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Community Conflict Mapping Report

AUGUST 2024

Produced by
INFOPRO

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Abbreviations

ADP	Arab Democratic Party
COAR	Center for Operational Analysis and Research
Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
GS	General Security
IO	International Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IRI	International Republican Institute
ISF	Internal Security Forces
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
KII	Key Informant Interview
L.L.	Lebanese Pounds
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
ML	Mount Lebanon
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SfCG	Search for Common Ground
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SDCs	Social Development Centers
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WE'AM	Working for Engagement, Acceptance, and Mediation

I

Summary

This report presents the results of an extensive conflict mapping exercise carried out in 12 local communities in Lebanon. The study was conducted under the "Working for Engagement, Acceptance, and Mediation: A Community-Based Approach to Social Cohesion in Lebanon – WE'AM" project, led by Oxfam in collaboration with Right to Play, SHiFT, and ALEF. Funded by the European Union, this initiative seeks to foster consensus and social cohesion by addressing community-level tensions, disseminating gender-responsive conflict prevention and resolution tools, and mainstreaming social cohesion into programming.

Employing criteria aligned with Wehr[1] and supplemented by contemporary approaches, this conflict analysis scrutinizes local conflict dynamics across the 12 selected Lebanese communities. The methodology integrates a multi-layered review of conflict development, major actors' roles, main conflict drivers (including connectors, dividers, and triggers), and the dynamic relationships shaping these conflicts. The data collection phase, which took place from December 2023 to February 2024, embraced an inclusive qualitative research approach, ensuring diverse perspectives in terms of gender, age, socioeconomic class, marginalized segments, and nationalities.

The conflict mapping revealed a complex web of socio-economic disparities, historical grievances, and political affiliations, fueling tensions across the targeted communities. Key findings include:

1. **Economic Hardships and Unemployment:** Economic vulnerabilities, exacerbated by limited access to opportunities and high unemployment rates, stand out as significant drivers of tension across communities.

2. **Sectarian and Political Tensions:** Historical and ongoing sectarian and political divides, often manipulated by local and national political figures, contribute to the escalation of conflicts.

3. **Role of Women and Youth:** Despite facing systemic barriers, women and youth play pivotal roles in promoting social cohesion and addressing community issues, albeit their potential is often underutilized due to prevailing societal norms.

4. **Impact of Syrian Refugees:** The influx of Syrian refugees has intensified resource competition, highlighting the necessity for inclusive support mechanisms that consider the needs of both host communities and refugees.

Based on the findings, several strategic interventions are recommended to address the root causes of conflict and foster long-term peace and cohesion:

1. **Economic Empowerment:** Initiatives to enhance economic stability, including vocational training and entrepreneurship support, particularly for women and youth, to alleviate economic disparities and unemployment.

2. **Community Engagement and Inclusion:** Strengthening community-based approaches that encourage the active participation of all community members, including marginalized groups, in conflict resolution and social cohesion efforts.

3. **Education and Capacity Building:** Enhancing access to quality education and capacity-building opportunities to equip community members with the skills needed for constructive engagement and leadership in peacebuilding efforts.

4. **Strengthening Governance and Civil Society:** Encouraging dialogue between community members and political representatives to foster inclusive governance and strengthen civil society organizations' role in peacebuilding and community support.

1. Wehr, P. (1979). Conflict regulation. Routledge & CRC Press. https://www.routledge.com/Conflict-Regulation/Wehr/p/book/9780367164911?srsltid=AfmBOoq-80z18QCOjG2kOgbGrTs6QUsXTiEsN4SgJz3TpE08YpBmwLMs

II

Introduction

Lebanon has been confronting **multi-layered socio-economic, political, and sectarian crises** that have implicated intra and inter-communal relationships across its many regions. The Syrian refugee crisis that began in 2011, was only one of the multiple triggers that exacerbated tensions. Literature on drivers of conflicts in Lebanon, before and after the Syrian displacement, is extensive while being presented in numerous formats, including articles, reports, databases, and official records, all aimed at assessing **the country's complex conflict environment.** Initially, the focus of these studies predominantly revolved around the socio-economic and political implications of this crisis on the relationships between Lebanese hosts and Syrian refugees. However, a significant shift occurred in 2019 when Lebanon experienced a political impasse marked by postponed parliamentary and presidential elections. This political standoff took center stage, triggering a shift in research interests around conflict dynamics in the country.

The year 2017 witnessed electoral reforms, followed by the 2018 Parliamentary elections, which, disappointingly, failed to yield substantial economic or public reforms. This outcome culminated in **widespread public discontent,** which erupted into massive public demonstrations throughout 2019 and 2020. Consequently, scholars began to explore the potential for new political forces and alternative emerging actors to address the evolving crisis. A heightened focus on **the role of women in protest movements and reform initiatives** also gained prominence.

However, the year 2020 brought about new challenges, including the devastating port explosion, economic collapse, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a surge in poverty rates, all of which posed severe threats to Lebanon's societal and political stability.[2] As a result, research interests shifted toward **understanding public sentiment and examining strategies for building resilience** in the face of deteriorating human security conditions. Furthermore, the dynamics of **host-refugee relations** within the context of economic hardship reemerged as a pressing concern for various stakeholders. Other issues confronting marginalized groups became pressing as, for instance, the state began to squeeze **the rights of the LGBTQ+ community** in the country.

In parallel, increased attention was directed toward subnational and local dynamics, as local communities began to devise solutions to address the shortcomings of national institutions and the absence of centralized services.

2. Multidimensional poverty in Lebanon (2019-2021): Painful reality and uncertain prospects. (n.d.). United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). https://www.unescwa.org/publications/multidimensional-poverty-lebanon-2019-2021

III

Nationwide Conflict Mapping Studies

Several major nationwide conflict mapping studies have been conducted in Lebanon, focusing on the dynamic of Syrian displacement and, since October 2019, on the impact of the economic crisis and political paralysis.[3] This is further supported by various public opinion surveys that have highlighted major risks and tensions in different areas around Lebanon. Notable contemporary studies that have assessed conflict dynamics in Lebanon are that of the Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR)'s Conflict Analysis – Lebanon National-Level (2022)[4] and Search for Common Ground's (SfCG) Conflict Analysis and Power Dynamics – Lebanon (2020)[5]. There are various other nationwide studies sponsored by United Nations (UN) agencies that are relevant to conflict mapping, such as those carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on public perceptions of social tensions throughout Lebanon, from 2017-2023.[6]

1. Issues

These studies have explored backgrounds of existing tensions at national as well as local levels while highlighting public perceptions and key drivers of existing tensions and relations between various actors and groups. Similarities and differences in these assessments depend on the focus and the methodologies utilized. In general, however, there are **common themes that explain the key aspects of existing tensions** on the national level. The COAR and SfCG studies, for instance, identify the sources of tensions as being primarily driven by economic distress while amplified by COVID-19, the Beirut explosion, political paralysis, Syrian displacement, and sectarian divides.[7]

The public issues, on the other hand, are typical of those formulated by field studies and reflect a strong inter-sectarian difference in the perception of major national issues, such as the question of non-state armed actors, relations and roles of foreign states, responsibility over crises and port explosions, the Syrian refugee issue, and deteriorating state power and services (see list of surveys in Table 1).[8]

Divisive issues have been highlighted through the various national public opinion surveys such as the 2019 and 2020 USAID's Citizen Perception Surveys conducted by Social Impact with 9,000 Lebanese households. The Surveys examined political economy and citizen satisfaction, COVID-19 response, gender-based violence, economic growth, employment, recycling, and renewable energy.[9] In 2021, the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) public opinion survey was conducted by Info Pro, targeting 2,400 adults, to gauge public trust in political institutions, policy priorities, the impact of protest movement, and pathways for reform.[10]

The International Republican Institute (IRI) conducted a similar survey in the same year with 2,400 participants through Info Pro that probed for political and economic impacts, including the effect of the economic situation on living conditions, trust and confidence in government, prospects for elections and reforms, national priorities, political support, voters' choice and determinants, voters' information, foreign roles, political inclusion, elections observations and monitoring, and refugee relations.[11]

Another Lebanese Perception toward the New Government survey was carried out by IPSOS with 900 participants to explore opinions regarding new government formation, international and regional relations, reforms, and elections.[12]

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung's (KAS) Study of Perceptions and Attitudes of Lebanese Citizens towards the Economic, Social, and Political Situation in Lebanon survey was conducted by Statistics Lebanon

3. Addressing protracted displacement in Lebanon: Syrian refugees and the host state (2021). World Refugee & Migration Council. https://wrmcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Lebanon-Syrian-Refugees-WRMC.pdf
4. Conflict Analysis - Lebanon - National Level (2021). Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR). https://coar-global.org/2022/01/14/conflict-analysis-lebanon-national-level/
5. Conflict analysis and power dynamics - Lebanon Study (2020). Search for Common Ground (SfCG). https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2020_SFCG_Conflict_Analysis_Report.pdf
6. Harris, A. (2021). Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon, Wave XI – ARK. https://www.ark.international/ark-blog/wave-xi
7. Also see studies that provide similar perspectives:
   Beaujouan, J., & Rasheed, A. (2019). An overview of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon and its Socio-Economic impact. In Springer eBooks (pp. 35–46). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35016-1_4
   Abouzeid, M., Halwani, D. A., Mokdad, A. H., & Habib, R. R. (2021). A generation at risk: The impacts of Lebanon's escalating humanitarian crisis on children. Frontiers in Public Health, 9. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.704678
8. See studies:
   Mapping of intra-Lebanese tensions and incidents: 2021 annual report (2021). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). https://www.thinktriangle.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/UNDP-Mapping-of-Intra-Lebanese-tensions-and-incidents-2021-Annual-Report-1.pdf
   Addressing protracted displacement in Lebanon: Syrian refugees and the host state (2021). World Refugee & Migration Council. https://wrmcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Lebanon-Syrian-Refugees-WRMC.pdf
9. Lebanon citizen perception survey (CPS) (2019). United States Agency for International Development (USAID). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X68X.pdf
10. No more politics-as-usual: Lebanese unite behind major reforms (2021). National Democratic Institute (NDI). https://www.ndi.org/publications/no-more-politics-usual-lebanese-unite-behind-major-reforms
11. A not yet published survey by the International Republican Institute (IRI).
12. Lebanese opinion on the new government (2021). Ipsos. https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2021-10/Lebanese%20opinion%20on%20the%20new%20government%202021-10-03.pdf

to examine public perception through a sample of 1,200 Lebanese.[13]

The Arab Barometer worked with Statistics Lebanon on a public opinion survey targeting a sample of 2,400 people in Lebanon around key themes such as trust in government, parliament, local government, legal system, armed forces, civil society, and religious leaders.[14]

There have been other sector-specific public opinion surveys, such as those by Madanyat in partnership with the UNDP, and conducted by IPSOS with 1,200 participants. The survey focused on public attitudes toward men's and women's roles in politics, the economy, media, and public life and revealed perceptions of different gender roles and the main aspects responsible for those differences.[15]

In 2022, The Washington Institute surveyed a sample of 1,000 Lebanese individuals regarding public satisfaction with contemporary developments in the country. The survey focused on foreign relations and attitudes toward various political economy issues, including offshore gas explorations.[16]

In the same year, the UNDP conducted a refugee-host survey through ARK, with 5,044 Lebanese and Syrian respondents, to probe for public perception of stability in the country and host refugee relations, within the context of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP).[17] It is important to note that this survey is part of an ongoing series designed to monitor these critical issues over time.

13. Study of perceptions and attitudes of Lebanese citizens towards the economic, social and political situation in Lebanon (2021). Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Lebanon Statistics. https://www.kas.de/documents/284382/284431/2021-12+KAS+Public+Opinion+Survey+Lebanon+Report.pdf/bfb92390-cb9b-97f3-423a-d4ec1fc464a0?version=1.1&t=1643958272879
14. Public opinion in Lebanon: 2021-2022 (2022). Arab Barometer https://www.arabbarometer.org/publication/public-opinion-in-lebanon-2021-2022/
15. Women in politics: Delving into women empowerment perceptions and attitudes survey (2021). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). https://www.undp.org/lebanon/publications/women-politics-delving-women-empowerment-perceptions-and-attitudes-survey
16. New poll shows Lebanese frustrations with government, Iran, and other powers (2022). The Washington Institute. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/new-poll-shows-lebanese-frustrations-government-iran-and-other-powers
17. Regular perception surveys on social tensions throughout Lebanon (2021). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Ark. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1o_dia_-kd0eNCbSMXSdvr_aIwDJRKylw/view

Table 1 **Map of Major Public Perception Surveys in Lebanon [2018-2023]**

Year	Organization	Survey	Sample
2019	USAID	Citizen Perception Survey I	9000
2020	USAID	Citizen Perception Survey II	9000
2021	NDI	Public Opinion Survey	2400
2021	IRI	Public Opinion Survey	2400
2021	IPSOS	Lebanese Perception toward the New Government survey	900
2021	KAS	Study of Perceptions and Attitudes of Lebanese Citizens Towards the Economic, Social, and Political Situation in Lebanon	1200
2021	Arab Barometer	Public Opinion Survey	2400
2021	Women in Politics	Delving into Women Empowerment, Perceptions & Attitudes	1200
2022	The Washington Institute	Public Opinion Survey	1000
2022	UNDP	Public Opinion Survey	5044

2. Actors and Dynamic

The studies pointed out to the main relevant actors within existing tension contexts, which include groups at local community levels, such as minor armed entities in Jabal Mohsen and Bab Al-Tebaneh or family clans in the Bekaa, as well as traditional political parties such as the Amal Movement and the Lebanese Forces.[18]

Political activists, civil society organizations (CSOs), area-based groups, and independent reformists are increasingly joining the landscape of influential actors, bringing forward agendas that have impacted national-level relationships and reshaped tension dynamics.[19] This is particularly the case as many of these groups have become capable of commanding large crowds of protesters in different parts of Lebanon and orchestrating interruptive activities such as roadblocks, sit-ins, and storming public offices.[20] The purpose behind their activities has been subject to greater scrutiny, especially due to being funded and sponsored by different international organizations (IOs) and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), who in turn become actors shaping relations and dynamics between the various national groups.[21]

Other important actors include the Lebanese security institutions such as the Internal Security Forces (ISF), the General Security (GS), and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Their roles and interests have been the subject of a variety of pressures coming from the public, as well as the elites and foreign states urging these institutions to take sides and act on contradictory interests. However, those security institutions have been facing a whole set of internal challenges that have been obstructing their roles, particularly hurdles about funding and desertions.[22]

The national conflict/tension dynamics between the different actors revolve around **the main political, religious, economic, and social dimensions.** Yet, the primary driver is insinuated by the political sectarian power struggle, where other aspects, such as competition for economic benefits and Syrian displacement, or other issues such as Hezbollah's rights to arms exacerbate already existing divisions and tensions. The sectarian power struggle is viewed by actors as existentialist, where any gain attained by a competing sect is considered a loss. Hence, **the dynamic is turned into a zero-sum game** that paralyzes the political process and exacerbates sectarian tensions.[23]

18. Geo-located mapping of conflicts in Lebanon (January 2018 - June 2019). (n.d.). Civil Society Knowledge Centre. https://civilsociety-centre.org/cap/map
19. Conflict Analysis - Lebanon - National Level (2021). Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR). https://coar-global.org/2022/01/14/conflict-analysis-lebanon-national-level/
20. DeQuero-Navarro, B., Aoun Barakat, K., Shultz, C.J. et al. (2020). From Conflict to Cooperation: A Macromarketing View of Sustainable and Inclusive Development in Lebanon and the Middle East. Environmental Management 66, 232–247. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-020-01300-w
21. Khatib, D.K. (2022). 17 October (2019) Revolution in Lebanon: A Preliminary Analysis. In: Issaev, L., Korotayev, A. (eds) New Wave of Revolutions in the MENA Region. Perspectives on Development in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15135-4_4
22. Conflict Analysis Lebanon National level (2022). Center for Operational Analysis Research (COAR). https://coar-global.org/2022/01/14/conflict-analysis-lebanon-national-level/
23. Salamey, I. (2021). The Government and Politics of Lebanon. Peter Lang Verlag. https://www.peterlang.com/document/1058650

IV

Local Community Conflict Mapping:
Aims and Approach

1. Research Objectives

Oxfam, in partnership with Right to Play, SHiFT, and ALEF is implementing a European Union-funded project entitled "Working for Engagement, Acceptance, and Mediation: A Community-Based Approach to Social Cohesion in Lebanon – WE'AM". The project is being implemented between March 2023 and February 2026. It will be implemented across the following 12 areas:

- Mashta Hammoud/Mashta Hassan – Akkar
- Fnaidek – Akkar
- Tikrit – Akkar
- Beddawi – Tripoli
- Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh – Tripoli
- Mina – Tripoli
- Deir Al-Ahmar – Bekaa
- Baalbek – Bekaa
- Saida – South Lebanon
- Barja – Mount Lebanon
- Ain El Remmeneh /Chiyah - Beirut
- Hay el Gharbeh/Ghobeiri – Beirut

The **project aims** to build consensus and social cohesion among communities through the following:

- Addressing drivers of tensions at the community level.
- Disseminating gender-responsive conflict prevention and resolution tools and methods.
- Mainstreaming community-level social cohesion into programming.

These aims are divided into **three outcomes:**

- Social and political tensions within and among communities are reduced, with locally-led solutions and responses driving positive change.
- Gender-responsive tools and methods for conflict prevention and resolution are developed and widely adopted, contributing to more equitable and effective conflict management.
- Consensus is built and actionable recommendations are produced, leading to the integration of social cohesion into EU community-based development programs, with active participation from diverse stakeholders including civil society, community groups, religious, political, media, and private sector actors, as well as the donor community and broader public.

This report provides the **findings** of a conflict mapping exercise conducted in each of the 12 areas under study. The findings in this report aim to assist the consortium in **understanding the following:**

- Drivers and root causes of tensions between community groups
- Willingness of community groups to engage in collaborative initiatives for the sake of addressing community problems while alleviating existing tensions
- The role of women in promoting social cohesion
- Communities' respective history, local traditions, beliefs, trends, and scenarios
- Present actors and stakeholders within the community, influencing tensions and conflicts escalation or de-escalation

Community profiling presented in this study lays out the existing power dynamics in each area of intervention. It also identifies conflict drivers and actors to understand connectors, dividers, and triggers of tensions within each community (See ToR in Annex).

2. Overall Approach

The conflict analysis relies on Wehr's criteria[24] that correspond to the World Bank and various contemporary applied approaches such as those of Herbert.[25] These criteria have been standard components utilized across conflict mapping researches.[26] Furthermore, these conflict mapping criteria are suitable for analyzing local conflict dynamics. They consist of **four major components.**

The first provides a **profile** with context and background describing conflict(s) development, with particular attention given to the past decade that witnessed Syrian refugee influx, up to contemporary economic collapse, state failure, and backlashes on freedoms and liberties. This profile interprets the nature of existing tensions, ongoing conflicts, and potential emerging clashes.

The second describes the major **actors, positions, and interests** involved in the conflict(s). Given that many regions in Lebanon are experiencing multi-layered conflicts—ranging from socio-economic to sectarian and political—actors must be identified at various levels: international, national, local, communal, and tribal. This approach will help the map out the roles of primary, intermediary, and minor actors across different conflicts and their respective resolutions. For programmatic purposes, this can assist in designing conflict mitigation and negotiation interventions (I, II, or III) tailored to specific conflict themes, such as host-refugee, sectarian, political, or socio-economic issues.[27]

The third determines the main **drivers** of the various conflicts and issues, including connectors, dividers, and triggers. Accordingly, major conflict drivers are isolated for targeted programmatic interventions.

The fourth reveals the **dynamics** shaping relationships between actors and/or coalition of actors. This is typically established based on the rationalism of gains and losses, winners and losers, and spoilers and advocates around a particular conflict and its resolution. Particular emphasis on youth and women in the conflict dynamic will be highlighted and mainstreamed throughout the analysis.

3. Methodology

The methodology employed relies on a **qualitative approach** to foster a deeper understanding of conflict dynamics within targeted communities. This multifaceted methodology is designed to ensure inclusivity across gender, age, socio-economic classes, marginalized segments, sects, and nationalities, thereby facilitating a holistic understanding of the community's conflict dynamics. By engaging in a literature review, field observations focusing on attitudes and practices, semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs), the research aims to capture a wide array of perspectives and insights.

The adherence to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) ethical conduct of research guidelines underscores the commitment to ethical standards, emphasizing the voluntary participation and consent of research subjects, while safeguarding the anonymity of personal data collected. The use of semi-structured KIIs allows for the collection of in-depth information from a diverse range of stakeholders, including civil society actors, local authorities, and refugee representatives, thereby enabling a nuanced analysis of the conflict's dynamics. The selection of KIIs and the flexible approach to adding or changing informants based on preliminary assessments and recommendations highlight the adaptability of the research design to ensure the relevance and comprehensiveness of the data collected.

Furthermore, the strategy for FGDs and participant sampling emphasizes the representation of diverse community members, with a specific focus on gender and refugee inclusion. The bifurcation of FGDs into discussions with local authorities and community stakeholders, as well as separate FGDs for local Lebanese and refugee communities, is indicative of the methodology's nuanced approach to capturing varied perspectives on conflict drivers and community tensions. This approach is complemented by detailed field observations post-FGDs, aimed at capturing the socio-economic and political nuances within the communities through direct interaction and photographic evidence. The structured observations

24. Wehr, P. (1979). Conflict regulation. Routledge & CRC Press. https://www.routledge.com/Conflict-Regulation/Wehr/p/book/9780367164911?srsltid=AfmBOoq-80z18QCOjG2kOgbGrTs6QUsXTiEsN4SgJz3TpE08YpBmwLMs
25. Herbert, S. (2017). Conflict analysis: Topic guide. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham. https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/ConflictAnalysis.pdf
26. See for example the similar approaches utilized by SFCG or COAR conflict mapping and analysis reports:
Conflict Analysis and Power Dynamics - Lebanon Study (2020). Search for Common Ground (SfCG). https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2020_SFCG_Conflict_Analysis_Report.pdf
Conflict Analysis - Lebanon - National Level (2021). Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR). https://coar-global.org/2022/01/14/conflict-analysis-lebanon-national-level/
27. Conflict mapping can determine whether tensions in communities are driven by actors at the national, sub-national, or local levels. Conflict mitigation and negotiation interventions can then be formulated according to the nature of actors and utilize track I interventions for national actors, track II interventions for sub-national, or track III for the local. More complex intervention may include multi-track and bottom-up approaches to conflict mitigation and negotiation. See Ramsbotham, o., Woodhouse, T., and Miall H. (2016). Contemporary Conflict Resolution. Fourth Edition. Cambridge: Polity Press. https://archive.org/details/contemporaryconf0000mial

span across key domains such as political symbols, infrastructure, demographic composition, and public space utilization, offering a comprehensive overview of the community settings.

This **triangulation of data collection methods**—combining desk reviews, KIIs, FGDs, and field observations—enhances the **reliability and validity of the research findings**, providing a robust foundation for understanding the multifaceted drivers of conflict within the targeted communities. Such a methodology not only underscores the importance of inclusivity and ethical conduct in research but also demonstrates a commitment to a thorough and adaptable approach to data collection, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the conflict dynamics at play (See Methodology in Annex).

4. Conflict Analysis Tools

Conflict analysis tools are developed based on the main analytical criteria. The key guiding questions are formulated based on **Herbert's tools to guide KIIs and FGDs** while taking into consideration the targeted community and potential conflict triggers (See Tools in Annex).[28]

Through **literature review and in consultation with WE'AM's partners**, a preliminary list of actors and stakeholders who are relevant to the local conflict dynamic in the 12 targeted communities was identified,[29] including individual, group, formal, or informal.

5. Data Collection

Data collection employed an **inclusive and qualitative research approach**, considering factors such as gender, age, socio-economic class, marginalized groups, sects, and nationalities. This included a literature review, field observations focused on "attitudes" and potential "practices", as well as qualitative methods like semi-structured key informant interviews, individual interviews, and focus group discussions. The process adhered to OECD's ethical research standards, ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, and the protection of participants' anonymity regarding any personal data collected.

1) Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

The research was guided by KIIs with open-ended questions, designed to compile in-depth information to sufficiently address the conflict analysis research questions. Thirty-six KIIs were primarily conducted with a range of stakeholders and local actors who could inform the community's conflict dynamic. An additional 12 KIIs were added to reach a gender balance among the respondents. In total, the study conducted a total of 48 KIIs, with 24 women and 24 men.

KIIs included civil society activists and organizations, local authorities, refugee community heads, as well as other interlocutors. Based on the initial mapping of actors and stakeholders, the research team anticipated interviewing the heads of municipalities or members of local authorities in the 12 targeted communities. These individuals could provide valuable insights into conflict mapping within their respective local areas. During implementation, the pool was expanded to capture the opinions of more members of the community and to be more gender-inclusive.

The key informant interviews also helped in completing the community profiling exercise. WE'AM's partner organizations were also interviewed to provide on-the-ground context.

Five KIIs with project coordinators (partners and Oxfam) were conducted. The remaining key informants were selected based on preliminary assessment and recommendations of WE'AM partner organizations who could provide the most relevant, diverse, and comprehensive information on the conflict dynamic in the targeted communities. A preliminary list of key informants to be interviewed had been prepared, keeping a margin of flexibility to add or change to the list in consultation with the WE'AM consortium team.

The list was made out of **50 potential participants** with gender distribution as follows: 38% women, 56% men, and 6% entities and organizations whose focal points were unidentified. The higher representation of men was attributed to the predominance of men among local authorities.

28. Herbert, S. (2017). Conflict analysis: Topic guide. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham. https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/ConflictAnalysis.pdf
29. Extracted from the different actors mapping categories utilized by the implementing consortium.

KII's Selection:

InfoPro organized the list of 50 names based on priority in each geographical area. The subsequent step involved initiating interviews with individuals designated as the highest priority. If any attempts were unsuccessful for various reasons, the process moved on to individuals identified as the next priority.

The final KIIs' gender distribution was 24 men and 24 women. The distribution of the KIIs was as follows: 31% local authorities, 30% NGOs/CSOs/CBOs, 29% activists/influencers, and 10% consortium partners (Annex 9).

Table 2 KIIs summary

Mohafaza/Governorate	Men	Women
Akkar	5	7
Baalbek	6	4
Mount Lebanon	4	6
National[30]	0	1
North	6	3
South	2	2
South and Mount Lebanon[31]	0	1
North and Akkar[32]	1	0
Total	**24**	**24**
Grand Total	**48**	

30. It means the person who was interviewed provided input with a national scope.
31. Respondents answering questions or providing input for both areas, mainly project team members.
32. Respondents answering questions or providing input for both areas, mainly project team members.

2) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Participants Sampling Strategy

The research team conducted a total of **25 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** with community members and stakeholders, reaching as many segments and opinions as possible within the available resources. Furthermore, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted before the FGDs to further inform and validate their methodology.

Each FGD consisted of approximately 8-10 community members. They were distributed in each of the twelve (12) targeted areas while ensuring gender and refugee inclusion among other critical demographics (age, income, and socio-economic, political and religious backgrounds). Ideally, in all FGDs, women should have constituted 50% of participants. In general, and based on the preliminary desk review and assessment, the research team expected to organize two types of FGDs. In total, women constituted 49.6% of participants in all FGDs (116 women and 118 men).

12 Local Authorities and Community Leaders FGDs

The first type of focus group was centered around local authorities and included members of respective municipalities, Mokhtars, Social Development Centers (SDCs), lawyers, religious leaders, and other relevant actors and stakeholders. This diverse group helped to probe issues, relations, and the dynamics of conflict within the community.

The utilized sampling strategy was based on the following selection process:

1. Literature review identified major community actors and stakeholders in each community.

2. A list of major actors and stakeholders from the different communities was further identified by WE'AM implementing partners.

3. Accordingly, a comprehensive master list of actors and stakeholders was established based on their respective characteristics.

4. Five members of local authorities (Municipal members or Mokhtars) were selected to serve as informants within each community, as these were typically well-informed about local tension and conflict drivers.

5. Five leading and/or influential actors and stakeholders of the local community were also selected to participate in the FGD, based on their relevance to tension/conflict issues or for their ability to inform the study.

To the extent possible, the InfoPro research team selected the 10 participants for the focus group discussions (FGDs) in a way to ensure proper representation across geographic areas, gender, and types of actors or stakeholders within each community. Of 147 possible participants, 23% were women, 27% were unidentified representatives of suggested organizations, and 50% were men.

Gender discrepancy in the sample was because most local authority members were men. However, the research team anticipated that the percentage of women participants would increase to 50% as they actively sought women from the various identified organizations.

For the FGDs involving local authorities and community leaders, InfoPro utilized a selection strategy of participants from a comprehensive pool, with the highest priority (ranked 1) given to the most informed and active community members identified by partners as well as by InfoPro, to ensure that collected data is relevant, abundant and of high value.

InfoPro resorted to a second and third pool of participants (ranked 2 and 3), whenever needed, to ensure sufficient participation of 8-10 members of local authorities and community leaders.

13 Lebanese and Refugee Community FGDs

The second type of focus group discussions (FGDs) brought together community members to explore local perspectives on the concerns of ordinary citizens that contribute to tensions. The sampling strategy for selecting community members aimed to ensure adequate representation across the community's diversity. Participants were chosen based on their involvement with the tension and conflict issues highlighted in the profiles of the various communities (Literature Report).

Each Community FGD included 5 men and 5 women, specifically targeting youth participants to meet a defined participation ratio set for each community. Accordingly, the selection was determined in each community (Annex 4). InfoPro anticipated that consortium implementing partners to assist in guiding this process, by supporting in identifying members of the community who could participate in the FGDs and in facilitating the hosting related activities.

Refugee community FGDs were held at the local level to encompass both Syrian and Palestinian participants, particularly in areas identified in the literature report as refugee tension-sensitive, such as the North, Bekaa, and the South. Some of the FGDs held among community members were mixed, such as those in the North and South. This approach was adopted after careful assessment of the existing tensions between the communities, to ensure feasibility and safety. At the same time, and as the research progressed, additional community FGDs were established to target relevant refugee community groups. Two additional FGDs were conducted with Syrian refugee communities

in Akkar and Baalbek, and two others were held with Palestinian refugee groups in Saida and Beddawi.

The recruitment process of the FGDs' participants was based on the distribution and criteria identified, while the partners helped only in filling the gap when needed.

FGD Selection

Regarding the FGDs with communities, the consultant asked partners to gather their recommendations for participants based on the criteria identified in the literature. It was important to note that this outreach was intended for obtaining recommendations, and not for validation purposes.

Table 3 FGDs summary[33]

Area*	Authorities	Lebanese	Syrian	Mixed	Palestinians
Akkar	3	1	1	0	0
Baalbek	2	1	2	1	0
Beddawi	1	1	0	0	1
Mount Lebanon (including Barja)/ Saida	4	3	0	0	1
Tripoli	2	1	0	0	0
Total	**12**	**7**	**3**	**1**	**2**

*Analysis by sub-area was not feasible as the areas are often intermingled; for example, Akkar includes various mixed localities.
* We conducted joint FGDs for Barja and Saida considering their geographical proximity.

3) Field Observations

Field observations were an indispensable component, serving as a vital means to gain a comprehensive understanding of the targeted communities. Following the FGDs, InfoPro moderators became thoroughly engaged in the process of capturing significant insights through direct interaction with the environment of the targeted areas, alongside the collection of photographic evidence. This multi-faceted approach enhanced the depth and breadth of the research, allowing the formation of a clearer perspective of the focal communities.

The observational notes and photographic documentation served as invaluable assets in the quest to assess the presence and implications of tensions within these twelve communities. These observations were structured around key domains and included an assessment of (a) political or sectarian symbols, (b) the presence of political party offices (captured without photographic evidence), (c) an evaluation of housing and infrastructural conditions, (d) the demographic composition in terms of Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese residents, as well as the (e) distribution between men and women.

Furthermore, the environmental landscape was examined, focusing on the (f) quality of water, (g) sewage, (h) waste disposal systems, (i) the existence of military checkpoints, although not visually documented, assessed as part of these observations, and (j) the extent of gender mixing in public spaces, also observed (Annex 5).

The incorporation of these observations was important in offering a more comprehensive overview of the communities under study. These on-the-ground insights provided a unique dimen-

33. Annex 8

sion to the research by offering a holistic context for understanding the drivers of conflict within these communities.

The incorporation of these field observations into the research methodology aimed to strengthen the triangulation of data collected from desk reviews, KIIs, and FGDs. This triangulation process was fundamental to ensuring the accuracy, reliability, and validity of the findings, making them a robust foundation upon which to build the final report.

A total of 25 observations were documented, one following each FGD.

6. Conflict Mapping Analysis

Triangulation of data has been utilized in this study to extract findings. A qualitative-interview analyst has been employed to support in synthesizing, tabulating, and analyzing interview data. This entailed identifying patterns and relationships between the different local, regional, national, and international actors. Throughout the analysis, gender issues as well as those pertaining to youth and marginalized groups have been mainstreamed and highlighted.

The conflict mapping was analyzed based on **the targeted community profile,** which outlines the actors involved in the escalation and de-escalation of tensions and conflicts. It highlights the key issues and interests driving these tensions, while also describing the dynamics of relationships—such as connectors, dividers, and triggers—that shape the conflict landscape within the targeted communities. A **conflict dynamic diagram** was created to visually illustrate the main priority conflict issue within each community, highlighting the linkages between actors, issues, and relationships using the Whimsical Diagram format. Analytical findings were derived from common themes and coherent information gathered through KIIs, FGDs, and field observations in each community, emphasizing the various aspects of the tensions and conflicts dynamics.

7. Challenges and Limitations

In the course of conducting the conflict mapping analysis, several challenges and limitations were encountered, which may have impacted the comprehensiveness and depth of the findings. These challenges were categorized as follows:

- **Shifts in political attitudes and government policies,** such as increasing pressure against refugees or marginalized groups, including the LGBTQ+ community, pose a layer of complexity. These changes can escalate tensions and introduce new conflict drivers that were not initially accounted for in the study. The unstable and fast-changing nature of these government policy behaviors are to be taken into consideration and require ongoing data collection to reflect their impact on communal social cohesion.
- **The rapidly evolving political and security landscape,** particularly influenced by regional conflicts such as the situation in Gaza, presents another limitation to the study and its findings. These events can significantly alter the dynamics of local conflicts, rendering some of the collected data outdated. This is particularly the case within the Palestinian community and its relations with its surrounding host groups. The volatility of the environment requires regular monitoring and adaptability in the research methodology to maintain the relevance and accuracy of the analysis.

- In addition, several challenges were encountered during the KIIs and FGDs. Regarding the FGDs, **assembling a group that combined community members from multiple areas** proved difficult, particularly in Akkar, where participants from Fnaidek, Machta Hassan, Machta Hammoud, and Tikrit had to be included. This was challenging due to the long distances between these areas and adverse weather conditions since data collection was done during December and January.

- Additionally, **diversifying the gender of authority figures in FGDs** was challenging in regions like Saida, Machta Hassan, Machta Hammoud, Fnaidek, and Tikrit, where the majority of figures are predominantly men.

- Furthermore, there was a **general lack of interest from participants** once they learned that the topic was conflict mapping. Many participants expressed that they found the topic either too complex, irrelevant to their immediate needs, or emotionally challenging to engage with, which made it difficult to engage them.

- Similarly, in the KIIs, **achieving diversity in gender and profile figures** was challenging. Twelve additional KIIs were conducted, reaching a total of 48, and this was to ensure a gender-balanced and diverse representation of key actors.

- **Reaching out to international NGOs and governmental entities,** such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), ministries, and Social Development Centers (SDCs), was sometimes difficult.

- Additionally, some individuals were either out of Lebanon, not interested, or refused to participate.

V

Findings from Regions and Local Community Conflict Mapping

1. Akkar Governorate[34]

1) Population and Demographics

Akkar is known for its diverse population, with a mix of ethnic and religious groups, including Sunni Muslims, Alawites, Christians (Maronites, Greek Orthodox), and smaller minority groups (Melkites Christians and Shia Muslims). A significant portion of the population is young, with a growing youth demographic. This area has provided the Lebanese Army with the largest reservoir of enlisted soldiers.[35] Like Tripoli, Akkar experiences **income disparities**, with some areas being economically disadvantaged compared to other prosperous ones. However, the region has been subjugated to **historic neglect** with widespread poverty as well as tensions and conflicts, including clashes between different religious and ethnic communities. Unresolved grievances, often related to land ownership and political power, continue to be a source of tension. Akkar has a history of governance struggles, with various political groups vying for control.[36]

2) Key Industries

Furthermore, limited access to **economic opportunities, high unemployment rates, and a reliance on seasonal agriculture can lead to economic vulnerabilities.** Agriculture, small-scale manufacturing, and trade are important local industries, but disparities exist in terms of economic development. Competition over land and water resources is common, with disputes arising from historical land ownership patterns. **Resource-related conflicts** can escalate, particularly during periods of resource scarcity. Water scarcity and environmental degradation can escalate conflicts. Hence, land disputes and competition for resources are key conflict triggers.[37] The presence of a large number of Syrian refugees, particularly in the areas of Wadi Khalid, has only increased the pressure over resources and further amplified existing tensions.[38]

3) Infrastructure and Services

Access to education and healthcare varies, with disparities between urban and rural areas. Infrastructure development projects may be **unevenly distributed**, affecting living conditions in different parts of Akkar. Economic and social uncertainty drives most residents to rely on remittances from family members working abroad, making the local economy vulnerable to external economic shocks. Electoral politics can be divisive, with accusations of unfair practices.

4) Cultural and Social Dynamics

It is important to signal that **traditional values and customs** are important in Akkar, often influencing social behavior and expectations. **Social hierarchies based on religion** and ethnicity can impact interactions within the community. There are community-based organizations, such as CSOs, and municipalities that play a vital role in maintaining social cohesion and providing support.

The region has seen a mix of **local governance structures and political leadership,** often aligned with larger Lebanese political parties, such as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, the Future Movement, the Lebanese Forces, and the Free Patriotic Movement. **Political affiliations** are diverse and sometimes divided along sectarian lines, contributing to political tensions. This creates **politically driven tension triggers** related to demands for equitable representation in decision-making processes.

Another factor that influences conflict dynamics is the involvement of external organizations, CSOs, and government agencies who can influence conflict dynamics. Competition over foreign funds and participating in CSO activities often aggravate tensions between different local groups and beneficiaries.

34. Mechanisms for stability and local development (n.d.). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). https://www.undp.org/lebanon/mechanisms-stability-and-local-development-msld
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35. Yahya, M., & Ali, M. H. (2023). North Pacific: Why Lebanon's Akkar region weathered the Syrian conflict. In Springer eBooks (pp. 63–84). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-09187-2_4
36. Lebanon: North & Akkar governorates profile (October 2018) (2018). United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/lebanon/lebanon-north-akkar-governorates-profile-october-2018
37. Local and regional entanglements: The social stability context in Sahel Akkar (2016). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/51136
38. Conflict assessment report: Tripoli and Akkar, Lebanon (2013). Partners for Democratic Change International (PDCI) and Peace Labz. https://partnersbg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Lebanon-assesment-report-final.pdf
Conflict analysis and power dynamics - Lebanon study (2020). Search for Common Ground (SfCG). https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2020_SFCG_Conflict_Analysis_Report.pdf
Le Monde de L'entre-Deux (2021). International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP). https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/57326/file/Le%2520Monde%2520de%2520L%25E2%2580%2599Entre-Deux%2520%2528v.11%2529_English.pdf

1) Mashta Hammoud/Mashta Hassan – Akkar

Figure 1 **Map of Lebanon, highlighting Mashta Hammoud/Mashta Hassan - Akkar in red**

1) Community Profile

Nestled in the heart of the Akkar region, Mashta Hammoud and Mashta Hassan's population is composed of Sunni Muslims with a median age of 28.2 as of 2015. The towns have been confronting major demographic shifts and economic instability, hallmarked by a 34% decline in the population of Lebanese residents between 2000 and 2015, a staggering 83.6% decrease since 1975.[39] The demographic decline of Lebanese residents has been confronted by a growing Syrian refugee population, reaching more than 2,000 in 2022.[40]

Historically, Mashta Hammoud and Mashta Hassan have confronted occasional conflicts, often rooted in socioeconomic disparities. The early years of the Syrian war saw the activation of Syrian armed groups in the region, prompting actions by the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) that included weapon confiscations and arrests, heightening local tensions.[41]

According to the local municipality, the economic crisis has not only spurred significant migration but has also left "youth unemployment as a pressing issue", exacerbating the community's struggle. The economic downturn has necessitated the employment of Syrian workers in local businesses, highlighting the complexity of host-refugee relations. Furthermore, municipalities grapple with "financial constraints, impacting essential services like garbage removal", a testament to the governmental financial support inadequacy.

Several key events and developments, including the controversial removal of an ancient forest, have intensified existing tensions and potential clashes. Occasional conflicts have also occurred involving village residents and Syrian refugees, where instances of vandalism and theft underscored the community's frustrations. Accusations of mismanagement and corruption, particularly concerning projects intended to benefit the community, reflect a profound mistrust in the handling of financial aid. Environmental challenges, notably polluted water sources, have led to health concerns, further aggravating the community's plight.

Economic instability has strained marriages and made access to education and employment increasingly difficult for the youth. The situation has implicated the social fabric as one member of the local community explains that "economic strains lead to conflicts within marriages", where women are often caught in a dire struggle to contribute financially while managing familial responsibilities. Refugees, bearing the brunt of competition for resources and employment, face "resentment and discrimination", embedding themselves deeply into the fabric of ongoing tensions.

2) Major Actors and Roles

The interplay of local, national, and international actors shapes the dynamics of conflict and mitigation efforts. At the international level, the UNDP has played a pivotal role in fostering reconciliation by establishing a committee focused on "addressing and resolving various issues within the village and surrounding areas", as described by a local member of the community. This effort underscores the significance of dialogue in building trust and cooperation among community members.

39. Mchati Hammoud, Akkar, Lebanon. (n.d.). City Facts. https://www.city-facts.com/mashta-hammoud-akkar-lebanon/population
40. Syria refugee response: Lebanon - Akkar governorate - Distribution of registered Syrian refugees at the cadastral level (as of 31 December 2022) (2022). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/98009
41. Army detains 50 suspects in north, seizes weapons (2014). Civil Society Centre. https://civilsociety-centre.org/sir/army-detains-50-suspects-north-seizes-weapons

Figure 2 **Medical center in Mashta Hassan, Akkar, North Lebanon.** *Photo credit: InfoPro/Oxfam.*

A participant in a FGD with Lebanese community members from Mashta Hassan said: "At the international level, organizations such as the UNDP have been involved in mitigating tensions and fostering reconciliation within the community. For instance, the UNDP's establishment of a reconciliation committee has been instrumental in addressing and resolving various issues within the village and surrounding areas. By facilitating dialogue and conflict resolution, the UNDP has helped build trust and cooperation among community members."

Nationally, the influence of expatriates in mitigating tensions is notable. Their contributions encompass financial assistance and economic development initiatives, which are vital for the community's well-being. Locally, grassroots organizations, such as the Akkar Development Organization, focus on supporting vulnerable groups, particularly women, through empowerment and skill development initiatives. These efforts aim to mitigate tensions by addressing underlying social issues.

Community-based initiatives, including scouting programs, have proven effective in engaging youth and offering positive alternatives to conflict. Yet, challenges such as drug abuse persist within the community, indicating a complex relationship between various actors and the authorities. The influence of traffickers and politicians, particularly in neighboring regions like Bebnine, underscores the intertwining of political and illicit economic activities in shaping conflict dynamics.

The involvement of local clans in resolving tensions highlights the absence of a formal government presence, described by a key informant from the community as relying on "jungle rules" for conflict resolution.

Women, predominantly in roles as students or teachers, play significant functions in social initiatives. Women figures are actively involved in addressing social issues through collaboration with entities like the UNDP. Yet, field observations still point to gender segregation and the low presence of women in public places.

3) Key Issues and Interests

The primary catalysts of instability, according to a member of the municipality, span the "lack of security, unemployment, and the overall economic situation", pinpointing a triad where the absence of robust security mechanisms and high unemployment levels fertilize the ground for societal strife. Economic instability, acting as a fulcrum, magnifies the impact of these issues, with community members lamenting the dire ripple effects on social cohesion.
The lack of "adequate security measures" is not merely a void of law enforcement but a profound concern impacting the sense of safety and the efficacy of government intervention. Unemployment, particularly among the youth, is highlighted as not just an economic failure but a social malaise leading individuals "to resort to harmful activities due to financial struggles." Economic challenges transcend monetary dimensions, linking "poverty and financial instability" to a broader spectrum of social issues and tensions, thereby sketching a landscape where economic duress, security lacunae, and a weakened moral compass converge to fuel conflicts.

Community's social moral safeguards against threats are also on the decline where the "current lack of religious consciousness" reflects a chasm between aspirational values and the prevailing social order, further complicated by "inequality in the distribution of aid" and accusations of "sectarian bias", which fan the flames of discontent.

The quest for a "new political landscape", free from the shadows of current political figures, underscores a profound disillusionment with the status quo and a collective yearning for governance that genuinely serves the people. The community's call for practical measures, like "implementing projects for garbage disposal, water well management, and reforestation", mirrors a grassroots resilience aiming to sow seeds of change.

On a different note, field observations point to deteriorating water quality and disposal systems in town.

Figure 3 Contaminated water in Mashta Hassan, Akkar, North Lebanon. *Photo credit: InfoPro/Oxfam.*

4) Dynamics

Members of the community pointed to the "lack of security, unemployment, and the economic situation" as the crux of local conflicts. Specifically, a participant noted the pervasive impact of "the absence of adequate security measures" and "high levels of unemployment, especially among the youth", delineating a scenario where economic despair and a lack of safety measures intertwine to foster an environment ripe for conflict. Yet, lack of security stood consistently as the main driver of conflicts.

Women, especially those in educational roles, emerge from the discussions as pillars of the community, with one participant mentioning: "Many influential women in the community are primarily teachers or housewives, exerting a significant influence". This statement underscores the dual role of women as educators within the classroom and as moral and social guides within the household, demonstrating the integral part they play in shaping the community's fabric.

Contrastingly, the scenario also illuminates those who thrive amidst disorder, with "outlaws and individuals who benefit from disorder", identified by a member of the municipality as profiteers of the prevailing chaos. This stark dichotomy between community pillars and agents of discord, paints a vivid picture of the internal dynamics at play within these villages.

A participant in a FGD with the authorities and stakeholders said: "There is a perceived inequality in the distribution of aid and resources, with neighboring villages receiving more support. This unequal allocation of donations, political interference in healthcare projects, and allegations of sectarian bias in decision-making processes are highlighted as issues that exacerbate tensions and contribute to an overall sense of dissatisfaction within the community."

The discussions extended into the practicalities of conflict resolution and the aspirations for societal improvement. A participant articulated the community's pressing needs, emphasizing that "clean water and a proper sewage system are identified as critical priorities", linking these basic services directly to the broader aim of enhancing living conditions and thereby mitigating potential sources of conflict.

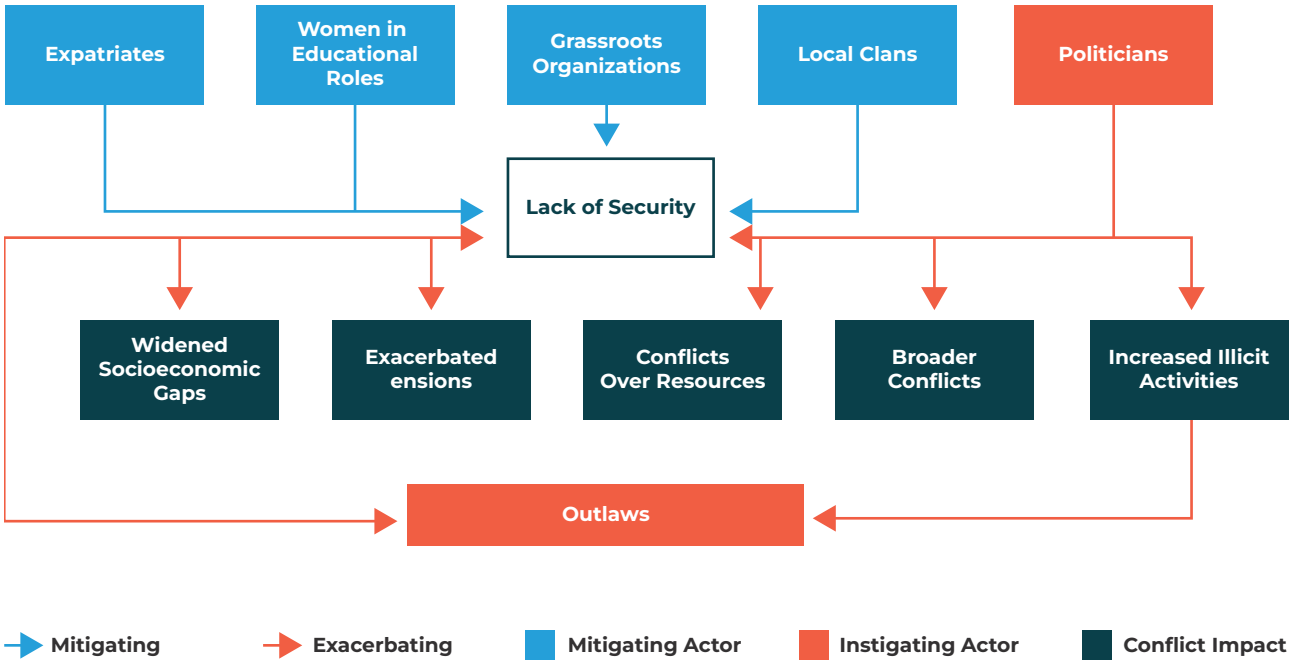

Diagram 1 **Actors' contribution or mitigation toward lack of security within the communities in Mashta Hassan and Mashta Hammoud**

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

In Mashta Hassan and Mashta Hammoud, peace-building and conflict resolution are shaped by a rich tapestry of traditional, local, and formal mechanisms, each contributing uniquely to the communities' efforts to maintain harmony and address disputes. Traditional methods, often led by elders and recognized community leaders, hinge on deep-rooted cultural practices of mediation and reconciliation. For example, a local community member in Mashta Hassan said: "We have always relied on the wisdom of our elders to guide us through disputes, just as our ancestors did." This highlights the enduring value of age-old practices in resolving conflicts that are deeply personal or sensitive, reinforcing social bonds and mutual respect among community members.

Local NGOs and community organizations also play a vital role, implementing a range of activities from dialogue facilitation to educational workshops aimed at strengthening community ties and addressing root causes of conflict. A leader of a local NGO noted: "Our programs are designed to bring people together, to discuss their differences and find common ground, which is crucial in a diverse community like ours." These organizations bridge traditional practices with modern conflict-resolution strategies, providing platforms for inclusive participation and collective problem-solving. However, the formal mechanisms involving municipal councils and legal frameworks face challenges in terms of resource constraints and bureaucratic inefficiencies, as one municipal officer said: "We strive to address the community's needs promptly, but are often hampered by limited resources and red tape."

To enhance these peacebuilding initiatives, there is a clear need to build on existing mechanisms by integrating and bolstering the capacities of both formal and informal sectors. Strengthening local NGOs through enhanced training and resources can empower them to expand their outreach and impact. Furthermore, improving coordination between municipal councils and community organizations can streamline efforts and enhance the effectiveness of formal resolutions. As suggested by stakeholders in the community, "by supporting local capacities and improving institutional responses, we can create a more resilient and cohesive community framework for managing conflicts."

6) Recommendations

- **Vocational Training and Entrepreneurship Support:** In Mashta Hassan and Mashta Hammoud, addressing the intricate web of unemployment, security deficiencies, and governance shortfalls demands targeted and gender-sensitive interventions. The communities' narratives underscore a pressing need for tailored vocational training and entrepreneurship support, especially for women. "The vulnerable youth should be approached from a more humanitarian standpoint", highlighting the critical role of inclusive employment strategies in mitigating tensions.
- **Community Cohesion and Peacebuilding Programs:** Community cohesion is critical, with peacebuilding programs that "emphasize gender sensitivity" and engage women and youth as peace ambassadors, offering paths toward harmonious coexistence. Projects that bring together diverse community segments can dismantle barriers of misunderstanding, laying bricks of mutual respect and understanding.
- **Collaboration and Women-Led Initiatives:** The collaboration between civil society, NGOs, and the community must be strengthened while unleashing the potential of women-led initiatives in driving forward community development and conflict resolution efforts.

2) Fnaidek – Akkar[42]

Figure 4 **Map of Lebanon, highlighting Fnaidek - Akkar in red**

1) Community Profile

Fnaidek, like much of Akkar, boasts a diverse population, but it is predominantly a Sunni Muslim town. It has a significant youth demographic, potentially leading to generational tensions and varying perspectives on social and political issues. Income disparities exist within Fnaidek with major families controlling most wealth, but the majority of the population faces extreme poverty and neglect. There is a significant number of Syrian refugees (approximately 947 registered refugees out of a total population of 6,000) in town.[43]

Fnaidek, like Akkar as a whole, experiences diverse political affiliations, sometimes aligned along sectarian lines. Yet, it has been predominantly affiliated with the Future Movement and has shifted in the 2022 election toward National Moderation under elected Member of Parliament Walid Baarini.[44] Local governance structures and political leadership are often linked to larger Lebanese political parties, but predominantly family associations.

The availability of education and healthcare services varies across Fnaidek, with disparities. However, the quality of education is often cited as lacking despite the presence of 7 schools serving 3,200 Lebanese and 370 Syrian students. Infrastructure development projects are unevenly distributed, impacting living conditions within the town. This finding is based on data collected during the study.

Fnaidek, like many regions in Lebanon, has been affected by the presence of Syrian refugees who have sought shelter and assistance in town. The refugee influx has strained local resources, including education and healthcare facilities, and altered the town's demographic composition. This has created additional economic challenges, as competition for limited employment opportunities has increased. FGD participants in Fnaidek pointed to tensions in the labor market between local and foreign laborers, mainly in informal jobs, leading to social disruption and conflict. This is largely due to the lack of government support, which should have been implemented long ago, in order to avoid the widespread social and economic distress experienced by rural areas today.[45]

Land disputes, resource competition, and electoral politics remain key conflict triggers, as in most areas in Lebanon. The presence of Syrian refugees can add complexity to and amplify these triggers, including competition for resources and social tensions. The infusion of Syrians in town and close to the borders, bring about a whole set of tension triggers between competitors and the community that are driven by cross-border smuggling activities, which implicate competing turfs for control and influence, particularly toward the youth, to maintain support and recruits, while splitting the community between benefiters and losers (usually segments of the local farmers suffer losses due to smuggled agricultural products).

Most residents perceive the state with suspicion and blame the government for historic neglect. Perceptions of Syrian refugees may also differ based on a range of benefits and losses, affecting social cohesion. While some locals benefit from the availability of cheaper Syrian agricultural and construction labor, others have growing stress over limited resources and utility services and point the blame at the Syrians.

42. Mechanisms for stability and local development (n.d.). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). https://www.undp.org/lebanon/mechanisms-stability-and-local-development-msld
43. CONFLICT ANALYSIS FINDINGS – Phase for Akroum, Fnaidek, Bebnine & Bazbina.
Fnaidek, Akkar, Lebanon: Population. (n.d.). City Facts. https://www.city-facts.com/fnideq-akkar-lebanon/population
Syria refugee response: Lebanon - Akkar governorate - Distribution of registered Syrian refugees (2024). https://reliefweb.int/map/lebanon/syria-refugee-response-lebanon-akkar-governorate-distribution-registered-syrian-18
44. Winners of the North Akkar elections 2022 (2022). The 961. https://www.the961.com/winners-north-akkar-lebanon-elections-2022/
45. The Impact of multiple crises on necessity-driven entrepreneurs in Lebanon's rural areas – Fnaidek (2021). Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS). https://api.lcps-lebanon.org/content/uploads/files/Fnaidek-report.pdf

2) Major Actors and Roles

Local governance structures, notably the mayor and other tribal figures, play an essential role in preempting conflict escalation. This approach is complemented by the existence of a reconciliation committee established by the UNDP, which includes Sheikhs, municipality members, and union presidents, demonstrating the village's commitment to collaborative conflict resolution.

A participant in a FGD with the authorities and stakeholders said: "The mayor, having close ties with various tribes, plays a crucial role in preventing conflicts from escalating. Immediate resolution mechanisms are in place, involving individuals familiar with those in conflict, including the mayor if necessary. This proactive approach has resulted in zero unresolved conflicts in the region."

The economic crisis has necessitated a reevaluation of traditional gender roles, pushing women into the labor force to sustain their families amid mounting financial pressures. An interviewee vividly describes the situation: "The economic crisis has compelled a shift in traditional gender roles, with women, who once stayed at home, now needing to seek employment." This shift has broadened the role of women beyond domestic confines, as they engage in sectors like agriculture and partake in social initiatives.

Smugglers and influential figures tied to illegal activities emerge as potent agents in shaping the socio-political landscape, offering alternative economic avenues in a region marred by unemployment and poverty. A participant from the community expressed this sentiment: "In the community, significant actors triggering tensions include mafias, smugglers, and politicians who have exploited the crisis for their benefit."

Amid economic downturns, local and international organizations, such as the UNDP, UNICEF, and the Red Cross, are cited as beacons of hope and support for the beleaguered community. Their activities have brought relief and have been crucial in sustaining families, as underscored by one respondent: "Some organizations facilitated employment opportunities for the unemployed, offering hope during a challenging period."

Women's organizations, such as Zahret Al Ajyel, are recognized for their pivotal role in supporting women through personal crises like divorce and for advocating for women's increased involvement in various community sectors. "The previously mentioned organization aids women facing divorce", according to one interviewee, reflecting the limited but vital avenues through which women contribute to conflict resolution.

Youth organizations have surfaced as proactive agents, engaging in community service and well-being. This is a shift from personal gain to voluntary service, a transition that is captured by a member of the municipality who stated that: "in the context of youth, new organizations, and groups have emerged amid the crisis, showcasing a growing trend of youth engagement."

The community of Fnaidek acknowledges the need for programs that integrate vocational training with academic studies, emphasizing sectors like IT, languages, and agriculture, to tackle unemployment and enhance economic stability. A resident explains that: "there is a consensus on the importance of integrating vocational training with academic studies."

3) Key Issues and Interests

The local governance, predominantly the mayor and clan leaders, are instrumental in conflict prevention. A community member notes that "the mayor, having close ties with various tribes, plays a crucial role in preventing conflicts from escalating", reflecting the reliance on established social hierarchies for peacekeeping. The Reconciliation Committee, created by the UNDP, signifies the formalization of these conflict mitigation efforts, incorporating traditional authority figures and modern organizational structures.

Despite low gender mixing in public spaces made by field observations, women's shifting roles due to economic demands are a recurrent theme. One woman articulated the challenge by stating "The economic crisis has compelled a shift in traditional gender roles, with women, who once stayed at home, now needing to seek employment." Women's participation in the labor market is an emergent factor in both economic survival and social change, indicative of evolving gender norms under duress.

A participant in a FGD with the authorities and stakeholders said: "Over the past decade in Fnaidek, significant changes have occurred, primarily attributed to the economic crisis affecting all of Lebanon. The rise in unemployment has led to heightened conflicts, particularly among the youth facing economic hardships."

Illicit activities, notably smuggling and trafficking, are underscored as both a source of conflict and an alternative economy. An interviewee describes this duality: "In the community, significant actors triggering tensions include mafias, smugglers, and politicians who have exploited the crisis for their

benefit." These activities are a response to systemic economic failures, offering both a lifeline and a catalyst for further instability.

International and local organizations, such as the UNDP, UNICEF, and the Red Cross, have become critical players in providing relief and fostering hope. They are credited with supporting the community through projects that alleviate some of the economic burdens, as stated by a local: "Some organizations facilitated employment opportunities for the unemployed, offering hope during a challenging period."

Women's organizations, like Zahret Al Ajyel, play a dual role in supporting women in personal crises and promoting their active involvement in community life. As highlighted by a respondent: "These organizations address the limited but impactful ways in which women contribute to conflict mitigation."

4) Dynamics

Economically, the village confronts significant challenges with narratives from community members highlighting that "Fnaidek's main income sources, military, and agriculture, suffered due to the economic crisis." This situation has exacerbated youth unemployment, creating a potential generational divide as young people endure greater economic hardships than their parents and older generations. This has led to a rise in theft, higher unemployment rates, and the emergence of drug dealers among the youth."

A municipal member said: "In the past year, the community faced severe economic challenges, especially impacting soldiers whose salaries, once considered sufficient, can now barely cover transportation costs. Fnaidek's main income sources, military, and agriculture, suffered due to the economic crisis. Some organizations offered support, such as equipment and a lake for irrigation, alleviating some struggles. The economic downturn also hindered young people seeking work in Beirut, compounded by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall situation created tension and increased depression within the community, with a notable unemployment rate of up to 75% among the youth."

Politically, Fnaidek's landscape is marked by historical affiliations, recently manifesting a shift toward the National Moderation in the 2022 election. This political reorientation is intertwined with local governance, predominantly influenced by family ties, which impact the distribution of resources and the administration of services, potentially exacerbating local grievances.

The gender perspective is particularly poignant in the village's shifting roles. According to a key informant, women, traditionally confined to domestic spaces, are now "compelled to seek employment to support their families." This economic impetus intersects with a social transformation, as "the economic crisis has led to a significant reduction in job opportunities", compelling women to navigate an increasingly public sphere, that challenges traditional gender norms and roles.

Key stakeholders, such as local governance figures, play a dual role in both preserving social order and inadvertently contributing to tension through inadequate governance. A community member describes that "immediate resolution mechanisms are in place, involving individuals familiar with those in conflict", indicating a reliance on traditional conflict-resolution methods.

International and non-governmental organizations represent another layer in the conflict dynamic, filling voids left by the government. Their activities provide a semblance of stability: "Organizations have made a positive impact. offering hope during a challenging period", according to one resident. This external support, however, is a double-edged sword, as it may foster dependency while also alleviating immediate economic pressures.

The increased visibility and involvement of women in the workforce and public life reflect a shift toward gender inclusivity, albeit born from necessity. As the interviews reveal, women's roles in Fnaidek are evolving: "Women roles are confined to agriculture. but [they are] now needing to seek employment."

The infusion of Syrian refugees adds another dimension, introducing both cultural diversity and strain on local resources. The refugee presence, as expressed in the interviews, is twofold: while it contributes to the "community's labor force", it also sharpens competition for resources, potentially fueling host-refugee tensions.

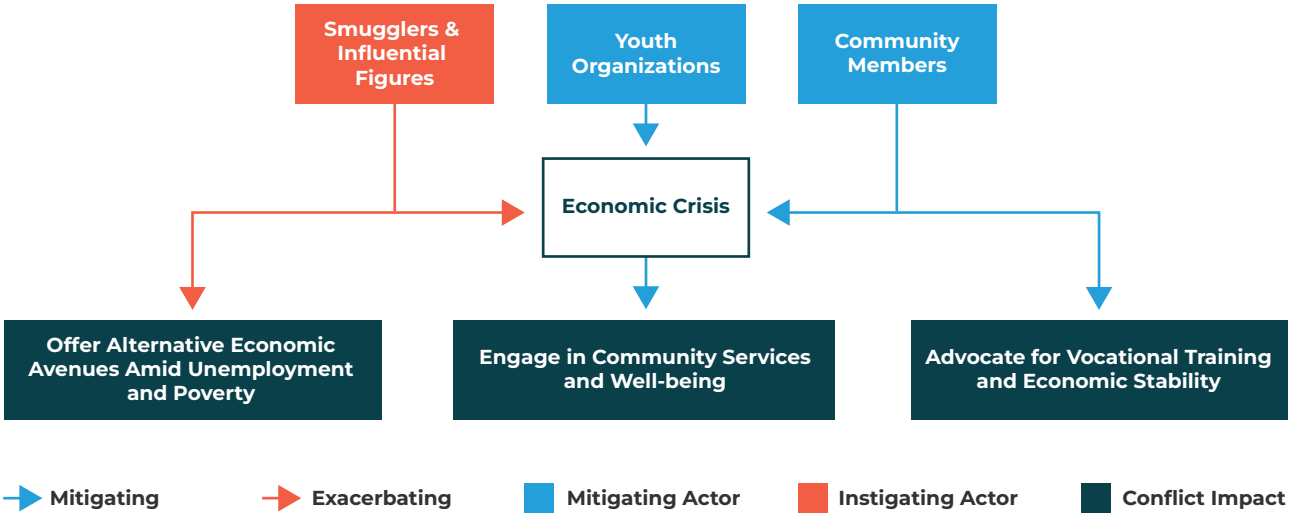

Diagram 2 Actors' contribution or mitigation toward the economic crisis in Fnaidek

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

In Fnaidek, peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms are deeply rooted in the community's traditional structures and are augmented by initiatives from both local leadership and international organizations. The local governance, notably the mayor and tribal leaders, have established immediate resolution mechanisms to address disputes before they escalate. As one community member recounts: "The mayor, having close ties with various tribes, plays a crucial role in preventing conflicts from escalating." This system leverages personal relationships and the respect for authority figures to mediate disputes, demonstrating an inherent capacity for peacebuilding that has reportedly resulted in "zero unresolved conflicts in the region."

Moreover, the UNDP-supported reconciliation committee represents a formal structure that incorporates various societal segments, including Sheikhs, municipality members, and union presidents, to facilitate collaborative conflict resolution. The committee's multidisciplinary nature indicates an institutional approach to peacebuilding, aiming to harness the collective strength of diverse community actors. "This committee, consisting of Sheikhs, municipality members, union presidents, and heads of organizations, represents a collaborative effort to address significant conflicts", according to a participant in the study.

These existing mechanisms could be further developed by incorporating a greater emphasis on gender sensitization and empowerment, given the shifting roles of women due to economic pressures. The inclusion of women's organizations in peacebuilding efforts, for example, could enhance the social fabric and broaden the scope of conflict resolution strategies. As noted in the interviews, "Women and similar vulnerable groups are most implicated by the different tensions and economic deterioration", suggesting a need for their active participation in peace processes. This implies a recognition of the unique challenges and contributions of women, indicating potential avenues for expanding and strengthening peacebuilding mechanisms in Fnaidek.

To build upon these mechanisms, Fnaidek could benefit from a more systematic integration of youth and women's perspectives in conflict resolution processes, recognizing their evolving societal roles and specific needs. Additionally, the enhancement of vocational training and employment opportunities as proactive measures against the economic root causes of conflict could prove instrumental.

6) Recommendations

- **Economic Empowerment through Vocational Training and Microfinance:** Firstly, economic empowerment through vocational training and microfinance schemes could address the immediate needs of unemployment and the shift in gender roles. Tailored programs for women and youth would ensure their participation in the workforce. So, "compelling women to enter the workforce" becomes a choice rather than a necessity. Additionally, facilitating access to credit for women-led agricultural initiatives could revitalize local traditions while incorporating modern practices for sustainable agriculture.

- **Education and Capacity Building for Long-term Development:** Secondly, education and capacity building emerge as crucial in addressing "the absence of effective government presence" and fostering long-term peace and development. Educational programs should not only aim to mitigate the "early marriages and decreased educational opportunities for girls" but also build civic awareness and participation, bridging the gap between the community and governance structures.

- **Social Cohesion and Peacebuilding Initiatives:** Social cohesion initiatives that foster inter-community and host-refugee relations are vital. Peacebuilding activities could include joint community projects that serve both Lebanese residents and Syrian refugees, reducing tensions over resources and "competition for limited employment opportunities."

3) Tikrit – Akkar

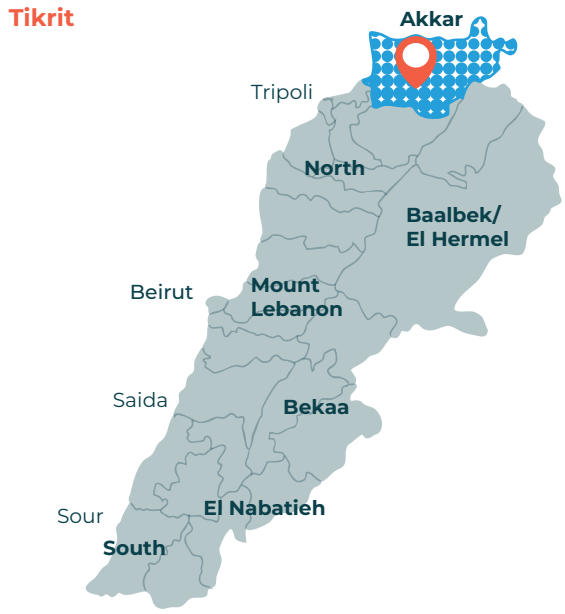

Figure 5 **Map of Lebanon, highlighting Tikrit - Akkar in red**

1) Community Profile

Tikrit, like much of Akkar, has a diverse population. It includes mostly Sunni Muslims and Greek Orthodox Christians as well as other minority groups.[46] A significant portion of Tikrit's population comprises young residents, contributing to generational dynamics and varying perspectives on social and political issues. Income disparities exist within Tikrit, with some areas being economically devastated, while the village is located in one of the most deprived regions in the country.[47] There is a relatively low number of registered Syrian refugees in Tikrit (444) compared to its population of more than 5,000 residents.[48]

Traditional values and customs play a significant role in shaping social norms and expectations. Social hierarchies based on religion and ethnicity can influence community interactions. For example, and as is the case in the rest of the country, community interactions are ordered by national

46. Tikrit, Akkar (n.d.). Detailed Pedia. https://www.detailedpedia.com/wiki-Tikrit,%20Akkar
47. Association of science and development (ASD) in Tikrit: From hardships to exemplary organization (n.d.). Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED). https://www.acted.org/en/association-of-science-and-development-asd-in-tikrit/
48. Syria refugee response: Lebanon - Akkar governorate - Distribution of registered Syrian refugees (2024). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). https://reliefweb.int/map/lebanon/syria-refugee-response-lebanon-akkar-governorate-distribution-registered-syrian-18

stratifications where Lebanese-Sunnis are positioned on a higher power status relative to Syrian-Sunni refugees in town. This is inclusive of gender stratification where Lebanese women hold a higher status than their Syrian counterparts. Tikrit has community-based organizations that foster social cohesion and provide support.

The town experiences diverse local governance structures and political leadership, often aligned with larger Lebanese political parties. Political affiliations in Tikrit are diverse, sometimes divided along sectarian lines, contributing to political tensions. Although most residents have been historically aligned with the Future Movement, in the 2022 Elections most voted for the Walid Baarini list, yet other lists received support such as that headed by Talal Al-Mara'abi.[49] Equitable representation in decision-making processes remains an issue. New political reformist groups have taken major activity in the town such as the Akkarouna alliance.

This milieu of economic struggles, political diversity, and deep-rooted traditional values sets the backdrop against which tensions and conflicts unfold in Tikrit. The economic crisis, compounded by poor governance and lack of job opportunities, particularly impacts the youth, driving them to seek futures abroad. Historical and ongoing tensions, whether related to economic disparities, political ideologies, or the integration of Syrian refugees, are exacerbated by the competition for scarce resources. Within this context, women, youth, and other vulnerable groups navigate a precarious existence, facing restricted access to healthcare, mobility, and opportunities for economic stability.

Efforts to address these tensions include initiatives aimed at creating a socially stable environment, such as the establishment of sports centers and waste management projects. Yet, securing funding for such endeavors remains a challenge, reflecting broader systemic issues of neglect and inadequate support for marginalized regions like Akkar. The dynamic interactions among various actors within the community—whether aimed at exacerbating or mitigating conflicts—underscore the intricate web of social, economic, and political factors at play.

2) Major Actors and Roles

Local and international organizations step in to fill the gaps left by political negligence. For instance, the involvement of UNICEF in "the restoration of a school and in providing it with solar energy" showcases an attempt to bolster educational infrastructure, reflecting a broader commitment to community support.

Grassroots movements highlight the power of community agency, with initiatives such as youth-led efforts which address environmental concerns, demonstrating a proactive stance toward solving local issues. These efforts embody the community's resilience, as they "collect funds from households, approximately 50,000 L.L. each, to clean up garbage."

Religious figures and groups, through their mediating roles, underscore the importance of spiritual leadership in conflict resolution. When groups like Dar El Efta are active in "mediating conflicts between villages" reveals the potential for religious leadership to contribute to peace and harmony.

Women's roles are critically examined, with the discourse highlighting their crucial impact on societal dynamics. "Women are not just the other half of society but the impactful force", according to a member of the municipality. This assertion stresses the need to recognize and leverage women's contributions toward societal peace and stability. Yet, field observations noted that men dominated public spaces, while women were rarely present in such settings.

Economic instability emerges as a pivotal issue affecting family dynamics and access to services, with a particularly acute impact on women, youth, and vulnerable groups. The strain of economic challenges is reflected in narratives of hardship and resilience, as community members navigate the complexities of providing for their families amidst escalating tensions. Observations from the field note low standards of housing quality, lack of waste disposal systems, and widespread street littering.

A participant in a FGD with the Lebanese community members in Tikrit said: "The challenges include widespread garbage, water shortages, and a bleak economic situation. The youth are compelled to seek opportunities abroad due to limited prospects at home. The blame for these issues is placed squarely on the politicians and the government... [citizens confront] difficulty in accessing employment opportunities, particularly in the army or teaching profession, and lament the low incomes that persist across various sectors, leaving many struggling to make ends meet."

49. Keuchkerian, K. (2022). Final results of the Lebanon elections 2022. The961. https://www.the961.com/final-results-lebanon-elections-2022/

Figure 6 Lack of waste disposal units or locations in Tikrit, Akkar, North Lebanon. *Photo credit: InfoPro/ Oxfam.*

The relationship between Lebanese nationals and Syrian refugees adds another layer to the community's challenges, marked by "economic competition, cultural clashes, and perceived injustices in aid distribution." These tensions highlight the nuanced interplay of hospitality, competition, and resentment, shaping the community's approach to integration and support for refugees.

3) Key Issues and Interests

The residents paint a picture of a governance system that has largely forsaken its duty, with political entities more focused on retaining power than addressing the needs of the people. This neglect is aptly reflected in expressions of discontent, as the community feels they are treated as "commodities" rather than as citizens with rights and needs. The sentiment that "the social situation is described as 'very bad'" underlines the profound impact of this neglect on the community's fabric.

A participant in a FGD with the Lebanese community said: "Internal conflicts revolve around authority, with fights over municipal elections and open positions in public schools."

The economic downturn emerges as a central theme, directly influencing the community's stability and exacerbating existing tensions. The intertwined issues of unemployment and resource scarcity are spotlighted as significant contributors to communal strife. A local authority's lament over the economic crisis and its role in heightening "unemployment and resource scarcity" emphasizes the economic underpinnings of the community's discord.

Through a gender lens, the narratives underscore particular vulnerabilities faced by women and marginalized groups. The Syrian refugees' accounts, detailing struggles with eviction and exploitation, exemplify the acute hardships encountered. According to a key informant, "instances where Syrian families have been pressured to leave their rented accommodations" underscore not only their economic precarity but also the gendered dimensions of vulnerability, highlighting the unique challenges women face in navigating a landscape shaped by conflict and scarcity.
Despite these challenges, the community's agency

A participant in a FGD with the Syrian community said: "Lebanese individuals express frustrations over Syrians accepting lower wages, as highlighted by the comparison of a Lebanese person charging $12 for a job while a Syrian might accept only $2."

is vividly demonstrated through grassroots initiatives. Efforts by youth groups to address environmental concerns signify a collective resolve to confront and mitigate systemic failures head-on. The act of "cleaning up garbage" through community contributions stands as a testament to the potential of local actions in fostering resilience and change.

4) Dynamics

At the heart of Tikrit's discord lie political disengagement and economic adversity. Political entities, focused on power retention, have led to a widespread sentiment of neglect within the community, succinctly captured by residents' assertions that "the social situation is described as 'very bad'." This political disengagement dovetails with economic challenges, where unemployment and resource scarcity not only fuel tensions but also exacerbate existing disparities. These factors collectively serve as potent drivers of conflict, undermining the social fabric and eroding trust in governance structures.

Gender disparities further complicate the landscape, with women and marginalized groups bearing the brunt of both economic and social vulnerabilities. The narratives from Syrian refugees, describing "instances where Syrian families have been pressured to leave their rented accommodations", highlight the dimensions of economic exploitation and displacement. These accounts underscore the intersectionality of gender, economic hardship, and social marginalization, illustrating how gender dynamics can amplify the impact of broader conflict drivers.

In the face of these challenges, community and grassroots responses emerge as vital connectors, offering avenues for conflict prevention and management. Grassroots initiatives, particularly those led by youth, demonstrate a significant community agency. Efforts to "clean up garbage" through community contributions reflect a collective will to tackle environmental concerns, acting as a connector by fostering communal solidarity and resilience amidst broader tensions

A participant in a FGD with the Syrian community said: "Economic disparities are evident in everyday life, with Syrians often able to afford goods and services more easily due to foreign support. This creates frustration among Lebanese residents who struggle to make ends meet amidst a deteriorating economic situation. Despite these tensions, the community also acknowledges the significant economic contribution of Syrians, particularly in sustaining local businesses. For example, in areas like Mashta Hassan, Syrian refugees have helped keep multiple supermarkets afloat, stimulating economic activity and providing essential goods to both Lebanese and Syrian residents."

The relationship between conflict drivers and connectors in Tikrit is characterized by a dynamic interplay where grassroots initiatives and community resilience seek to mitigate the impacts of political and economic strife. This interplay highlights the potential of community-led efforts in bridging divides and fostering peace, even as systemic challenges persist. The gender lens further reveals the critical role of women in these processes, not only as disproportionately affected parties but also as key actors in community mobilization and conflict resolution efforts.

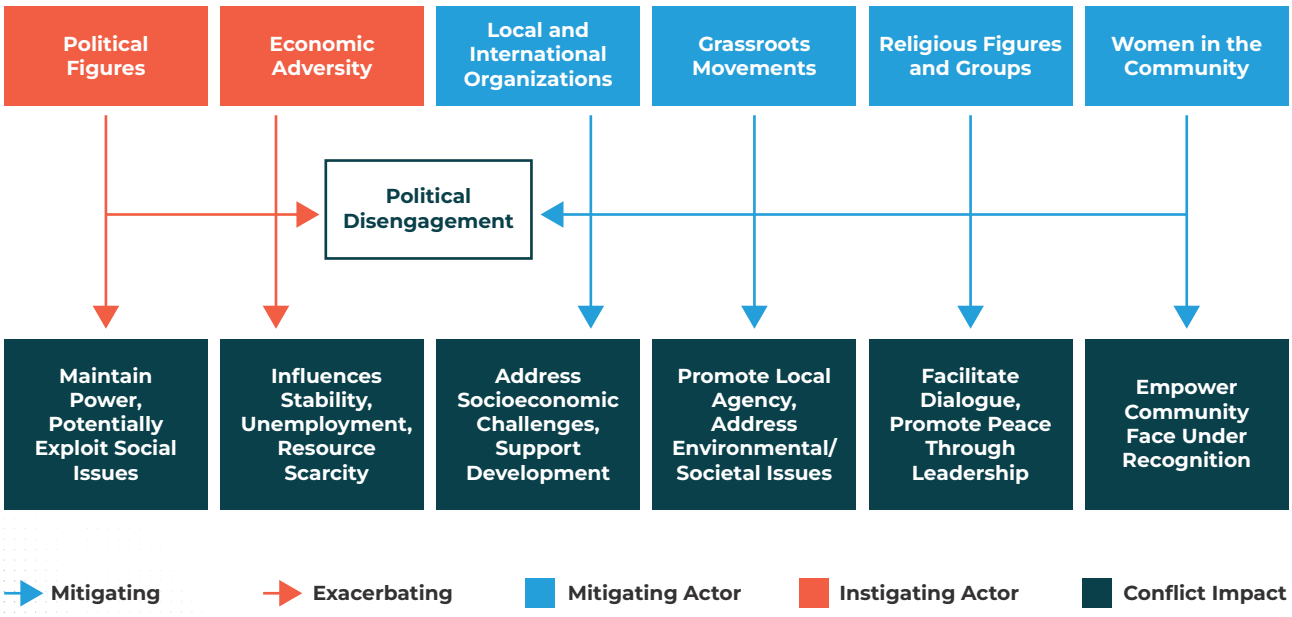

Diagram 3 Actors' contribution or mitigation efforts toward political disengagement in Tikrit

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

In Tikrit, peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms are deeply intertwined with the community's social fabric, drawing on both formal institutions and informal community practices. One prominent mechanism involves the engagement of local and religious leaders in mediating disputes and facilitating dialogue. Religious figures, representing both the moral and spiritual ethos of the community, play pivotal roles in conflict resolution by fostering communication and understanding among conflicting parties. This is evidenced in the community's reliance on religious figures who "help mediate conflicts between villages", which was noted by a member of the municipalities, showcasing a traditional yet effective method of grassroots diplomacy. The involvement of such figures leverages their respect and authority within the community, making them crucial actors in maintaining local peace.

Grassroots initiatives also stand out as a critical peacebuilding mechanism in Tikrit. These are driven by local youth and community groups who undertake projects aimed at environmental improvement and social cohesion. Such efforts not only address immediate community needs but also foster a sense of ownership and collective responsibility among residents. A notable example is the local youth's initiative to "clean up garbage" through community contributions, which not only improves the physical environment but also builds social bonds among participants. This approach embodies a proactive community engagement strategy that transforms potential sources of conflict into opportunities for collaboration and unity. This grassroots mobilization, as reflected in community actions, underscores the potential for expanding these initiatives into more structured peacebuilding activities.

However, while these mechanisms have their strengths, they also highlight areas ripe for further development. The current reliance on traditional and informal resolution strategies, while valuable, points to the need for more formalized and sustainable peacebuilding infrastructures. Enhancing these mechanisms could involve training programs that equip local leaders and community activists with advanced negotiation and mediation skills, thereby professionalizing and scaling their peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, establishing more formal partnerships between community groups and local authorities could ensure a more cohesive and integrated approach to conflict resolution. As suggested by community feedback, there is a significant opportunity to "spread social awareness and educate parents, students, and youths", which could be systematically structured into community education programs aimed at fostering a culture of peace and mutual respect.

6) Recommendations

- **Enhancing Political Engagement and Governance Transparency:** Firstly, enhancing political engagement and governance transparency stands paramount. Establishing mechanisms for increased community participation in decision-making processes, particularly for women and marginalized groups, can ensure more inclusive governance. Efforts should be directed toward creating platforms that amplify these voices in political arenas, thus recognizing their unique insights and contributions to community well-being.

- **Addressing Economic Adversity through Empowerment Initiatives:** Secondly, addressing economic adversity requires targeted interventions aimed at economic empowerment and resource accessibility. Initiatives that provide vocational training and entrepreneurship opportunities, especially for women, can mitigate the impact of unemployment and resource scarcity. Such programs should be coupled with access to microfinance and markets, empowering individuals to not only participate in but also drive the local economy.

- **Integrating Gender-Sensitive Approaches in Conflict Resolution:** Moreover, integrating a gender-sensitive approach into all stages of conflict resolution and peacebuilding is crucial. This entails recognizing the gendered dimensions of conflict and leveraging the roles of women not just as beneficiaries but as active participants in these processes. Programs focused on gender-awareness training, along with the establishment of safe spaces for dialogue, can facilitate understanding and cooperation across different community segments.

2. North Governorate

1) Population and Demographics

Tripoli is similar in demographic composition to Akkar. Literature converges in considering Tripoli as a diverse region with a **mix of ethnicities and religious groups.** The population includes **Sunni Muslims, Alawites, Christians** (mainly Maronites and Greek Orthodox), and smaller communities such as Kurds. The population has a relatively youthful demographic profile, with a significant proportion of young adults. Generational dynamics often play a role in social and political movements. There are significant **income disparities** in Tripoli, with wealthier neighborhoods contrasted by impoverished areas, contributing to social tensions.[50]

2) Social and Economic Dynamics

The region has a history of **sectarian tensions and conflicts,** notably between Sunni Muslims and Alawites. Historical grievances related to these conflicts may still influence current dynamics. The region has experienced varying governance structures over time, with power sometimes concentrated in the hands of influential families, which can create divisions. Notable families are Karami, Mikati, Safadi, and Kabbara who had major politicians leading governments or holding key political posts.[51]

Economic opportunities in Tripoli are limited, leading to high unemployment rates, especially among the youth. This economic disparity can be a source of frustration and conflict. Tripoli has a struggling industrial sector, particularly in the textiles and manufacturing industries, contributing to economic vulnerabilities. The region's economy is susceptible to external economic fluctuations and the political climate in Lebanon.

Cultural norms and traditions are important in Tripoli, with different communities maintaining their customs. There are social hierarchies based on religious and national identities, affecting community cohesion. Community organizations, often along sectarian lines, play a significant role in Tripoli's social fabric.

3) Governance

Local governance is influenced by political affiliations, with different factions vying for control. Tripoli has historically been a stronghold for Sunni political groups ¬most recently the Future Movement as well as other Islamist and Salafist organizations. Political divisions can lead to tensions.

Access to basic services like education and healthcare is uneven, with some areas facing infrastructure deficits. Infrastructure development varies across neighborhoods, leading to **disparities in living conditions.**

Disputes over land and access to resources like water are common, contributing to local conflicts. Recent tensions have arisen with neighboring regions over water rights at Lebanon's highest peak, the Black Peak. Disputes over these rights between various communities have the potential to escalate into nationwide conflicts, particularly when communities on both sides of the disputes are of different sectarian compositions, as was the case in the Black Peak incident ¬there was tension between Christian Maronites of Bcharri on one side and Sunni Muslims on the other. The tension began to take on a national context that forced the Maronite Patriarch and the Sunni Mufti to intervene in an attempt to diffuse tensions.[52] Hence, **competition for limited resources can exacerbate tensions** within the community and may even trigger national conflicts. The scarcity of resources, including jobs and housing, can also lead to tensions.[53]

4) Refugee Crisis

Originally welcomed to promote "Sunni solidarity" across borders,[54] the influx of Syrian refugees has since strained resources and intensified competition for jobs and services.[55] This has led to a friction between the host community and Syrian refugees, with varying perceptions: some view the refugees as a burden, while others see them as victims. External organizations and CSOs play a role

50. Lebanon North Akkar governorate's profile (2018). United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/lebanon/lebanon-north-akkar-governorates-profile-october-2018
51. The conflict context in Tripoli: Chronic neglect, increased poverty, & leadership crisis (2016). Lebanon Support. https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/ls-car-nov2016-tripoli_0.pdf
52. Houssari, N. (2023). Calls for calm in Lebanon as Bsharri killings raise fears of sectarian violence. Arab News. https://www.arabnews.com/node/2331536/middle-east
53. Conflict assessment report: Tripoli and Akkar, Lebanon (2013). Partners for Democratic Change International (PDCI) and Peace Labz. https://partnersbg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Lebanon-assesment-report-final.pdf
54. Lefèvre, R. (2014). The roots of crisis in Northern Lebanon. Carnegie Middle East Center. https://carnegie-mec.org/2014/04/15/roots-of-crisis-in-northern-lebanon-pub-55305
55. Massabni, W. (2020). Prejudice, job competition, and conflict: Syrian refugees and the host community in Tripoli, Lebanon. Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law (KPSRL). https://kpsrl.org/publication/prejudice-job-competition-and-conflict-syrian-refugees-and-host-community-in-tripoli-lebanon

in providing humanitarian aid and peace-building efforts. Some interventions have had mixed impacts on conflict dynamics—while some locals have responded positively, these efforts have often fueled tensions due to the perception that Syrian refugees are receiving exceeding benefits.

5) Role of the Media

Local media can amplify tensions or play a role in mitigating conflicts, depending on their affiliations. Negative media campaigns have largely focused on stereotyping the city as a conservative stronghold for radical Islamists. Misinformation and rumors can spread quickly, affecting community perceptions. National perception and widespread stereotyping of the city and its region as the hub of radicalism and Islamic fundamentalism add to the local frustration against the media.

1) Beddawi-Tripoli

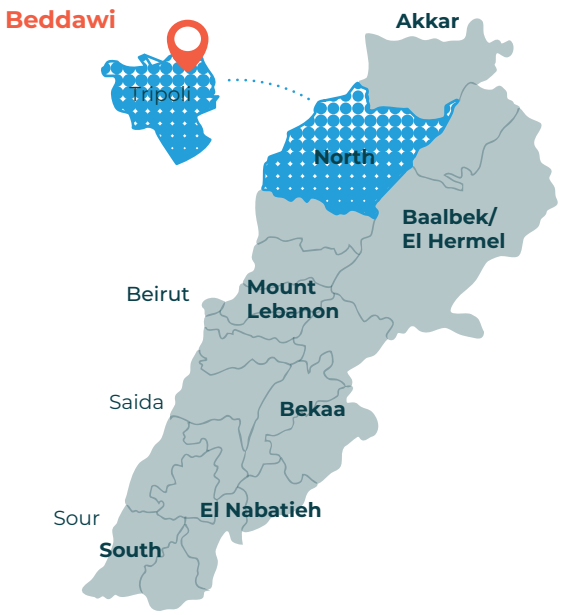

Figure 7 Map of Lebanon, highlighting Beddawi (Tripoli) - the North in red

1) Community Profile

Beddawi is a diverse town within the Tripoli region, with a mix of ethnicities and religious groups. The population is predominantly Sunni Muslim. The town has a youthful demographic profile, with a significant proportion of young adults. Beddawi hosts a major Palestinian camp that is very much infused into the social fabric of the town.[56][57]

Income disparities exist within Beddawi, but overall, the town is among the main poverty pockets of the country with widespread economic deprivation and marginalization, affecting mostly women and children.[58]

Beddawi, like the broader Tripoli region, has experienced historical sectarian tensions and conflicts, which may still influence current dynamics. Following clashes between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and radical Islamists in the nearby Nahr Al Bared Palestinian camp, the Beddawi area experienced significant tensions as many displaced refugees from Nahr Al Bared flooded the camp, leading to increased friction with the Lebanese military. Tense relations led to outbreaks of conflicts and checkpoints, particularly in the early years of the war in Syria, amid rising sectarian tensions. Over time, governance structures have evolved, with certain periods significantly influenced by local power brokers.[59]

Economic opportunities in Beddawi are limited, resulting in high unemployment rates, especially among the youth. The town has a struggling industrial sector, and economic vulnerabilities are heightened due to its dependence on external economic conditions and Lebanon's political instability.[60]

Beddawi values cultural norms and traditions, with different communities preserving their customs. Social hierarchies based on religious and ethnic identity can influence community cohesion. Community organizations, often organized along sectarian lines, play a significant role in Beddawi's social fabric, and religious leaders play prominent roles.[61]

Local governance in Beddawi is influenced by political affiliations, and different factions may compete for control (particularly factions affiliated with traditional March 8 or those of the Future Movement). The local representation of various groups in decision-making processes may be unequal, leading to potential tensions.

56. Beddawi refugee camp, Lebanon (2016). Interpal. https://www.interpal.org/20160321-beddawi-refugee-camp-lebanon/
57. Beddawi camp (n.d.). United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon/beddawi-camp
58. Conflict analysis and power dynamics - Lebanon Study (2020). Search for Common Ground (SfCG). https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2020_SFCG_Conflict_Analysis_Report.pdf
59. Conflict analysis – Tripoli (2022). Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR). https://coar-global.org/2022/01/14/conflict-analysis-tripoli/
60. The conflict context in Tripoli: Chronic neglect, increased poverty, & leadership crisis (2016). Lebanon Support. https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/ls-car-nov2016-tripoli_0.pdf
61. Conflict analysis and power dynamics - Lebanon Study (2020). Search for Common Ground (SfCG). https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2020_SFCG_Conflict_Analysis_Report.pdf

Beddawi's dynamics are influenced by its proximity to Tripoli and Syria and its historical ties to Palestinian refugee politics where many active armed Palestinian groups, divided by allegiance to the Syrian government, often compete for control. The presence of Syrian refugees has further strained resources and increased competition for jobs and services, impacting the local community. Additionally, Beddawi has long-standing economic ties and a history of smuggling across the Syrian border, which have played a significant role in shaping its economy and social landscape. These activities have created a complex web of economic dependencies and informal networks that further complicate the region's socio-economic challenges.

Land ownership disputes and resource scarcity are potential triggers for conflicts within Beddawi. Palestinian-Lebanese relations benefit from a common sectarian affiliation and cross-communal political support for Palestinian rights. However, perceptions of fairness in resource distribution and governance can impact such inter-communal relations. These relations may also be strained by the growing number of Syrian refugees within and around the area of Beddawi.

2) Major Actors and Roles

At the heart of the escalating tensions lie criminal networks and political leaders, exploiting the vulnerabilities of a justice system marked by leniency and corruption. Criminal networks engaged in a variety of activities inside and across the Lebanese borders may cause a major breakout of tensions, as was the case in the killing of Pascal Suleiman, a member of the Christian Lebanese Forces who was abducted by a group of car hijackers and ultimately killed, stirring a major violent anti-Syrian campaign.[62] A participant poignantly noted: "Criminals thrive due to a lenient justice system, engaging in repeated offenses with minimal consequences", shedding light on a cycle of impunity that emboldens criminal behavior and undermines the fabric of social stability. This narrative is further darkened by tales of corruption, where individuals "enter jail with basic phones and exit with smartphones", a metaphor for the deep-rooted corruption that plagues the system.

A participant in a FGD with the community members said: "In the Beddawi region, conflicts among youths lack formal organization, with no clear political opposition between groups. Armed groups, often constituted by youth, contribute to safety concerns."

Amidst this landscape of disorder, the absence of accountability and effective government intervention casts a long shadow, allowing behaviors that fuel tensions to go unchecked. However, it's within this shadow that glimmers of hope emerge, illuminated by the efforts of associations and organizations dedicated to bridging divides and fostering trust. Their role in the community, as highlighted by one resident, transcends mere intervention, offering guidance and support that cultivates a sense of belonging and understanding among residents.

The narrative takes a nuanced turn as it weaves through the experiences of the Palestinian community, where sports and social groups have risen as beacons of support during the Syrian displacement crisis. Through livelihood programs and initiatives aimed at alleviating stress and social problems, these groups have demonstrated the transformative power of community solidarity in the face of adversity.

Yet, the tapestry of Beddawi's social dynamics is not without its frayed edges, as seen in the unorganized youth conflicts. Those were described by an NGO activist as "conflicts that often arise within families vying for control", highlighting a microcosm of the broader strife that afflicts the community. These conflicts, devoid of formal organization or clear political opposition, are further complicated by intra-communal tensions, painting a complex picture of the challenges that lie ahead.

3) Key Issues and Interests

The discussions consistently highlight economic instability and unemployment as pivotal issues driving conflict within the community. The Lebanese community, authorities, stakeholders, and the Palestinian actors alike identify economic hardship as a fundamental root cause of tensions. A participant articulates: "The main causes of conflicts and tensions in the community are identified as unemployment", pointing to the dire consequences of joblessness on social cohesion and stability. Housing and infrastructure conditions are of extremely low standards, as observed in the field.

62. Atallah, N. M. (2024). Attacks against Syrians in Lebanon surge after killing of Christian party official. The National News. https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2024/04/12/syrians-lebanon-attacks-lebanese-forces-pascal-sleiman/

Figure 8 Poor infrastructure conditions in the Beddawi camp, North Lebanon. *Photo credit: InfoPro/Oxfam.*

This sentiment is echoed in various interviews where financial stability is emphasized. "The most significant cause of conflicts and tensions in the community is the economic state", according to a participant. The emphasis on economic conditions underscores a universal recognition of the need for financial security and employment opportunities as foundations for peace and harmony within the community.

A participant in a FGD with the Palestinian community said: "Graduates struggle to secure jobs due to discriminatory laws that restrict employment opportunities based on Palestinian identity. This exclusionary practice perpetuates economic marginalization and exacerbates tensions within the community."

Palestinians in Lebanon are only permitted to work in certain occupations according to Lebanese laws, further limiting their economic opportunities and contributing to their marginalized status.

The influence of national and family/clan affiliations emerges as a significant theme, particularly in discussions about the Palestinian community and among stakeholders. The nature of the area, characterized by family affiliations, is cited as contributing significantly to conflicts and tensions, with preferential treatment and competition over resources being intertwined with these affiliations.[63]

Ineffective governance and leadership are frequently cited as exacerbating existing challenges, leading to increased competition over scarce resources and inadequate infrastructure. One participant discussing the Palestinian community's perspective said: "There is significant unrest stemming from unlawful competition. Control over resources emerged as another major source of tension." This underscores the critical need for effective oversight and equitable distribution of resources to mitigate conflict.

Moreover, another informant's insights into the lack of basic services highlight the gravity of infrastructure challenges: "Limited resources, such as an electricity line or water supply, lead to competition among residents, resulting in disputes over access to these services." These observations point to the tangible impact of governance failures on daily life and the potential for these issues to fuel tensions.

4) Dynamics: Conflict and Lack of Security

The Lebanese community's feedback encapsulates the grim reality of efforts to mitigate protracted tensions: "Efforts to reduce or mitigate tensions within the community have been largely ineffective, with no discernible instrumental figures or initiatives identified", according to a participant in the study. This sentiment is mirrored in the description of the pervasive insecurity that plagues the community, particularly at night: "Residents are confined to their homes after dark, fearing potential attacks or shootings in the streets", according to another participant in the study.

A participant in a FGD with the Lebanese community members said: "Concerning the Beddawi region, its extensive history is marked by conflicts rooted in its geographic location and the changes it underwent. Recognized as an area of immigrants since the arrival of the first wave of Palestinians in 1948, these demographic shifts have been a consistent source of tension."

63. Clashes between two families in Beddawi: one dead and one injured. (2024). L'Orient-Le Jour. https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1371796/clashes-between-two-families-in-beddawi-one-dead-and-one-injured.html

The discussion within the Palestinian community, on the other hand, sheds light on the cyclical nature of conflict and mediation. One participant said: "The same actors responsible for creating conflicts often play a role in mitigating them." This observation highlights the complexity of conflict dynamics, further emphasized by the parallel drawn between corruption in the camps and the Lebanese government. Authority in the camp includes the Joint Security Forces which was established in 2018 as well as Popular Committees and Palestinian Factions.[64] Yet, other informal militant groups may be active in and around the camp, including in previous years the violent Islamist group Fath Al-Islam.[65]

From the perspective of municipal authorities and stakeholders, the challenges of volunteer work and civil society initiatives are acknowledged. Despite acknowledging the willingness of people to volunteer, one informant highlighted: "The challenge lies in accessing funding and in the presence of competing interests in allocating resources". This testimony underscores the systemic obstacles faced by those endeavoring to bridge divides and foster peace.

A participant in a FGD with the Palestinian community said: "The current relationships within Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon reflect a multifaceted dynamic shaped by both internal solidarity and external challenges. Despite these challenges, Palestinian refugees actively participate in broader societal events and initiatives to challenge stereotypes and advocate for recognition and inclusion."

Women's roles within this complex social fabric are recognized but constrained. One participant said: "Overall, there is acceptance of women's roles in Beddawi, although constraints persist." The narrative acknowledges the need for societal evolution to fully embrace the changing roles of women, highlighting the socio-economic barriers that hinder their empowerment and active participation in conflict resolution processes.

The analysis of winners and losers in specific conflict contexts reveals a stark dichotomy, with "bad" individuals benefiting from criminal activities, while the "good" people suffer. This is succinctly expressed: "The tensions and conflicts primarily benefit the 'bad' individuals engaged in criminal activities, while the 'good' people, including women, youths, and vulnerable groups, suffer the consequences", according to one participant.

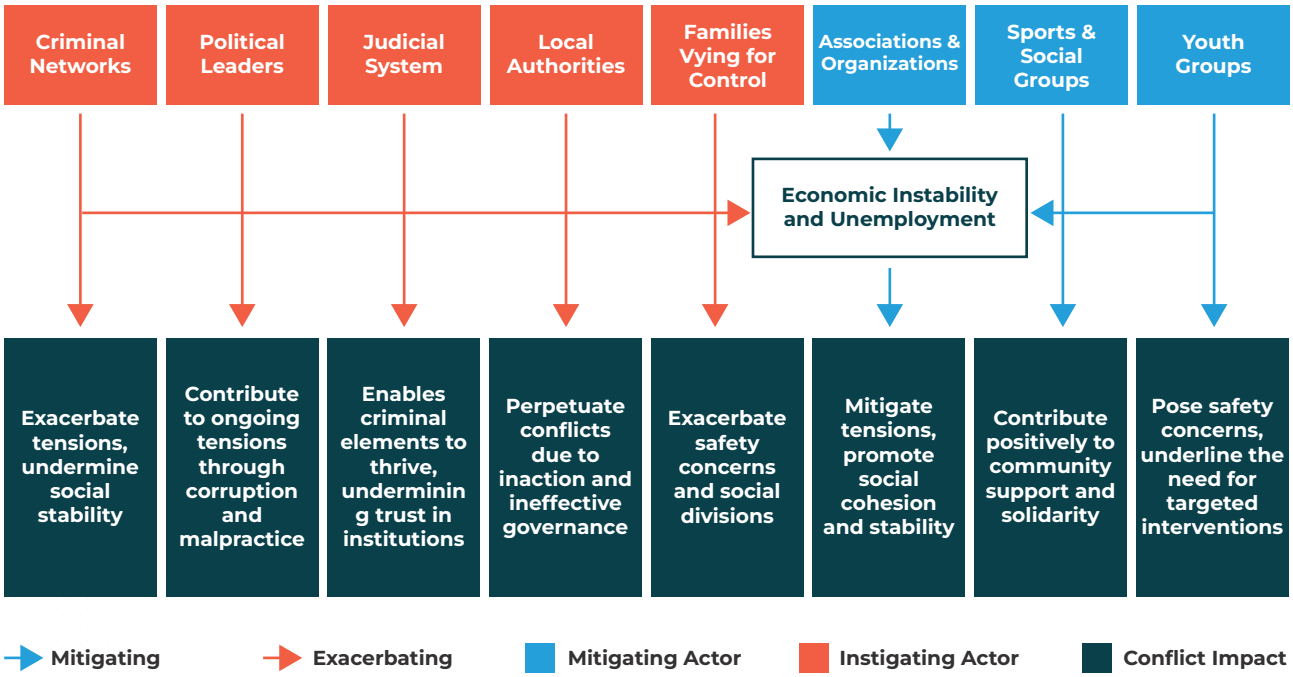

Diagram 4 Actors' contribution or mitigation toward economic instability and unemployment in Beddawi

64. Beddawi camp. (n.d.). United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon/beddawi-camp
65. Fatah al-Islam commander captured. (2007). Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2007/10/1/fatah-al-islam-commander-captured

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

In Beddawi, the mechanisms for peacebuilding and conflict resolution are distinctly manifested within the Palestinian and Lebanese communities, each shaped by their unique social dynamics and historical contexts. Within the Palestinian community, local NGOs and civil society organizations play a pivotal role in mediating conflicts. These groups facilitate community-based dialogues that aim to address and mitigate tensions, engaging various segments of the community in constructive discussions. The situation highlights a unique aspect of the Palestinian approach, where the lines between conflict instigators and peacemakers are often blurred, reflecting a complex web of social relations.

Conversely, the Lebanese community in Beddawi tends to rely more heavily on informal mediation by respected community elders and local leaders. These figures use their standing and influence to de-escalate potential conflicts, leveraging traditional respect and authority structures. This method is deeply rooted in the Lebanese social fabric and is particularly effective in resolving disputes that are personal or familial in nature. However, the effectiveness of these traditional mechanisms can vary, as expressed by a community member: “It is often unclear who the winners or losers are, as this struggle tends to unfold randomly.”

To enhance these existing mechanisms, there is a clear opportunity to bolster the structural and organizational capacities of local peace initiatives, particularly by bridging efforts between the Palestinian and Lebanese communities. Strengthening support for NGOs and community groups engaged in peacebuilding could provide a more stable foundation for these initiatives. Integrating modern conflict resolution techniques with traditional methods could also offer a more effective approach to handling disputes. Further, promoting the involvement of women and youth in peace processes is essential for fostering inclusive and sustainable conflict resolution. As noted in discussions, the role of women is particularly pivotal: “Overall, there is acceptance of women’s roles in Beddawi, although acknowledged constraints persist.”

6) Recommendations

- **Enhancing Community Security and Safety:** Firstly, enhancing the security and safety of the community, particularly for women and vulnerable groups, is paramount. This involves not only physical measures to protect against violence and crime but also legal and social frameworks that empower women, protect their rights, and ensure their voices are heard in spaces of decision-making and conflict resolution. Investment in community policing, alongside training programs focused on gender sensitivity and anti-corruption, could rebuild trust in security institutions.

- **Fostering Inclusive Dialogue and Community Engagement:** Fostering inclusive dialogue and community engagement processes can heal divisions and build a shared vision for the future. This involves establishing platforms where all community members, regardless of gender, age, or social status, can participate in conversations about peacebuilding and development priorities, contribute to decision-making, and hold authorities accountable.

2) Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh – Tripoli

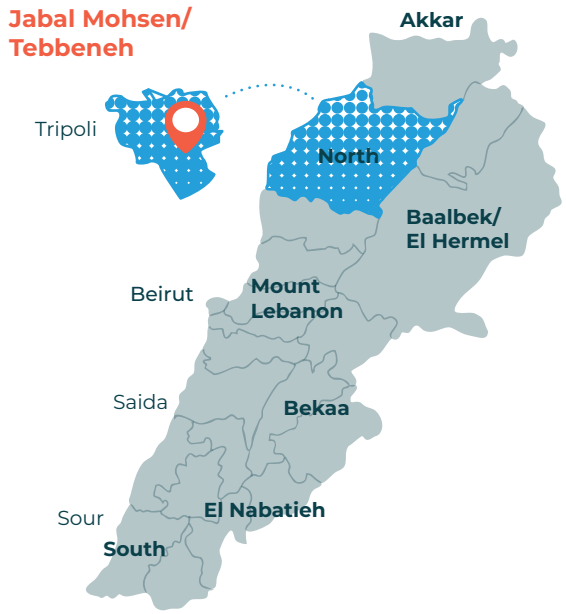

Figure 9 Map of Lebanon, highlighting Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh (Tripoli) - the North in red

1) Community Profile

Jabal Mohsen and Bab El Tebbeneh are made up of a predominantly Alawite population in Jabal Mohsen and a Sunni majority in Tebbeneh. This demographic divide has historically contributed to tensions. The town has a youthful population, with generational differences influencing social and political dynamics. Income disparities are notable within and between neighborhoods, contributing to inter-community tensions.[66]

Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh has experienced significant sectarian conflicts, particularly between the Alawite and Sunni communities. These historical grievances continue to influence present-day dynamics.[67] Governance structures in both areas have often been influenced by powerful local families like the Eid family, as well as Tripolian influencers such as the Kabbara family, and political figures like Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Member of Parliament Ashraf Rifi, further deepening divisions.

Employment opportunities are limited in Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh, leading to high youth unemployment rates. Economic disparities between the two neighborhoods contribute to social tensions. Even though both districts are poor, the Tebbeneh district is much more economically devastated. Such disparities between both neighborhoods can often serve as a trigger for sectarian tensions.[68] The industrial sector in the town has faced challenges, affecting livelihoods. Economic vulnerabilities are compounded by external economic fluctuations and Lebanon's political instability.[69] The unemployment rate in the neighborhoods recently reached 60% among working age groups and 70% among the youth. Most of the enterprises in Jabal Mohsen comprise food and grocery stores, and—to a lesser extent—carpentry and tailoring workshops.[70] The lack of jobs and economic prospects encouraged the majority of illicit activities, such as trafficking and cross-border smuggling.

Cultural norms and traditions are significant in Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh, with distinct identities in each neighborhood. These identities often contribute to social hierarchies and divisions. Social networks and community organizations often align along sectarian lines, undermining social cohesion.[71]

Local governance in Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh is influenced by sectarian and political affiliations, with different factions vying for control.[72] The pro-Syrian regime and pre-dominantly Alawite Arab Democratic Party (ADP) claims control over the Jabal Mohsen neighborhood, while various Sunni and anti-Syrian regime factions, backed by

66. The conflict context in Tripoli: Chronic neglect, increased poverty, & leadership crisis (2016). Lebanon Support. https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/ls-car-nov2016-tripoli_0.pdf
67. Jaiswal, S. (2023). Bab al-Tabbaneh–Jabal Mohsen conflict. Alchetron. https://alchetron.com/Bab-al-Tabbaneh%E2%80%93Jabal-Mohsen-conflict
68. Conflict Analysis – Tripoli (2022). Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR). https://coar-global.org/2022/01/14/conflict-analysis-tripoli/
69. Jabal Mohsen Neighbourhood Profile: Tripoli, Lebanon. (2018). United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Retrieved from ReliefWeb: https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/jabal-mohsen-neighbourhood-profile-tripoli-lebanon-december-2018
70. Ibid
71. Williams, A. (2019). Micro-level motivations of combatants in inter-communal conflicts: A look into the case of Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tabbaneh. Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI). https://www.ibei.org/ibei-student-paper-51_240404.pdf
72. Lebanon: Political leadership confronted by Salafist ideology (2017). Observatoire du Monde Arabo-musulman et du Sahel and Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique. https://www.frstrategie.org/sites/default/files/documents/programmes/observatoire-du-monde-arabo-musulman-et-du-sahel/publications/en/13.pdf

different political figures including Ashraf Al-Rifi, claim influence in the Tebbeneh neighborhood.[73] Political divisions can lead to tensions, and representation in decision-making processes may not be equitable. Affiliates of Al-Rifi, Hariri, and Mikati as well as the various Islamist Salafist groups and families may often compete over influence and turfs, hence creating intra-communal tensions.[74]

Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh's proximity to Syria and historical ties to Syrian politics can influence its dynamics by dividing the community between supporters and opponents of the Syrian government. The presence of Syrian refugees has strained local resources and intensified competition for jobs and services. Regional tensions and conflicts can spill over into those neighborhoods, affecting stability.

Monitoring human rights issues is essential, given past violations. This is particularly relevant to the question of the Lebanese Army's detention of so-called "Islamists" from Tripoli and surrounding areas, including Tebbeneh, where a large number have been detained for more than 20 years without court due process. This situation has significantly heightened feelings of deprivation among many youths in the area, as the law appears to be applied unequally, particularly affecting non-Sunni sectarian groups.[75] Hence, the unequal application of law enforcement and judicial systems can play an important factor in diffusing conflict triggers

2) Major Actors and Roles

Gulf countries are perceived by some, mostly in Jabel Mohsen, as external beneficiaries of Lebanon's turmoil, with one participant noting: "Honestly, as long as Lebanon is at war, the Gulf countries are the ones gaining the most out of it." Such perceptions, primarily held by Alawite residents, reflect their fear of being a sectarian minority potentially overpowered by the neighboring Sunni community in Bab El Tebbeneh. This fear is fueled by widespread assumptions that Sunni-majority Gulf states are supporting Sunnis in Lebanon against the Shia. The fragmentation of power within the community, however, is evident in the transition from being supporters of dominant political groups to a plethora of smaller factions, each led by distinct individuals. A participant describes this evolution: "We once had a prominent actor here, commonly referred to as the 'Senegal party' by many, but later on, numerous smaller groups emerged, each under the leadership of a different individual." Photos and political posters of different political leaders are observed throughout the different neighborhoods.

A community member said: "Our society is divided into two segments based on religion—Alawi and Sunni. Alawis predominantly align with loyalty to the Syrian president, while Sunnis exhibit varied loyalties. This religious division has persisted for the past 40 years, contributing to ongoing conflicts."

Political manipulation and economic incentives drive individuals, particularly men grappling with unemployment or financial hardship, into the throes of conflict. One participant in the study revealed: "The conflicts were orchestrated by political parties who, though not directly involved, manipulated public sentiment by poisoning the well. They instilled violent thoughts in people's minds, providing weapons and money to incite them to attack each other."

Business owners and former leaders are implicated in perpetuating aggressive behaviors and maintaining influence over community dynamics. "Individuals who infringe upon the rights of others are prevalent in the community. Business owners have adopted aggressive behavior and lack patience", according to a key informant. Such a perception is a reflection of a growing gap between members of the community and business owners that can, at the same time, implicate economic activities and undermine social relations.

A participant in a FGD with the Lebanese community said: "... Some collect information at the community's expense without effectively aiding those in need. Hospitalization and medication are identified as critical challenges, with the minimum cost of surgery being prohibitively high, and employees struggling to receive support. For example, private hospitals are claiming financial struggles while expanding their facilities, and specific funding for cancer medication requires intermediaries."

73. The conflict context in Tripoli: Chronic neglect, increased poverty, & leadership crisis (2016). Lebanon Support. https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/ls-car-nov2016-tripoli_0.pdf
74. Rival families exchange gunfire in Tripoli. (2022). Wael Taleb. L'Orient-Le Jour. https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1295790/rival-families-exchange-gunfire-in-tripoli.html
75. Justice for everyone? Arbitrary detention and torture of Islamists in Lebanon. (2016). Camille Lons. Civil Society Knowledge Center & Center for Social Sciences Research and Action. Retrieved from https://civilsociety-centre.org/content/justice-everyone-arbitrary-detention-and-torture-islamists-lebanon

The role of traffickers and politically connected figures in shaping the community's socio-political landscape is critical, with one participant pointing out: "Most prominent actors are the traffickers and the politicians linked to them. Jabal Mohsen is a famous neighborhood for activism."

Grassroots efforts, led by civil society and local NGOs, stand out in their crucial roles in conflict resolution and community rebuilding. "The conflicts were initiated by political parties, but it was the civil society, including local NGOs like UTOPIA and others, that played a crucial role in bringing an end to them", according to a key informant, demonstrating the power of community engagement in peacebuilding processes. This testimony is also reflected in the various civil society interventions, such as those of MARCH bringing women from across the neighborhood to work together.

Women's and youth organizations advocate for economic support and sustainable employment opportunities,[76] recognizing the pivotal roles these demographics play in ensuring community stability amid crises. A participant said: "Participants provide insights into the struggles faced by women. Women's organizations advocate for economic support", highlighting the gendered dimensions of the economic crisis and the advocacy for empowerment.

3) Key Issues and Interests

At the heart of the community's unrest lies a deep-seated economic crisis, vividly captured in the consensus that "the economic crisis is a major source of tension." This issue is intricately linked with rampant unemployment, where the stark observation emerges that "the primary cause of tension is unemployment, particularly affecting the idle youth." The absence of a cohesive governmental framework and strategic planning exacerbates these issues, leading to a scenario where short-term fixes are sought in the absence of long-term vision, such as short-term and informal employment. A striking commentary on governance, or the lack thereof, comes to light as participants note the "absence of a government and a coherent plan" alongside the critical view that "there is a lack of planning in Lebanon compared to other countries." Field observations attest to widespread negligence of public services and deteriorating housing and street conditions in the neighborhood.

Figure 10 Poor housing conditions in overpopulated Tebbeneh, North Lebanon. *Photo credit: InfoPro/Oxfam.*

Political dynamics are underscored as a pivotal element shaping the conflict landscape. The transition from a religiously mixed community to one entangled in political and sectarian conflict post-1975 is remarked upon, with insights that "the issue is mainly political and there is no conflict happening here that doesn't have a political nature at its core." This is a vivid illustration of the transformation catalyzed by external influences, where "Yasser Arafat had an impact on the Sunnis, while the Syrians influenced the Alawis", described by a key informant as being of past practices but maintained by different external players.

Economic strife and political exploitation merge as participants lament the manipulation of sectarian divides by political entities aiming to cement their power. The observation that "the basic elements that strengthened the conflicts were economic difficulties and the intentional promotion of bias toward specific sectarian groups" illustrates how economic vulnerabilities are weaponized for political gain. This manipulation fosters a dependency on political parties for resources, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and conflict to maintain electoral control.

76. Haydar, A. (2024). Women-led peacebuilding creates bridges across rival Tripoli neighborhoods. L'Orient-Le Jour. Retrieved from https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1370757/women-led-peacebuilding-creates-bridges-across-rival-tripoli-neighborhoods.html

A community member said: "... conflicts frequently arise between the two regions, Bab El Tebbeneh and Jabal Mohsen, primarily due to economic struggles and poverty in these areas. Poverty leads to a lack of education, as parents often do not enroll their children in schools. This ignorance contributes to a cycle of conflict, and my center, located amid these tensions, has experienced armed attacks... The pervasive poverty in these regions results in a high level of uneducated youth who are prone to engaging in bad habits such as drug abuse."

Unemployment, particularly among youth, is spotlighted as both a symptom and catalyst of the prevailing tensions. Initiatives emphasizing "the importance of education and job opportunities" are advocated as critical for diverting the youth from the path of conflict, toward productive societal engagement.

The narrative also touches on the strain between Syrian refugees and Lebanese citizens, a contention fueled by job competition and service shortages. This tension, coupled with "increasing crime rates, including robberies and drug abuse", paints a picture of a community at a tipping point, where "the competition between Syrian refugees and Lebanese for job opportunities" exacerbates an already volatile environment.

Amidst these challenges, women's experiences of conflict emerge as particularly acute, revealing a deeper layer of gender disparity. A key informant observed that "in Tripoli, women face more suppression than men and are disproportionately affected by conflicts", which underscores the gendered dimensions of the crisis, although the specific impacts on the LGBTQ+ community remain less understood within this context. The implication of violent conflicts on women is the same as elsewhere, where they become increasingly confined to domestic roles while being stripped of legal, social, or physical protection.

4) Dynamics

The nuanced dynamics of conflict and tension in Jabal Mohsen-Tebbeneh are intricately linked to the socioeconomic realities of its inhabitants, with a pronounced influence of gender roles on the escalation and management of these tensions. This is particularly the case as men become the sole decision-makers in deciding conflict and utilizing violence as a means to settle disputes, a matter that can easily be extended to domestic behaviors. The collected interviews shed light on a community highly susceptible to external influences, particularly from political figures who exploit economic vulnerabilities to mobilize individuals into conflict. This susceptibility underscores a critical vulnerability. One participant said: "People can easily be rallied into conflicts based on the whims of big politicians. They are susceptible to manipulation and control."
Addressing the economic and financial precarity that underpins much of the community's strife, interventions have prioritized economic empowerment, particularly through skill-based education tailored to women, youth, and the most vulnerable. The rationale behind this approach is clear: "The root cause of the conflicts was primarily the poor economic and financial status of the people." By offering practical skills and hence, avenues for income generation, these programs aim to dismantle one of the primary drivers of conflict.

Collaboration with local authorities and understanding the unique needs of different community segments are highlighted as essential for effective conflict prevention and management. Engaging with local committees allows for a nuanced understanding of community needs: "Organizations aiming to operate effectively can collaborate with municipalities. By obtaining input from these committees, a support plan can be devised and implemented in the field", according to a member of the municipality.

Yet, the interviews reveal a grim picture of vested interests working to maintain a status quo that favors illegal activities over law and order, thereby perpetuating conflict and hindering peace efforts. "All conflict actors have common interests that are to keep Tripoli and the entire North away from the rule of law and government jurisdiction, to maintain illegal activities", according to a participant.

A member of the municipality said: "In Tripoli, I've witnessed various conflicts, notably the clashes between the Tabani region and Jabal Mohsen. These conflicts, rooted in political differences and with a hint of sectarianism, persisted for a considerable time, with the last fights occurring in 2015. The aftermath has left these areas vulnerable, facing stigma and a lack of assistance and services."

In the face of these challenges, the role of NGOs and other organizations in empowering the community stands out as a beacon of hope. Through awareness and skill-building initiatives, these entities work against the tide of conflict by providing alternatives to engagement in destructive activities. "The political parties are the losers in this scenario, while other organizations and NGOs supporting people and opposing conflicts emerge as winners", according to a participant.

Women's increasing involvement in both local and family decision-making marks a significant shift toward empowerment, albeit within the constraints of a patriarchal society. This empowerment, however, does not extend to all, as "women, while still facing limitations in decision-making, have seen an increased role at the local and family levels", according to a participant.

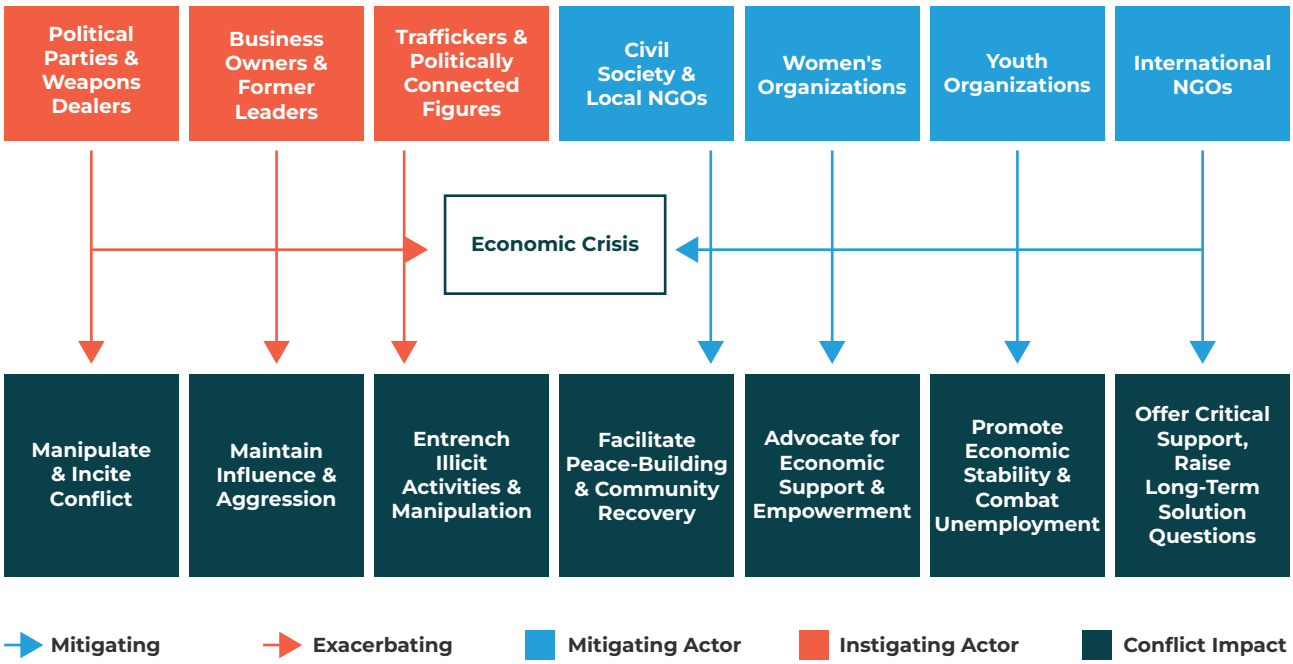

Diagram 5 Actors' contribution or mitigation toward the economic crisis in Jabal Mohsen – Tebbeneh

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

In Jabal Mohsen-Tebbeneh, a range of peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms are being employed, aiming to address both the symptoms and root causes of local tensions. One such mechanism is the targeted vocational training and education program by Ruwwad Al Tanmeya, aimed at empowering specific groups within the community, notably women, youth, and the vulnerable. These programs are designed to provide practical skills that can lead to employment opportunities, thus reducing economic insecurity which is a significant driver of conflict. A participant highlighted the effectiveness of these initiatives, stating: "At our center, the focus has been on specific groups like women, youth, and the most vulnerable. The goal is to provide these individuals with practical experience, enabling them to generate income for themselves and their families." This strategy not only combats unemployment and poverty but also fosters a sense of agency among participants, contributing to community resilience.

Another key mechanism involves collaboration with local governance structures, such as municipalities, the Lebanese Army, and local committees to ensure that interventions are tailored to the specific needs and dynamics of the area. One of the projects is being implemented by MARCH to install solar lighting in the neighborhood through collaborative activities. By engaging with these local entities, organizations can implement support plans that are both contextually relevant and broadly supported within the community. This approach is underscored by the relationship between local NGOs and authorities which facilitate effective peacebuilding interventions. For example, one respondent noted: "Organizations aiming to operate effectively can collaborate with municipalities. By obtaining input from these committees, a support plan can be devised and implemented in the field." This collaboration not only enhances the effectiveness of interventions but also promotes a participatory approach to conflict resolution, where community members feel their voices are heard and valued.

To further build on these existing mechanisms, there is a need to enhance the inclusivity and reach of these programs. Despite the success of vocational training and local collaborations, there are still segments of the population, such as the elderly and disabled, who remain marginalized in peacebuilding efforts. Expanding these programs to include all community members, regardless of age, disability, or social status, would ensure a more comprehensive approach to

peacebuilding. Additionally, strengthening mechanisms for accountability and transparency in local governance can help mitigate the influence of external political actors who might exploit economic vulnerabilities for personal gain. As one community member pointed out: "All conflict actors have common interests which is to keep Tripoli and the North away from the rule of law and government jurisdiction, in order to maintain illegal activities."

6) Recommendations

- **Engaging Youth in Constructive Ways:** Simultaneously, engaging youth in constructive and meaningful ways presents a crucial avenue for change. The disillusionment and idleness that often lead young people toward conflict can be countered with education, vocational training, and civic engagement opportunities. As one interviewee noted, the focus on education through skill-based courses reflects a strategic approach to diverting youth from the allure of conflict into the promise of a productive and fulfilling future. This engagement must be inclusive, offering pathways for both young men and women, and sensitive to the diverse needs and aspirations within this group.

- **Building Local Collaboration for Effective Interventions:** Building upon the local fabric of community life, to foster collaboration between organizations, local authorities, and the community itself, is essential. The interviews underscore the value of understanding and working within the local context, where local committees and municipalities play a critical role. Such collaboration can ensure that interventions are not only relevant but embraced by the community, thereby enhancing their effectiveness and sustainability. This collaborative approach can also serve to bridge the divides that external political forces exploit, reinforcing a sense of community identity and shared purpose.

- **Improving Economic Conditions to Address Conflict Foundations:** Addressing the economic foundations of conflict requires a concerted effort to improve the overall economic conditions of the town. This entails not just individual skill-building but also broader initiatives aimed at creating jobs, supporting small businesses, and improving infrastructure. Investments in sustainable development projects, such as renewable energy or agriculture, can offer both immediate relief and long-term benefits, turning economic despair into opportunity.

3) Mina – Tripoli

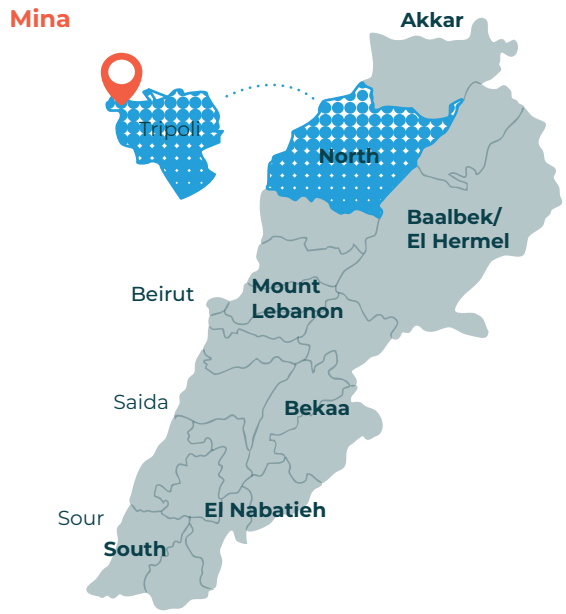

Figure 11 Map of Lebanon, highlighting Mina (Tripoli) - the North in red

1) Community Profile

Mina, a town within the Tripoli region, is characterized by a diverse population, including Sunni Muslims, Alawites, and Christians. Syrian refugees have also significantly impacted the demographic composition. The town has a youthful demographic profile with a substantial proportion of young adults, including both locals and Syrian refugees. Income disparities exist in Mina, with economic deprivation more pronounced due to the presence of Syrian refugees in extreme poverty, contributing to social tensions.[77]

Mina has experienced historical sectarian tensions, especially between Sunni Muslims and Alawites. Past conflicts and grievances continue to shape current dynamics and maintain distance between Alawis and Sunnis, though the formers constitute a small minority group. Governance in Mina has historically seen power concentrated in the hands of influential families, such as the Kabbara and Alamedine ones, which often leads to divisions within the community.

Economic opportunities in Mina, like the rest of Tripoli, are limited, resulting in high unemployment rates, particularly among young adults from both the local and refugee populations. The industrial sector in Mina, including textiles and manufacturing, faces challenges, further contributing to

77. The conflict context in Tripoli: Chronic neglect, increased poverty, & leadership crisis (2016). Lebanon Support. https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/ls-car-nov2016-tripoli_0.pdf

economic vulnerabilities. Economic dependencies and vulnerabilities are exacerbated by the presence of Syrian refugees seeking employment.

The political landscape in Mina is influenced by various factions, with political affiliations often tied to religious identities. In the 2022 parliamentary elections, several electoral lists competed for Mina's electorates, leading to the victory of candidates on Ashraf Rifi, Abdelkarim Kabbara, and Feisal Karami's lists, each contesting the leadership of Tripoli. Political divisions can lead to tensions within the town, and representation in decision-making processes may not always be equitable.[78]

2) Major Actors and Roles

Political leaders emerge as pivotal figures, both as catalysts of tension and as potential harbingers of peace. Their actions, often swayed by personal and political agendas, weave a complex narrative of manipulation and neglect. One participant poignantly criticizes this dynamic, stating: "Political leaders deliberately leave the community in poverty to present themselves as saviors during times of need." This sentiment echoes through the discussions, highlighting a manipulation of socio-economic vulnerabilities to maintain political control.

A community member said: "All conflict actors in Tripoli and the North share a common interest—to keep the region away from the rule of law and under their control, which allows them to maintain their illegal activities. This often causes them to appear at odds politically, even though their end goals align."

The shadow of external influences looms large over Mina, with the presence of pro-Syrian regime and pro-Hezbollah affiliates, considered as significant contributors to the community's tensions. The narratives reveal incidents of nocturnal disturbances, and shots fired at generators and homes, painting a vivid picture of the fear and unrest these elements introduce into the community's daily life. A Mina authority figure captures the essence of the situation: "The Iranians [pro-Hezbollah affiliates] often perpetuate conflicts and disturbances", elucidating the direct impact of external actors on local tensions.

Economic hardship and the lure of economic incentives to join groups affiliated with Hezbollah surface as critical drivers of conflict involvement. The complex relationship between economic survival and political allegiance is encapsulated in the reluctance to rent out properties to potential troublemakers, underscoring the economic dimension of community tensions. The changing perceptions toward Syrian refugees, from empathy to frustration, further highlight the socio-economic strains on communal harmony.

From the perspectives of key informants, a broader view of the community's challenges and potentials unfolds. One respondent emphasizes the significant support from NGOs and global organizations, particularly in empowering women, youth, and the unemployed, marking a beacon of hope in the mitigation of conflicts. Much of the support is provided in terms of vocational training or supporting women in small businesses. Another narrative paints a grim picture of political corruption and economic crises, underlining the local and international challenges that compound Lebanon's strife, including the reverberations of global events like the situation in Gaza. A third perspective introduces a darker element into the discourse, identifying traffickers and politicians entangled in illicit activities as central figures in the community's underbelly, particularly in neighborhoods known for activism and cross-border smuggling.

At the heart of these narratives, the role of women in conflict resolution emerges as a beacon of transformative potential. Women's involvement in economic activities and their crucial role in maintaining family cohesion amidst economic pressures are highlighted as key factors in conflict resolution. One participant noted: "Women play a crucial role in conflict resolution, constituting around 80% of the efforts." This testament to the resilience and agency of women in the face of adversity underscores the critical need to support and empower these pivotal community members.

3) Key Issues and Interests

The dialogue across different stakeholders places the economic crisis at the epicenter of escalating tensions within the community. This crisis manifests in stark job scarcity, pervasive financial instability, and the consequential shutdown of local enterprises, spiraling into a cycle of crime and violence fueled by the accessibility of cheap weapons. A key informant reflects: "The lack of job opportunities, financial struggles, and the shutdown of factories have heightened tensions", underscoring the dire economic desperation gripping the community.

Parallel to economic woes, educational shortcomings emerge as a critical axis of conflict. The decline in educational quality and the closure of religious

78. Dispute in El Mina (n.d.). Civil Society Knowledge Centre and the Center for Social Sciences , Research and Action. https://civilsociety-centre.org/sir/dispute-el-mina

institutions are lamented for eroding societal values and traditions, fostering a breeding ground for ignorance and violence. "There is consensus among the speakers that educational challenges, including a decline in the quality of education and widespread ignorance, contribute to conflicts", according to an informant, highlighting the closure of religious schools as detrimental to community values.

Political dynamics further exacerbate these economic and educational challenges, with informants indicating political influences as detrimental to the community's economic and societal stability. The security landscape is painted as chaotic, with increased incidents of domestic violence and shootings linked to the proliferation of weapons and the erosion of religious values. One participant stated: "Others have highlighted the prevalence of chaos in the community, linking it to security concerns", thus illustrating the breakdown of social order.

Beneath the surface of these pronounced challenges lies a pervasive current of gender discrimination, silently exacerbating the community's plight. The narrative identifies gender discrimination as a significant factor contributing to the community's myriad social issues, with one informant candidly noting they "will still face significant gender discrimination in Lebanon, and its pervasive existence contributes to numerous social issues."

A participant in a FGD with the authorities and stakeholders said: "The tensions and conflicts in the community predominantly impact those with fewer connections and limited support, especially the economically disadvantaged and the poor."

4) Dynamics

In the heart of Mina, a narrative of resilience and complexity unfolds, painted against the backdrop of occasional disagreements and the absence of major street conflicts. The municipal authorities, described by participants, serve as the linchpins in this delicate balance, engaging in a meticulous dance of listening, investigating, and solving the myriad problems presented by the community's diverse social and cultural tapestry. One municipal representative noted: " Our role is essentially about creating a safe environment where every voice finds a listener and every issue, a pathway toward resolution."

The contours of vulnerability and resilience are sharply drawn when considering the economically disadvantaged and those whose income is below the poverty threshold within this community. Particularly striking is the plight of the youth, ensnared in a vicious cycle of unemployment and, for some, a descent into drug abuse as a desperate means of survival. "It's a heartbreaking choice", shared a participant, "between a bleak present and an uncertain future, where selling drugs becomes the only viable path to feed a family." This grim reality casts a long shadow over the prospects of young people forging stable lives, pursuing education, and dreaming of a family. Economic duress not only curtails these aspirations but also suffocates the very essence of personal relationships, as one poignant account revealed: "Love, in our world, has been confined to phone screens as if the economic crisis sought not just to impoverish us but to rob us of our ability to dream, to love, to live fully."

A WE'AM partner said: "The tensions have increased as the economic crisis deepened. Many non-Lebanese, mostly Syrians, are becoming increasingly involved in illicit activities, which contributes to stereotyping refugees and increased host-refugee tensions."

Women, within this narrative, emerge as the silent pillars bearing the weight of a community in flux. Amidst a patriarchal society, their role transcends the traditional; they are the custodians of hope, nurturing the next generation under the harsh glare of economic and societal challenges. "We're raising children in an era where values seem to be in perpetual decline", according to a mother, echoing a widespread concern over the potential erosion of moral and ethical frameworks that have traditionally bound the community together.

Amidst these reflections, the discussions unmask a shared interest among conflict actors to evade the reach of law and governance, a sentiment succinctly captured by one respondent: "There's a common thread binding all conflict actors—keeping Tripoli and the North ensnared in a web of illegality serves their agendas, despite their political posturing." This alignment of interests, paradoxically, fosters both unity and division, laying bare the intricate dance of power and vulnerability that characterizes the community's social fabric.

The discourse on the dynamics of winners and losers in conflict contexts unveils a stark dichotomy, with youths identified as bearing the brunt of the community's challenges. "Our youth are trapped", remarked a voice from the discussion, "in a quagmire of unemployment and substance abuse, with little hope of escape." Conversely, political leaders are perceived as the architects of these conflicts, beneficiaries of a status quo that marginalizes the many for the gain of the few.

As Mina stands at the crossroads of change, the discussion emphasizes the critical juncture faced by women, youths, and marginalized communities. Poised on the brink of transformation, these groups harbor the potential for driving positive change, awaiting the dawn of opportunities that

promise safety, success, and the realization of dreams long deferred. A participant concluded: "Our collective future hinges on our ability to forge unity from diversity, to transform our vulnerabilities into strengths, and to navigate the tumultuous waters of our present with an unwavering commitment to a more hopeful, inclusive tomorrow."

"As a representative of the municipality, there are international efforts, particularly with the Strong Cities Network, focusing on youth-oriented initiatives against violence and conflict." – KII: Municipal Authority

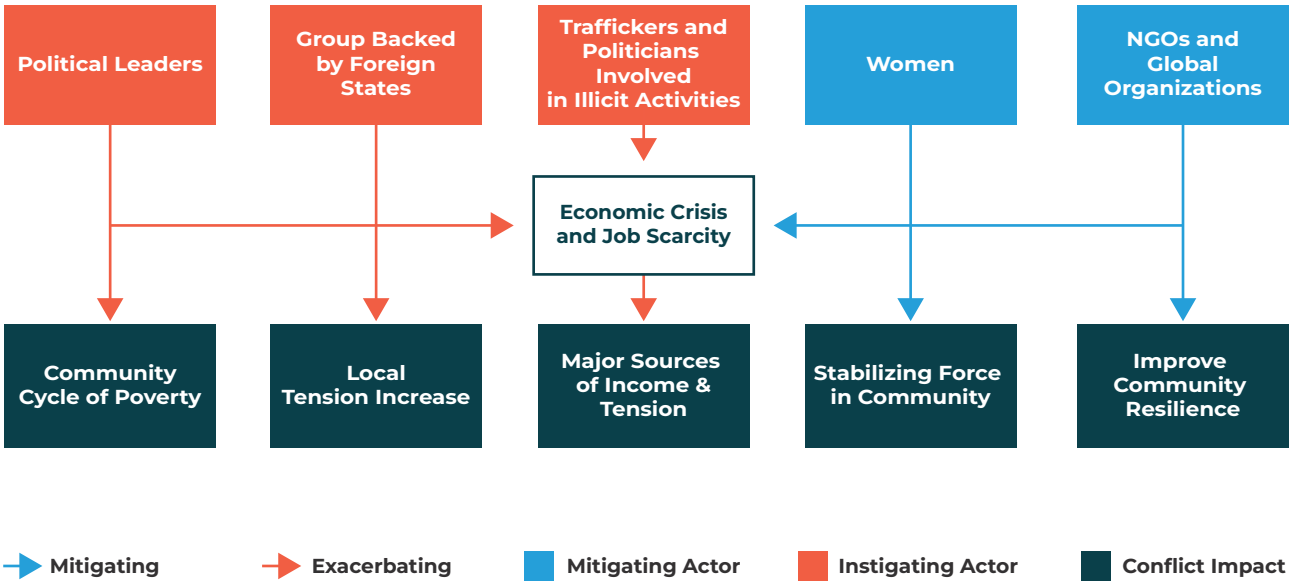

Diagram 6 Actors' contribution or mitigation toward the economic crisis and job scarcity in Mina

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

In Mina, a layered approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution is palpable, drawing on both formal and informal mechanisms to manage and mitigate tensions within the community. The municipality serves as a central actor in this framework, operating as a coordinator and mediator among various social and cultural groups. Its efforts are particularly geared toward listening and responding to the community's concerns, which is critical in a setting marked by economic and social diversity. A key informant from the municipality underscored this role: "We strive to create a safe environment by listening attentively to the people's problems, conducting thorough investigations, and crafting solutions that respect the unique fabric of our community." This approach has facilitated a degree of stability and mutual understanding, indicating that municipal leadership is pivotal in maintaining social harmony.

However, the existing mechanisms often underutilize the potential contributions of specific demographic groups, particularly women and youth, who, despite facing significant challenges, hold substantial capacity for fostering peace. Women, often relegated to traditional roles despite their central place in the social matrix, could be more actively involved in peace processes. Initiatives such as women-led community dialogues have shown promise elsewhere and could be replicated in Mina to enhance inclusivity. The informal networks that women participate in, such as neighborhood groups or school associations, offer a platform for wider engagement in peacebuilding activities. As noted in a focus group discussion: "Our mothers and sisters play a heroic role in keeping the family and, by extension, the community together, yet their potential in formal peace processes remains largely untapped."

Building on the existing structures, there is a significant opportunity to integrate modern conflict resolution technologies and methodologies to enhance the efficacy of peace initiatives. For instance, the use of social media and digital platforms could be harnessed to promote dialogue and understanding among the youth, who are otherwise seen as one of the most vulnerable groups

when it comes to conflict escalation. Currently, as one youth participant mentioned: "Social media is our battleground and our meeting place; it's where opinions clash but also where we find common ground." Leveraging these platforms for structured peace dialogues and campaigns can transform them from arenas of conflict into forums for reconciliation and understanding. Furthermore, strengthening the capacity of local leaders and peace committees through training and resources could ensure that the existing mechanisms are not only maintained but adaptable to the evolving dynamics of Mina's social landscape.

6) Recommendations

- **Empowerment of Women as Agents of Change:** Central to any conflict prevention or mitigation strategy is the empowerment of women and youth, who stand as pillars within the community, capable of driving significant change. Women, bearing the dual burden of nurturing the future while navigating a patriarchal-dominated society, emerge as key agents of peace. Empowering them through economic independence and leadership roles can transform the social dynamics, enabling a shift toward a more inclusive and equitable community. Initiatives focused on skill development, access to microfinance, and leadership training can catalyze this transformation, turning vulnerabilities into strengths. As one community member aptly noted, "empowering our women is not just about equity; it's about unlocking the potential of half our population for the betterment of all."
- **Addressing Economic Disparities for Societal Stability:** It stands as a cornerstone of any conflict prevention or mitigation strategy. The narrative of Mina reveals a community where economic hardship not only stifles individual aspirations, but also fuels societal tensions. Initiatives aimed at economic revitalization, such as support for small and medium-sized enterprises, vocational training programs, and infrastructure development, can alleviate these pressures. By fostering an environment where economic growth is inclusive, such a strategy would aim to bridge the gap between poverty and prosperity, ensuring that economic development benefits all, not just a select few.

3. Baalbek-Hermel Governorate

1) Population and Demographics

The Baalbek-Hermel Governorate shares many similarities with Akkar, particularly as a predominantly agricultural region, sharing extended borders with neighboring Syria. It is also ethnically diverse, with a mix of Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian refugees, and other ethnic groups such as Armenians. In 2018, population estimates suggested there are around one million inhabitants throughout the Bekaa and Baalbek-Hermel region, of which 38% are registered Syrian refugees.[79] The majority of the population is Muslim, with a significant Christian minority. There is a broad age distribution, with a substantial youth population. About 35% of the Baalbek population was under 24 years of age.[80] Generational dynamics may lead to differences in perspectives and priorities. There are income disparities, with some areas experiencing higher poverty rates than others. Economic opportunities vary within the region.

2) Historical Disputes

Historical grievances are connected to the Syrian military interventions during the 1975-1990 Lebanese Civil War that left deep scars in the social fabric of the population, including accusations of demographic changes, land confiscations, and responsibility over the disappeared individuals. Historical disputes, such as land ownership conflicts or political rivalries are closely linked to unresolved and conflicting narratives of the war. Hence, land and water access can be contentious, especially in agriculturally-dependent areas. Resource-related disputes, such as land ownership or water rights, can escalate into conflicts.[81]

3) Social and Economic Dynamics

Still, economic opportunities are limited, leading to unemployment and poverty in some areas. Agriculture is a significant sector, but there are disparities in access to land and resources. Agriculture, particularly wine production, and informal sectors play a role in the local economy. Economic vulnerabilities are tied to fluctuations in agricultural yields and external economic factors.

Availability of basic services varies, with some areas lacking adequate education, healthcare, and utilities. Infrastructure development is uneven, affecting economic opportunities and quality of life. The influx of Syrian refugees has strained resources and created competition for jobs and services, which have exacerbated local tensions.[82]

Cultural traditions and values are diverse, and influenced by both Lebanese and Syrian cultures. Strong clan culture remains intact through modernization and urbanization.[83] It has been economically consolidated by its centrality to collective solidarity, in light of absent state control and the spread-out of hashish harvesting and cross-border smuggling. Hence, community cohesion varies across different areas and along different communal structures mobilized around families, clans, towns, leaders, and political parties.

4) Governance

Local governance structures may vary, with some areas under the influence of different political parties or factions. While most local representatives are typically politically aligned, family politics as well as sectarian dynamics may often disrupt political allegiance. In various local towns, this may stir tensions between the local and the political. Political affiliations may be aligned with national political parties or local power brokers whose intentions contradict those of local families. Major national political groups are active in the Bekaa, including Hezbollah, Amal Movement, Future Movement, Progressive Socialist Party, Lebanese Forces, and Free Patriotic Movement, as well as minor and emerging political groups. Traditional political families are also important actors, such as Skaff, Daher, Yaghi, and Rifai as well as clans such as Jaafar, Zaiter, and Shammas, among many others. Inclusivity in decision-making can be a source of tension, particularly for marginalized groups.[84]

79. Lebanon: Bekaa and Baalbek-El Hermel governorates profile. (2018). United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-bekaa-baalbek-el-hermel-governorates-profile-october-2018
80. Lebanon (n.d.). World Factbook. https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/lebanon/
81. Lebanon: Conflict analysis - Central Bekaa (2021). Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR). https://coar-global.org/2022/02/17/lebanon-conflict-analysis-central-bekaa/
82. The burden of scarce opportunities: The social stability context in Central and West Bekaa. (2017). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). https://reliefweb.int/attachments/e20089f0-d539-3996-855a-fbfb76781237/UNDPCAC%26WBekaa-TheBurdenofScarceOpportunitiesbookletEnglish.pdf
83. Sociological views suggest that the forces of modernization such as education, urbanization, transportation, communication technology, etc. will free individuals from the traditional value systems, hence undermining patrimonial relationships in favor of individualism. See liberal authors such as: Lipset, S. (1959). Some social requisites of democracy: Economic development and political legitimacy. The American Political Science Review, 53(1). 69–105. doi:10.2307/1951731
84. The burden of scarce opportunities: The social stability context in Central and West Bekaa. (2017). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). https://reliefweb.int/attachments/e20089f0-d539-3996-855a-fbfb76781237/UNDPCAC%26WBekaa-TheBurdenofScarceOpportunitiesbookletEnglish.pdf

In sum, land-related disputes and environmental issues, such as water scarcity and land degradation, can contribute to conflicts, especially in agricultural areas.[85] Resource scarcity and economic disparities can be additional conflict triggers. Tensions related to the presence of Syrian refugees can escalate, particularly where resources are scarce or sectarian differences amplify anti-refugee sentiments. Electoral issues and political rivalries may also contribute to conflicts between competing parties and candidates or between the local interests or that of the dominant party's national agenda.

International support, CSOs' activities, and government agencies may provide support and interventions to support and protect marginalized groups as well as the Syrian refugees, but their impact remains difficult to assess, which may often aggravate refugee-host relations.

1) Deir Al-Ahmar – Baalbek-Hermel

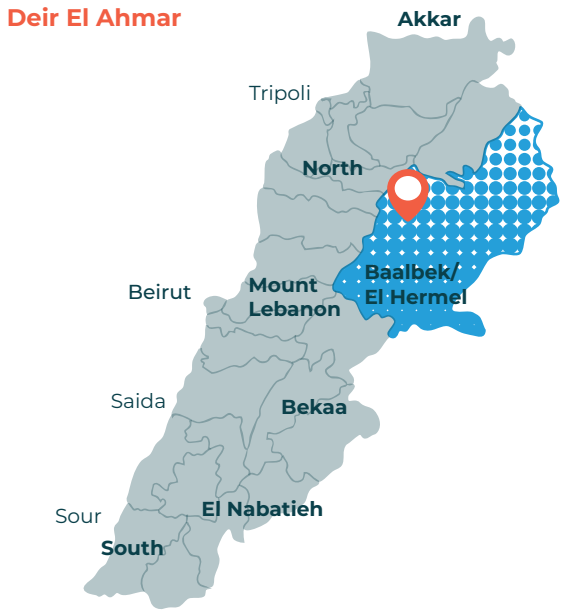

Figure 12 Map of Lebanon, highlighting Deir Al-Ahmar - Baalbek-Hermel in red

1) Community Profile

Deir Al-Ahmar is a town in the Bekaa region with a diverse population, mostly Christian Maronites. Displaced Syrian refugees have set up informal camps on the outskirts of the town, causing recurring tensions.[86] More than 6,000 Syrians live in and around the town, among approximately 23,000 residents.[87] However, the number of permanent Lebanese residents is likely around a quarter of that figure, making the population roughly equal to that of Syrian refugees.[88]

Deir Al-Ahmar, like other areas in the Bekaa, has a history marked by Lebanon's civil war and regional conflicts. Historical grievances and tensions persisted. Past disputes, including land ownership conflicts and political rivalries, have continued to affect local dynamics, particularly with adjacent Shia towns.

Economic opportunities in Deir Al-Ahmar may be limited, potentially leading to unemployment and poverty. Agriculture plays a significant role in the local economy, with possible disparities in land ownership and resource access. Informal sectors and agriculture, including wine production, contribute to the town's economic activities. Economic vulnerabilities may stem from external factors and fluctuations in agricultural yields.

Cultural norms and values in Deir Al-Ahmar are influenced by local customs, particularly the Maronite Church, further shaped by the coexistence of residents and refugees. Important Christian pacifist teachings may have played a role in reducing hostility toward refugees and moderating tensions. Yet, a clear segregation of both communities, in terms of societal practices, has been enforced to minimize interactions beyond those of work and employment. This approach aims to prevent social conflicts by maintaining distinct boundaries in daily interactions, which might restrict opportunities for deeper cultural understanding and community integration. While this separation helps manage immediate social tensions, it also limits the potential for building a cohesive community identity that incorporates both locals and refugees. Community cohesion may vary across different neighborhoods of the town. Also, community organizations play a role in supporting residents.

Economic hardships, exacerbated by the ongoing economic crisis, strain social relations, with political exploitation of religious distinctions further complicating the community fabric. Issues such as land ownership disputes, drug problems among the youth, and the strain on infrastructure due to the refugee influx emerge as significant concerns, alongside challenges in education and perceived imbalances in aid distribution.

85. El-Kareh, J., El Hajj, R., Farajalla, N., & Chehadeh, A. (2018). Water conflict in the Bekaa: Assessing predisposition and contributing factors. Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs. https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/policy_briefs/2017-2018/20180809_water_conflict_in_bekaa.pdf
86. Vohra, A. (2019). Lebanon's Deir al-Ahmar: How an incident displaced 600 refugees. Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/6/9/lebanons-deir-al-ahmar-how-an-incident-displaced-600-refugees
87. 700 Syrian refugees flee from Lebanon's Deir El Ahmar camp. (2019). XinhuaNet. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-06/11/c_138134625.htm
88. Deir el Ahmar. (n.d.). Alchetron. https://alchetron.com/Deir-el-Ahmar

Local governance structures in Deir Al-Ahmar may differ from neighboring towns, potentially influenced by various political parties or factions. The Lebanese Forces, which is the dominant political party, has mobilized most voters behind its 2022 parliamentary candidate, Antoine Habshi. Political affiliations may align with national parties or local power brokers such as municipalities or town associations, with implications for representation and decision-making.

The historical context of conflicts and tensions, underscored by socioeconomic factors and inadequate state services, has evolved to encompass contemporary challenges such as water scarcity, electricity problems, and demographic shifts due to the departure of Lebanese residents and the settlement of Syrian refugees. The absence of essential infrastructure and services exacerbates these tensions, with land occupation issues and the control of resources by outlaws adding layers to the community's struggles.

Women, youth, and vulnerable groups experience the implications of these conflicts and tensions distinctly, with women playing a crucial role in promoting peace and stability, and youth facing limited prospects due to inadequate education and job opportunities. The imposition of financial burdens on refugee families and the lack of support for vulnerable populations such as the disabled highlight the intersectionality of challenges in Deir Al-Ahmar, calling for comprehensive solutions to address the socio-economic and inter-communal tensions that persist. For instance, Syrian refugees face significant financial burdens, exemplified by the imposition of a $20 monthly fee per tent by local authorities, which can lead to eviction for non-compliance due to limited job opportunities and low wages. Additionally, vulnerable groups, particularly the disabled, receive inadequate support, with one interviewee noting: "People with disabilities do not receive the necessary attention, aid, or education from most NGOs." These examples highlight the intersectionality of challenges in the community, emphasizing the need for comprehensive solutions to address both the socio-economic strains and inter-communal tensions that persist in Deir Al-Ahmar.

2) Major Actors and Roles

Families and family tribes in and around the area of Deir Al-Ahmar emerge as pivotal actors whose activities often fuel local discord. Engaging in unlawful endeavors, including "kidnapping and drug dealing", these tribes exploit the lack of governmental oversight to assert their dominance, contributing to an atmosphere of fear and instability. This lawlessness is further compounded by the protective umbrella extended by political affiliations, allowing these actors to operate with impunity. The interviews underscore this reality, with one respondent noting: "Family tribes have long had a presence in the area, but their activities have intensified due to the lack of government intervention."

Political parties, such as the Lebanese Forces and Hezbollah, are also central to the narrative of conflict within Deir Al-Ahmar and neighboring towns. By exploiting community tensions for political gain, these parties perpetuate a cycle of instability that serves to consolidate their power. The absence of effective governance is a recurrent theme, with political representatives failing to bridge the gap between the community's needs and the state's provision of services. As one interviewee lamented: "Political parties are often blamed for their failure to involve the government in providing necessary services and enforcing law and order."

In contrast to the divisive roles of family tribes and political parties, women, youth, and vulnerable groups in Deir Al-Ahmar strive to be forces of reconciliation and peace. Participants noted that women, especially those employed in the educational sector where they constitute the majority of teachers, face significant challenges due to the conflict, including shortages of essential resources like electricity and fuel. Despite these hurdles, they endeavor to instill values of peace and stability within their families and the broader community. Their initiatives to create job opportunities, although often stymied by limited support, reflect a commitment to addressing the root causes of tension. One interviewee observed: "Women initiate projects aimed at creating job opportunities. However, these endeavors often face challenges due to the lack of support from governmental authorities or NGOs", highlighting the systemic barriers to conflict mitigation efforts.

Youth engagement in dialogue and reconciliation efforts marks another critical aspect of the community's struggle against the tide of the conflict. By organizing meetings with residents of neighboring towns, the youth of Deir Al-Ahmar aim to address and resolve underlying issues through dialogue and mutual understanding. This proactive approach is emblematic of a generational shift toward seeking sustainable peace and stability.

A participant in a FGD with the Lebanese community said: "Interactions within the community are generally positive, with minor conflicts over land ownership usually resolved through family and municipal intervention... The church plays a pivotal role in preventing the escalation of conflicts, utilizing its influence to maintain peace."

International organizations and NGOs such as UNDP, UNHCR, USAID-CSP, World Vision, OXFAM, and WADA are active in Deir Al-Ahmar. These entities play roles in various capacities, aiming to address some of the challenges faced by the community. While the specific activities and impact of each organization might vary, they generally focus on providing temporary solutions and support for pressing needs, such as education, infrastructure repairs, and support for public schools. For example, NGOs like LOST have undertaken projects in the area, which include road repairs and providing support to public schools. These organizations strive to make a positive impact, although their efforts are often seen as addressing the symptoms rather than the root causes of the community's challenges.

A participant in a FGD with the Syrian community said: "In the efforts to reduce or mitigate tensions within the community, it becomes apparent that various entities have played instrumental roles, with the UN and Oxfam being notable actors."

Amidst this complex interplay of actors, the municipal government of Deir Al-Ahmar emerges as a beacon of local governance and development efforts, as described by some of the respondents and municipal members. Tasked with the monumental job of providing essential services and regulatory oversight, the municipal government's endeavors are pivotal in shaping the town's daily life and future trajectory. Yet, the effectiveness of these efforts is often tempered by the overarching challenges of resource constraints and political complexities that pervade the Lebanese context.

3) Key Issues and Interests

A prevailing theme across the discussions is the prolonged absence of effective government intervention, leading to "a range of issues, including insecurity, inadequate access to essential services such as water and electricity, and economic instability", according to one participant. This lack of governance has left a void where outlaws and criminal elements thrive, exacerbating conflicts and eroding public trust in governmental institutions.

The discussions further reveal that economic hardships and inequalities, made worse by the financial crisis, have intensified the community's financial strain. The soaring costs of living have had a profound impact on families and individuals, with one participant noting the following: "The economic downturn has resulted in inflation, making necessities increasingly expensive."

Moreover, the presence of Syrian refugees has introduced additional complexities, straining resources and infrastructure. While recognized as a humanitarian issue, this influx has contributed to heightened tensions within the community, as articulated by a participant who highlighted that "the economic crisis, particularly the competition for job opportunities between Syrians and Lebanese" is a primary source of conflict.

A participant in a FGD with the Syrian community said: "The municipality imposes financial burdens on the refugee community, demanding a monthly fee of $20 per tent. Some residents face challenges in meeting this requirement due to limited job opportunities and low wages set by the municipality."

Water scarcity is identified as a source of conflict where the water management crisis continues to strain relations with neighboring towns, including disputes over access and distribution. Specifically, the water supply being controlled by entities from another town has led to conflicts over access, further exacerbating the already strained relations with neighboring towns. This situation is complicated by inadequate government intervention in ensuring equitable access to water resources, leaving the community to navigate these challenges amidst broader socio-economic pressures.

Participants indicate that land ownership conflicts, including issues related to the distribution and management of agricultural land, contribute to the tensions within the community. This aligns with the broader context of the Bekaa valley, where agricultural practices are central to the local economy, and disputes over land ownership and usage can significantly impact community relations and economic stability.

A participant in a FGD with authorities and stakeholders said: "In Deir Al-Ahmar, tensions and conflicts are primarily driven by economic challenges rather than religious differences. [..] Most of the tensions between the citizens are related to the ownership of land or some individual conflicts. There is a drug problem in the youth community."

Gender disparities emerge as a significant factor contributing to tensions within the community. The economic conditions and disparities between Lebanese and Syrians in terms of wages, discrimination, and the lack of opportunities for women in the workforce are identified as key issues. One participant explicitly stated: "The lack of acceptance

for transgender individuals is evident, and men hinder women from having significant roles in the community", illustrating the gendered dimensions of tensions and the societal challenges faced by women and gender minorities.

Addressing the community's urgent needs calls for a multifaceted approach. Effective governance and socio-economic development are identified as paramount, with one participant in a FGD with authorities and stakeholders emphasizing "the need for collaboration between NGOs, local associations, and government agencies to stimulate economic growth and create sustainable livelihoods for residents." Furthermore, improving security by combating criminal activities and restoring law and order is deemed crucial for fostering a stable environment.

4) Dynamics

The local authorities and community leaders play a proactive role in mitigating tensions, often engaging in dialogue and negotiations to resolve disputes. Financial contributions are sometimes required as part of these resolutions, indicating the economic underpinnings of many community conflicts. The church, municipality, and unions of municipalities emerge as key mediators, although their efforts are seen as temporary fixes. One respondent suggests their own means to avoid conflicts: "In some cases, individuals may pay a sum of money to outlaws to prevent conflicts from affecting their lives or families."

External organizations like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are acknowledged for their contributions, yet there is a sentiment that their solutions do not fully address the root causes of tensions.

The community perceives economic competition and resource scarcity as primary drivers of tension with Syrian refugees. Local NGOs and the municipality play a role in alleviating community issues and mitigating tensions. According to one respondent: "The church also plays a pivotal role in preventing the escalation of conflicts, utilizing its influence to maintain peace."

Among Syrian refugees, the reduction in support services from organizations like Oxfam has raised concerns. The refugees appreciate the assistance provided, such as water supply and hygiene kits, but note the challenges posed by decreased aid. "Oxfam's contributions include supplying water, pumping septic tanks, distributing pre-paid phone cards, providing hygiene kits, and assisting with transportation fees", according to one refugee.

Conflicts and tensions within Deir Al-Ahmar disproportionately impact youths, women, and vulnerable groups, with political parties and outlaws often emerging as beneficiaries. The youth, in particular, face significant challenges, including a lack of job opportunities, leading many to leave the community in search of a better future. This brain drain further exacerbates the community's socio-economic challenges. "Youths, especially recent graduates, suffer as they struggle to find stable jobs and build a future in the community", according to one participant.

A participant in a FGD with authorities and stakeholders said: "Despite having experienced the effects of the civil war in 1975 and hosting refugees during the 2006 war, religious diversity has not been a source of discord. Political parties, however, exploit religious distinctions between neighboring communities to maintain power."

Women play a crucial role in the socio-cultural fabric of Deir Al-Ahmar, both as agents of peace and as bearers of the community's future. Their contributions to family and community stability are vital, yet the challenges they face in the context of conflicts and tensions highlight the need for greater support and empowerment. "The role of women is paramount as they are responsible for educating children and shaping future generations", according to a woman participant.

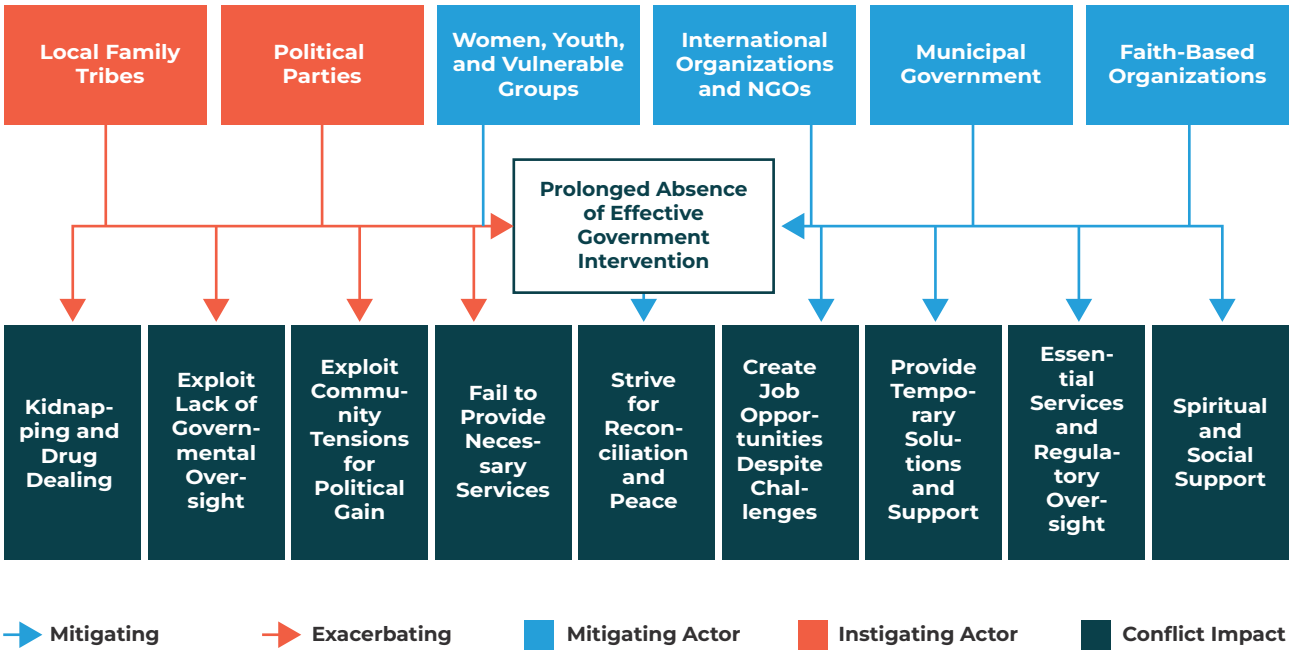

Diagram 7 **Actors' contribution or mitigation toward a prolonged absence of effective government intervention inDeir Al-Ahmar**

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

According to interviews, local institutions such as the church and municipal authorities play a central role, acting as key mediators in conflicts that often arise from economic disparities and competition over resources. These institutions can also facilitate dialogue and resolutions between the Lebanese residents and Syrian refugees, who may tap into the same limited agricultural resources. The church, holding significant respect across both communities, employs its moral authority effectively to mitigate tensions.

Community-driven initiatives also stand out as vital mechanisms for conflict resolution, with local NGOs and community groups actively working to bridge divides between the Lebanese and Syrian populations. These organizations focus on creating economic opportunities and improving infrastructure, thus addressing some of the root causes of tension such as unemployment and inadequate public services. Such efforts are crucial for reducing the economic strain that can lead to conflicts, especially in areas where both Lebanese and Syrian communities depend on the same resources for their livelihoods. A representative of a local NGO shared: "Local entities such as the municipality, the union of municipalities, and various NGOs actively engage in efforts to alleviate tensions and address community issues."

To build upon these existing mechanisms, it is critical to further involve women and youth from both the Lebanese and Syrian communities in the peacebuilding process. Women, often central in family and community dynamics, could be empowered through initiatives that enhance their roles in decision-making and conflict resolution. Engaging youth is equally important, as they face high risks of involvement in conflicts and illegal activities due to unemployment and lack of prospects. Programs aimed at vocational training and education can help integrate them more fully into community life, thereby fostering long-term stability. One community member noted "The challenges faced by the youth, especially recent graduates, suffer as they struggle to find stable jobs and build a future in the community." This emphasizes the need for targeted interventions that bridge divides between communities and promote inclusive development for all groups.

6) Recommendations

- **Strengthening Local Institutions in Conflict Resolution:** The role of local institutions, including the church and municipal authorities, in mediating conflicts and fostering dialogue cannot be overstated. Strengthening the capacity of these institutions to engage in effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts is essential. This involves training community leaders and officials in mediation and negotiation techniques, with a focus on gender-sensitive approaches that recognize the distinct experiences and contributions of women in conflict situations.

- **Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Women and Youth:** Priority interventions should focus on enhancing economic opportunities, particularly for women and youth, who are disproportionately affected by the lack of stable employment and educational prospects. Initiatives aimed at expanding access to vocational training and entrepreneurship programs can empower these groups, enabling them to contribute more significantly to the local economy and reduce dependency on external aid. Tailoring these programs to align with local needs and cultural sensitivities ensures broader community support and participation. For example, promoting women's involvement in agriculture and small businesses, while providing the necessary training and resources, can bolster their economic independence and status within the community.

- **Tackling Sustainable Practices and Resource Management:** Addressing resource scarcity and environmental challenges through sustainable practices is critical. Implementing community-led water management projects and renewable energy initiatives can mitigate conflicts over resources while contributing to environmental sustainability. Involving women in these projects not only ensures a more inclusive approach but also leverages their unique perspectives and knowledge in natural resource management.

2) Baalbek – Baalbek-Hermel

Figure 13 Map of Lebanon, highlighting Baalbek - Baalbek-Hermel in red

1) Community Profile

Baalbek's population comprises a diverse mix of Lebanese, and Syrian and Palestinian refugees, as well as other groups. The majority are Muslim Shia, with significant Sunni and Christian minorities. Income disparities persist, with some areas experiencing higher poverty rates, exacerbated by illicit activities.[89] Women's unemployment remains high except for various informal agricultural-related activities.[90]

Historically, Baalbek has been marred by conflicts, notably during Lebanon's civil war, and continues to face land ownership disputes due to inadequate land demarcation. The city's economy, heavily influenced by illicit activities such as hashish cultivation, is both a source of income and vulnerability, affecting social hierarchies and communal relations. The dominance of 'new Shia comers' since the 1980s has reshaped Baalbek's social fabric into a predominantly clan-oriented society, further complicating the interplay of economic, social, and political dynamics.

89. Household economy analysis (HEA) outcome analysis: Beirut, Akkar, and Baalbek (March-May 2022) (2022). Save the Children. Retrieved from: https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/household-economy-analysis-hea-outcome-analysis-beirut-akkar-and-baalbek-march-may-2022
90. Conflict analysis and power dynamics - Lebanon Study (2020). Search for Common Ground (SfCG). https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2020_SFCG_Conflict_Analysis_Report.pdf

Local governance structures in Baalbek can vary, with some areas influenced by different political parties or factions, some of which may be linked to illicit activities. Hezbollah and allies, such as the Amal Movement, remain among the major dominant forces in Baalbek, alongside the various traditional clans such as Jaafar, Shammas, and Zeaiter who dominate the different economic activities, including hashish harvesting, transportation, and cross-border smuggling activities. Other actors include influential Sunni families such as Solh, Rifai, Bayan, and Assaf and the Higher Islamic Fatwa Council which is headed by its Mufti Baker Al Rifai. The Shia Higher Council is another important political actor with a prominent role undertaken by Sheikh Khalil Shokeir.

Cultural traditions and values in Baalbek are a blend of Lebanese and Syrian influences, but the illicit economy has altered some social dynamics. The illicit trade has led to social hierarchies, with those involved in hashish cultivation and smuggling gaining significant influence. Most current clans in Baalbek are made out of 'new Shia comers' who originally roamed the surrounding areas to finally settle in Baalbek, starting in the 1980s. The social fabric of Baalbek has become predominantly clan-oriented while 'original' urban families, particularly Sunnis, have become minorities, with such a social division determining most communal relations.[91]

Baalbek has gained notoriety as a hub for smuggling activities, including arms and goods, due to its proximity to the Syrian border. Illicit cultivation of hashish is a significant contributor to the local economy but also poses challenges, including security issues and environmental impacts.

Thus, conflict triggers in Baalbek may include disputes over illicit trade routes, competition in the smuggling industry, and territorial disputes related to hashish cultivation. Tensions related to the presence of Syrian refugees can also escalate, given the added strain on resources.

Economic opportunities are limited in Baalbek, leading to unemployment and poverty in various neighborhoods. Illicit activities, particularly hashish cultivation, significantly contribute to the local economy but also bring about economic vulnerabilities.[92]

Land and water access can be contentious, with disputes often intertwined with the illicit cultivation of hashish. Resource-related conflicts may arise from land ownership and disputes over water resources.[93]

Conflicts and tensions in Baalbek affect women, youth, and vulnerable groups disproportionately. Economic challenges, discrimination, and inadequate government services compound the adversities faced by these groups. Women's unemployment and involvement in informal sectors, coupled with societal pressures and the impact of illicit economies, highlight gender-specific challenges.

2) Major Actors and Roles

The landscape of conflict in Baalbek is significantly influenced by political parties and government inaction. Stakeholders repeatedly criticize the government and political entities for their failure to address the root causes of economic and social unrest. A participant in a FGD with the authorities and stakeholders said: "The government's insufficient involvement exacerbates conflicts, with issues like crime and tensions persisting." This narrative of neglect underscores the pivotal role of political governance—or the lack thereof—in shaping the community's conflict dynamics.

A community member said: "Political parties representing the community in the government play a significant role in fueling tensions due to their inability to find solutions to problems."

Local actors, including tribes, families, and armed individuals, emerge as potent forces within this milieu. Their influence, often underpinned by the possession of arms and power, delineates a social order where "the law of the jungle prevails and where the more power and weapons one possesses, the greater the influence in the community", according to one participant. This stark reality highlights the interplay between social hierarchies and conflict, where power dynamics dictate the terms of engagement and resolution.

91. Conflict analysis and power dynamics - Lebanon Study (2020). Search for Common Ground (SfCG). https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2020_SFCG_Conflict_Analysis_Report.pdf
92. Lebanon's crisis-hit farmers turn to growing hashish (2021). France24. Retrieved from https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210420-lebanon-s-crisis-hit-farmers-turn-to-growing-hashish
93. Water as a tool for defusing socio-political tension (2021). United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Lebanon. https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/8861/file/Water%20as%20a%20Tool%20for%20Defusing%20Socio%20Political%20Tension%20-%20Full%20Report%20EN.pdf

Amidst these tensions, women and youth undertake crucial roles in fostering community stability and advocating for peace. Despite facing systemic underrepresentation, their efforts to educate, mediate, and promote employment underscore their indispensable role in the fabric of Baalbek. The efforts of women, in particular, to mitigate conflicts through education and restraint illuminate the gendered dimensions of peacebuilding. A Syrian community member said: "Women are observed to play significant roles during conflicts, often letting go of certain issues to maintain peace."

Furthermore, the youth's advocacy for "peace, respect, and job opportunities" reflects the aspirations and priorities of a demographic critically positioned at the intersection of economic hardship and social mobilization. Their engagement in tension-reduction initiatives underscores a collective desire for a stable and prosperous future, challenging the prevailing narratives of conflict and division.

External actors and foreign interventions further complicate the socio-political landscape of Baalbek, introducing layers of international intrigue and influence that exacerbate local tensions. The involvement of these entities, often aligned with conflicting interests, highlights the global dimensions of local conflicts, weaving a complex tapestry of allegiances and oppositions that transcend national borders.

The United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), are pivotal in providing humanitarian assistance and social services, reflecting a commitment to safeguarding human dignity and ensuring the fulfillment of basic needs. The significance of their presence in Baalbek is underscored by acknowledgments of their active engagement, highlighting the critical role of external support in stabilizing the conditions for those affected by conflict.

Further contributions to the social welfare and educational needs of the community are evident through the efforts of local organizations like the Sadr Foundation, Mabarrat, and Mahdi Schools. These entities bridge the gaps in public services, especially in education, thereby bolstering the community's resilience.

A community member said: "Hezbollah supports NGOs to alleviate the social and economic pressure caused by the influx of refugees. This work is often carried out in collaboration with Dar Al Fatwa, along with civil society organizations."

The sphere of conflict mitigation and peacebuilding is enriched by the endeavors of local NGOs such as the Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL) and Golden Hands, which focus on promoting women's rights and empowerment. In the realm of advocacy and rights protection, Kafa and Himaya stand out for their roles in combating violence against women and providing support for survivors.

3) Key Issues and Interests

In the intricate mosaic of Baalbek's societal landscape, the interplay of historical grievances, economic challenges, and socio-political disparities paints a complex picture of enduring conflict and tension. Central to this narrative is the prolonged absence of government intervention, highlighted by local authorities as contributing significantly to economic and financial instability, corruption, and an exacerbation of conflict both from within and by external pressures. This governmental void, underscored by the lamentation of "the prolonged absence of government intervention since 1975, corruption, financial crisis, and war escalation", has eroded the potential for sustainable community development, security, and equitable governance.

A community member said: "The conflicts in the community have deep roots in religious and political divisions. primarily rooted in government failure."

The fabric of Baalbek's society is further strained by deep-rooted sectarian and cultural disparities. Historical tensions between Christian and Muslim communities, and most recently the Shia and Sunni divide, are emblematic of the internal divisions that permeate the city's ethos. These sectarian tensions, intertwined with the city's political and familial allegiances, serve as significant catalysts for conflict, influencing everything from social interactions to governance and resource distribution. The influx of Syrian refugees adds another dimension to this complex socio-political landscape, inadvertently intensifying competition over scarce resources and services, notably employment, and straining already fragile community relations.

A WE'AM partner said: "The primary challenge faced by the [Syrian] community is the lack of rights to work, own property, and access resources."

A critical dimension of Baalbek's conflict landscape is the impact of land disputes and water management issues. The city's agricultural heritage and the reliance on land for livelihoods have made land ownership conflicts a persistent source of tension among local communities. Disputes

over water resources further exacerbate these tensions, as water is a scarce and valuable commodity in the region. The struggle for control and access to water sources often mirrors broader sectarian and familial conflicts, serving as a microcosm of the city's larger challenges. This scenario, where "conflicts over fuel and waste management, and concerns about the overall security of the city" are cited, underscores the interconnection between resource management issues and broader societal tensions. Observations from the field point to poor waste management and the spread-out of littering in the streets.

Amidst these conflict drivers, the dynamics of illicit activities and clan tensions reveal a complex web of economic disparity and power struggles. The cultivation and trafficking of illicit drugs, notably hashish, have entrenched economic inequalities and reinforced the dominance of certain clans. These clans, often operating outside legal boundaries, contribute to the perpetuation of violence and retribution, undermining efforts toward social cohesion and economic development. Clan tensions, deeply rooted in Baalbek's historical and political fabric, manifest in territorial disputes, access to resources, and political influence, further complicating the path to unified governance and community stability.
The nuanced impact of gender dynamics within

this context cannot be understated. Women, facing unique vulnerabilities amid socio-economic and political instability, often bear the brunt of these conflicts. Their experiences of marginalization and exposure to violence underscore the gendered aspect of Baalbek's societal tensions. Similarly, youth engagement with the community's ongoing conflicts is shaped by economic hardship, cultural expectations, and a quest for identity and purpose amidst limited opportunities.

The infusion of foreign aid, while aimed at supporting the city's development and humanitarian needs, can inadvertently become a potential driver of conflict. The distribution of aid often intersects with the city's complex socio-political landscape, characterized by sectarian divides, clan dynamics, and historical tensions. Competition for foreign aid deepens feelings of inequity and neglect, particularly among local populations who perceive aid as disproportionately benefiting refugee communities or specific groups.

4) Dynamics

The conflict dynamics in Baalbek highlight the crucial roles played by political parties, religious leaders, mayors, family members, and other influential entities in either intensifying or alleviating tensions.

For example, in Baalbek, political parties sometimes establish committees dedicated to conflict resolution, demonstrating a structured approach to mitigate family tensions. This indicates an awareness of the interdependencies among different social actors and their potential collective power in fostering peace. As one member of the community explained: "Political parties, religious figures, mayors, and family members play crucial roles in influencing the escalation or de-escalation of conflicts and tensions in the region."
Some individuals and groups may emerge as "winners" or "dividers" in the context of conflicts, often at the expense of the broader community. Those engaged in illicit activities, such as drug dealers, criminals, and outlaws, are typically identified as beneficiaries of the current state of unrest, capitalizing on the lack of government control and the community's vulnerabilities. This situation has led to a perception that these individuals are the only beneficiaries in an otherwise lose-lose scenario for the community, as reflected in the municipality's assertion that "drug dealers, criminals, and outlaws are identified as the only winners."

A community member said: "The dynamic relationships governing actors in conflicts have perpetually remained unstable. The vulnerable, the needy, the impoverished, and the disadvantaged are often exploited by powerful forces—driven by interests and capital—for short-term gains."

Despite the evident challenges, the community of Baalbek also recognizes the potential for change and the importance of forward-looking strategies. Civil society organizations, although limited by their scale and reach, are lauded for their contributions when they implement sustainable projects that encompass both genders. They often emerge as "connectors" bringing collective interests along with key actors working for the community's stability. The future dynamics of these interactions and their impact on social cohesion will largely depend on the community's ability to address the structural causes of conflicts, support inclusive initiatives, and foster an environment where all members, particularly women, and youth, can actively contribute to peace and development efforts.

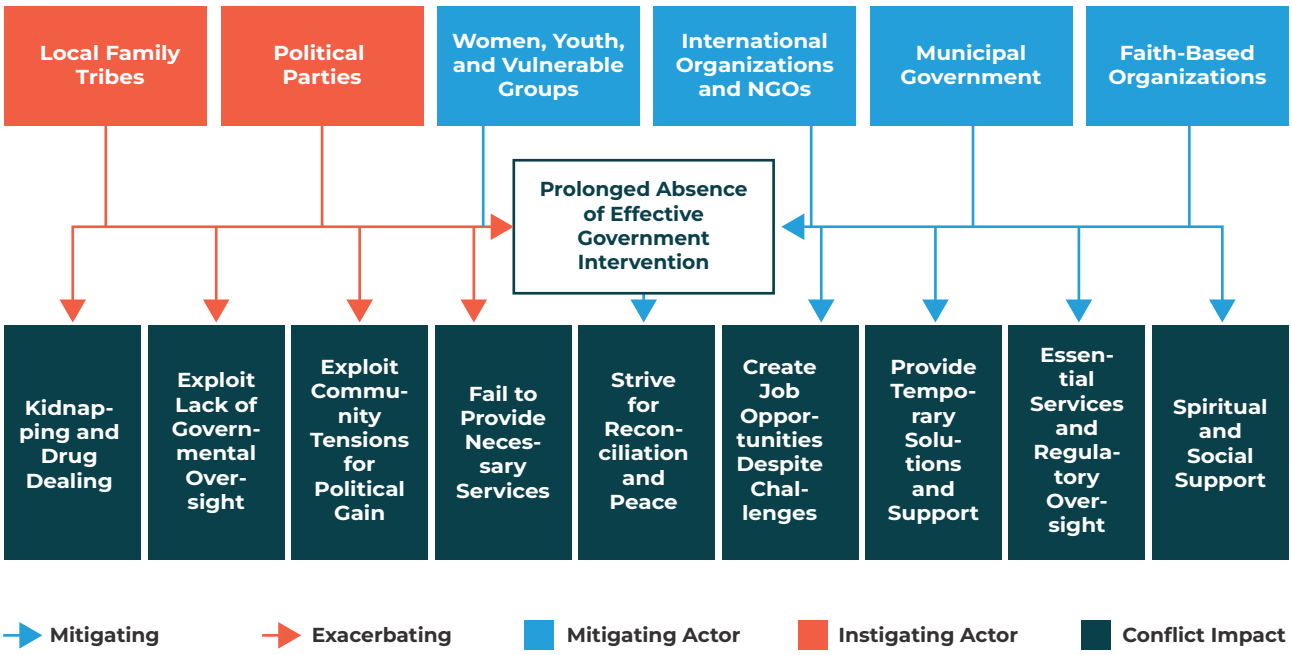

Diagram 8 Actors' contribution or mitigation toward the prolonged absence of effective government intervention in Baalbek

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

One notable mechanism is the presence of political committees, often established by major political parties, specifically tasked with resolving conflicts between families and tribes. For instance, as per the local authorities' focus group discussions, "the main political party has a committee dedicated to resolving conflicts and reducing tensions between families." This indicates a structured approach, albeit influenced by political calculations, which underscores the significant role these parties play in the societal fabric of Baalbek. The political dimensions of peacebuilding here are both a blessing and a curse; while they provide the structure for resolution, they can also be colored by the interests and biases of the political entities involved.

The community in Baalbek, deeply enmeshed within religious and familial networks, also benefits from the interventions of religious figures and mayors who command respect across different sects. These local influencers wield their moral authority to mediate and mitigate conflicts, employing traditional conciliation methods that are well-respected within the community. For example, the words of a local religious figure resonate with the community's collective conscience: "The political presence plays a crucial and positive role in mitigating these conflicts." Yet, the efficacy of these traditional methods is tested in a modern context where the social fabric is continuously stretched by economic hardships and the pressures of hosting a large number of Syrian refugees. While these mechanisms have served to de-escalate immediate tensions, they cannot often address underlying issues, particularly among youth and women, whose roles in conflict dynamics are increasingly recognized yet not fully integrated into peacebuilding efforts.

To build a comprehensive peacebuilding framework in Baalbek, it is imperative to amplify mechanisms that engage and empower women and youth, who are crucial yet underrepresented stakeholders in the peace process. Women's roles as peacemakers are evidenced in the creative approaches they have employed, such as when "women from both sides distributed flowers as a symbol of peace, ultimately contributing to the cessation of the conflict." This highlights the untapped potential of women in conflict resolution. The youth, on the other hand, require platforms that can channel their energies and aspirations away from the destructive allure of illicit activities and clan rivalries. Here, NGOs have played a vital role by incorporating youth and women into their initiatives, as emphasized by one participant: "Over the past years, youth and women have actively participated in initiatives aimed at decreasing conflicts and promoting peace." Expanding these initiatives, ensuring they are inclusive and free from political and sectarian leanings, and strengthening their capacity for sustainable impact are necessary steps toward solidifying conflict resolution mechanisms across all communities.

6) Recommendations

- **Nuanced Governance and Women's Inclusion:** Firstly, a nuanced approach to governance is essential, where state presence must be reasserted to fill the vacuum that has allowed non-state actors and clan dynamics to flourish unchecked. Expanding women's participation in local decision-making bodies also needs to be inclusive to governance to ensure that interventions are more equitable and attuned to the needs of all community members.

- **Strategic Economic Investments for Disenfranchised Groups:** Secondly, recognizing the profound impact of economic disenfranchisement, and strategic investments in economic development are required, specifically in sectors that empower women and youth. Tailored vocational training programs and microfinance initiatives that prioritize women's economic independence can serve as vital counterweights to the lure of illicit activities. Concurrently, targeting youth with education and employment opportunities can deter their involvement in cycles of violence and crime. An integrative labor market strategy, emphasizing skills development and job creation, can recalibrate the economic pathways that currently converge on conflict.

- **Conflict Resolution and Equitable Resource Management:** Thirdly, conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts in Baalbek must address various contentious issues including host-refugee and sectarian relations. At the same time, approaches must mitigate the deep-seated land disputes and water resource management issues that ignite and perpetuate conflict. Transparent and equitable resource allocation policies, coupled with dispute resolution mechanisms that involve community representatives, can attenuate these points of contention. Collaborative management of shared resources can serve as a foundation for inter-community dialogue and reconciliation, fostering a culture of shared stewardship over common goods.

4. South Lebanon Governorate[94]

1) Population and Demographics

South Lebanon is characterized by a **predominantly Shia Muslim population,** but it also includes **smaller Sunni and Christian communities.** The region is **ethnically and religiously diverse,** though the Shia Muslim population is the most prominent. Income disparities exist, with certain areas facing higher poverty rates than others. The South is home to **several Palestinian refugee camps,** the largest being Ain El-Hilweh which experiences recurring clashes between radical Islamist groups and the Fatah organization.[95]

The South has a **history of conflict,** including the Lebanese Civil War and the Israeli occupation of the region. The presence of Hezbollah, a Shia militant group, is a defining aspect of the historical context. Disputes over land ownership and power dynamics have deep historical roots.

2) Social and Economic Dynamics

Employment opportunities are limited in some areas, leading to higher unemployment rates while pushing for migration toward Beirut and its suburbs or abroad. **Agriculture, trade, and tourism** play significant roles in the local economy, with disparities in economic development between different localities and towns.

Traditional Shia Muslim values and cultural norms are predominant with strong Iranian religious influence shaping attitudes and practices. There is a sense of community cohesion, particularly within Shia Muslim communities. The Sunni community, on the other hand, is concentrated in Saida, surrounded with a strong presence of Palestinian refugees in Ain El-Hilweh. **Conservative Islam** has come to shape most values and practices, often aggravating relations with moderate residents or non-Sunnis surrounding communities in various neighborhoods, such as Haret Saida of mostly Shia residents, or surrounding Christian villages such as Maghdoushe. Christians are dispersed throughout the South, concentrated mostly around the Marjaayoun and Jezzine areas. The **Christian community has faced serious tensions about other Muslim sects** and has, as a consequence, declined in demography and presence in the different localities.

3) Political Tensions

The region is **politically influenced by Hezbollah as well as the Amal Movement**. Hezbollah in particular has a strong political and armed presence and public support base, but other groups are also active throughout the different localities, including the Future Movement, Lebanese Forces, Free Patriotic Movement, Communist Party, Islamic Group, and Nasserites, among other smaller parties. Hence, political affiliations are often divided along religious lines. The representation of different communities in decision-making processes may be unequal. Local governance structures vary with many of the towns included in the union of municipalities.

Tensions with neighboring communities, particularly Israel, have historically influenced the region. The presence of Palestinian and Syrian refugees has strained local resources and contributed to social and economic challenges. Regional politics, including Iran's influence and regional conflicts, affect South Lebanon. Political disagreements, especially related to external actors like Hezbollah, can trigger conflicts in different towns of mixed sectarian and political allegiance. Water scarcity and resource competition can also trigger local tensions.

94. Conflict Analysis - Lebanon - National Level (2021). Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR). https://coar-global.org/2022/01/14/conflict-analysis-lebanon-national-level/
95. Lebanon clashes: Thousands flee violence at Palestinian refugee camp. (2023). BBC News. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-66354364

1) Saida - South Lebanon

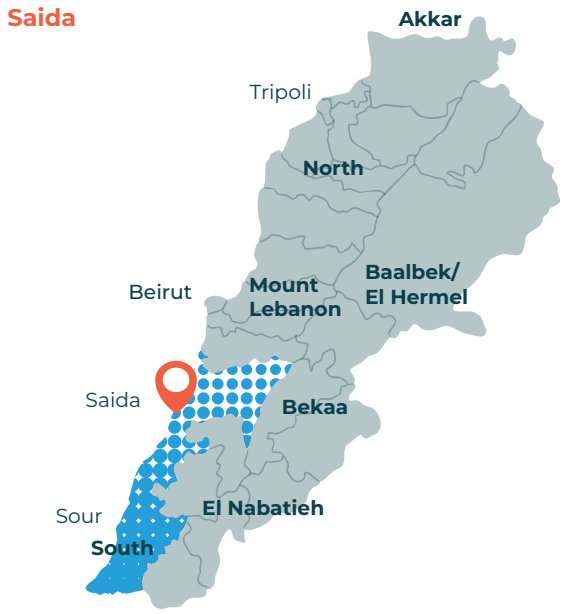

Figure 14 **Map of Lebanon, highlighting Saida - South Lebanon in red**

1) Community Profile

Saida is a city in South Lebanon known for its diverse population. It is home to a mix of Shia and Sunni Muslims, and Christians, contributing to its ethnic and religious diversity. The city's demographic makeup is influenced by its historical significance and geographical location. The population consists of various age groups, with a relatively youthful population due to a high birth rate. Socioeconomic disparities exist, with certain areas facing higher poverty rates. Saida hosts the Ain El-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp, the largest in the country. Many Palestinian residents have integrated with the local population through marriage and work.

Saida has a complex historical background marked by periods of conflict and occupation. The Lebanese Civil War and the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon have left lasting scars. Sectarian tensions, often fueled by historical grievances, have played a role in shaping the city's dynamics. External actors have exerted influence over the region, contributing to power imbalances. Most recent political tensions have been sectarian driven, dividing mostly the Shia population in the Haret Saida neighborhood from the larger surrounding city. Radical Sunni Islamists have also resorted to roadblocks to disconnect the larger Shia community residing further south from the rest of the country, particularly Beirut.

Economic opportunities in Saida are not evenly distributed, resulting in varying employment prospects and income disparities. The city's economy relies on sectors such as agriculture, trade, and tourism, though disparities in economic development exist between different neighborhoods. Vulnerabilities arise from economic dependencies on specific industries, such as fishing, handicrafts, and food as well as regional instability, further exacerbated by the presence of Syrian refugees.[96] Economic vulnerability is primarily driven by a lack of resilient and sustainable activities against a chronic state of instability in the city. As a consequence, much of the professional labor force continues to seek migration.

Economic crisis and political strife, compounded by sectarian dynamics, have significantly eroded social cohesion, leading to a fragmented community. For instance, a respondent pointed to the breakdown in social structures, exacerbated by a lack of governmental support and rampant corruption, which hinder access to essential services such as healthcare and education and foster politically motivated aid distribution, deepening social inequalities.

The economic precarity and socio-political challenges have uniquely impacted vulnerable groups within Saida. Women, compelled to support their families through multiple jobs or home-based work, face challenges that lead to shifts in traditional gender roles and expectations. Youth and disenfranchised populations are particularly affected by mental health issues, with an increase in suicide rates among young people, signaling the severity of the socio-economic and psychological pressures faced. The political and economic challenges disproportionately affect these groups, highlighting the need for solutions that address underlying issues of discrimination, economic disparity, and lack of support.

The political landscape in Saida is shaped by various sectarian and political affiliations. Hezbollah wields influence in the region further south of the city and in the Haret Saida neighborhood, reflecting the broader Shia presence in South Lebanon. However, the city itself provides a strong base to Sunni leadership, particularly the Hariri's Future Movement, as well as to the Nasserites led by Ousama Saad and the Islamic Group. Local governance structures may differ, and political divisions often align with religious lines, mostly divided between the Hariri supporters and those of Saad. Islamists as well as the Palestinian political and economic presence in the city is a major determinant of its politics.

96. Dewailly, B. (2015). Spatial fragmentation and rise in poverty: the conflict context in Saida. Conflict Analysis Digest, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Lebanon Support. https://hal.science/hal-04029281/

Saida's relationship with neighboring communities has historically influenced the city's security and politics. This includes inter-sectarian relations evolving out of Saida's relations with adjacent Shia and Christian cities and suburbs. Electoral politics take into consideration alliances formed to capture the predominantly Sunni voters of the city, along with those of the predominantly Christian votes of adjacent cities and the district of Jezzine.

Additionally, the presence of the Ain Al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp on the outskirts of Saida impacts the city's dynamics, including security and socio-economic challenges. Internal Palestinian factional violence has repeatedly spilled over to the heart of Saida. Hence, Saida's political leaders have played a pivotal role in negotiating an end to the camp's violence. Unstable conditions have negatively implicated the well-being of the city and the camp, as fighting has often destroyed businesses, undermined investment, and forced displacement.

Sectarian tensions in Lebanon can easily trigger turbulence in Saida and infuriate anti-Hezbollah and anti-Shia sentiments among radical Sunni Islamists. The presence of the Ain Al-Hilweh refugee camp also adds complexity to the city's security landscape, where intra-camp clashes often threaten a spillover. External factors, including the Syrian refugee impact and the economic crisis, further intensify tensions and undermine social cohesion.

2) Major Actors and Roles

The ongoing conflicts in Lebanon as well as in Saida stem from the influence of political parties and sectarian groups. These entities gain significant power by taking advantage of Lebanon's deeply rooted sectarian system. This system forms the foundation of the country's governance, creating a culture where political loyalty and religious identity are closely connected. This situation creates fertile ground for conflicts to arise. "Political figures and sectarian groups play a significant role in perpetuating conflicts for their own gain", as highlighted by one interviewee, underscoring the manipulative tactics employed to maintain power and control. The sectarian divide is further exacerbated by political parties leveraging these divisions, employing patronage networks to ensure loyalty, which is often rewarded with access to resources and opportunities.

Governmental inefficacy and corruption are additional catalysts for discord within Saida. The absence of transparent, accountable governance erodes public trust, creating a vacuum that non-state actors and sectarian groups readily exploit to assert their dominance. This scenario leaves the community reliant on these groups for basic services, thereby perpetuating their influence and deepening societal rifts.

The Palestinian leadership and their role within Saida cannot be understated. They emerge as significant figures, with their actions and decisions bearing profound implications on the community's socio-economic landscape. "The recruitment of young men into armed groups and organizations", as pointed out by an interviewee, reflects a disturbing trend of exploiting economic vulnerabilities for the consolidation of power, further destabilizing Saida's social fabric. Photos of political leaders and political slogans displayed around streets are evidence of polarization and fragmented political allegiance around different neighborhoods.

Figure 15 Streets in Saida, South Lebanon, depicting photos of political leaders on historical buildings.
Photo credit: InfoPro/Oxfam.

Amidst these dynamics, women, youth, and other vulnerable groups find themselves navigating a complex matrix of challenges and opportunities. Despite the pervasive gender stereotypes and the traditional roles ascribed to women, their participation in resistance movements and community initiatives stands as a testament to their resilience and agency. However, their contributions often go unrecognized, overshadowed by the prevailing patriarchal norms. A member of the municipality considered that: "Women's roles during times of conflict, such as their active participation in resistance movements, often go unrecognized by those in power", which reflects a nuanced understanding of the gendered dimensions of conflict, and the critical need for acknowledging and empowering their participation and recognition in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Youth and vulnerable groups are particularly susceptible to the allure of armed groups, often drawn by financial incentives amidst an environment of economic scarcity and limited opportunities. "80% of our people who are 15 years of age are getting firearms", one interviewee noted, pointing to the grim realities facing Saida's youth and the urgent need for interventions that offer viable alternatives and hope for the future.
Among the actors striving for peace and stability, civil society groups, NGOs, and notable political figures such as Bahia Al Hariri, Abdel Rahman Al Bizri, and Ousama Saad are recognized for their positive contributions.

Among the international actors, entities like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) play a pivotal role in providing humanitarian assistance and supporting socio-economic development within Palestinian refugee camps. However, the influence of these organizations is viewed through a critical lens by the community, with concerns over their potential to either mitigate or inadvertently exacerbate local tensions. The engagement of "major powers", as cited by a participant, suggests a complex landscape where international interventions are perceived as having dual potentials, influenced by geopolitical interests that may not always align with the community's immediate needs.

A community member said: "After those three difficult months that have passed, what I observe is that there are factors larger than our community at play, namely, some major powers that are engaged in regional conflicts, and ultimately, we bear the consequences of their actions."

Local civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) stand out as crucial actors in the fabric of Saida. These groups, including groups like the Saida-based Najdeh Association, attempt to fill the void left by governmental inadequacies, providing essential services, educational programs, and advocacy on critical issues such as women's rights and youth empowerment.

3) Key Issues and Interests

In Saida, a complex interplay of economic instability, sectarian and cultural differences, and the dynamics of refugee relations emerge as pivotal factors fueling conflicts and tensions within the community.

Economic instability is identified as a fundamental driver of tensions, with racism and bureaucratic hurdles exacerbating the situation. Discriminatory practices, particularly against the Palestinian community, manifest in everyday scenarios, such as a participant's recounting of being asked for their ID at a bakery after revealing their Palestinian identity. Such incidents underscore the prevalent discrimination based on nationality, hindering not only social cohesion but also economic participation. "The restriction on Palestinian businesses, where bureaucratic obstacles prevent individuals from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures", highlights the systemic barriers that exacerbate economic disparities and stifle potential sources of livelihood.

A participant in a FGD with the Palestinian community said: "The recruitment of young men into armed groups and organizations has also been identified as a significant factor in escalating tensions within the community... Throughout the economic crisis, 80% of us never thought of getting any firearms. Now you find 80% of our people, starting as young as 15, are getting firearms ."

Sectarianism and the influence of political parties are underscored as significant contributors to the community's discord. Participants identified several factors playing a significant role in perpetuating conflicts, including "political parties, sectarianism, racial and sectarian discrimination, with social media standing out" in making matters worse. The divisive role of political parties, leveraging sectarian identities for electoral gains, deepens societal rifts, with social media amplifying misinformation and exacerbating tensions.

The interactions between Syrian refugees and the Lebanese community in Saida add another layer to the complex tapestry of tensions. While some participants note the absence of significant conflict between Syrians and Lebanese, the competition for scarce resources and job opportunities underlines the broader challenges of economic instability and social inequality.

A participant in a FGD with the Lebanese community said: "The economic crisis didn't just affect our livelihood but it also affected the way people communicate with each other and interact. You find yourself angry most of the time without any reason... Some jobs could be done by foreigners while others are done by the citizens of the area. The issue is relative and it differs from person to person, but it's still a problem."

Addressing the urgent needs of the community to ensure social stability requires tackling the highlighted issues head-on. Initiatives aimed at "combating discriminatory hiring practices", "fixing the economic crisis", and "generating job opportunities" are identified as critical steps toward mitigating tensions. The establishment of local production facilities to reduce import dependence and create jobs is proposed as a solution to stimulate economic growth and provide equitable employment opportunities.

The role of women and mothers in navigating and mitigating these challenges is emphasized, particularly in the context of protecting youth from involvement in armed groups. "Mothers are portrayed as grappling with the dilemma of protecting their children", according to a participant, highlighting the gendered dimensions of the conflict and the critical role of women in fostering community resilience.

4) Dynamics

Unstable social relations not only stifle economic growth but also contribute to a sense of frustration and injustice among community members. The linkage between economic instability and societal discord is evident, as financial struggles lead to heightened interpersonal conflicts and exacerbate negative sentiments toward different community groups.

The role of political parties and sectarian divisions in perpetuating conflict is significant. The dynamics of power and control within Saida often pivot around sectarian affiliations and political maneuvering, with political parties leveraging these divides for their gain.

A participant in a FGD with authorities and stakeholders said: "There are numerous conflicts at the community level due to the lack of essential services being provided. The lack of governmental support and services has led to a breakdown in social structures, with corruption and mismanagement hindering access to essential resources like healthcare and education... Politically motivated distribution of aid and resources, along with corruption in public institutions, deepens social inequalities and erodes trust in authorities."

Certain individuals and groups emerge as connectors, such as prominent political figures including Bahia Al Hariri and Ousama Saad who are often suggested as instrumental in reducing or mitigating community discord. The emphasis on human connections and mutual support as vital components for overcoming challenges underscores the potential for positive relationships among different actors to de-escalate conflicts.

Women, youth, and vulnerable groups occupy pivotal positions in the relationship dynamics of Saida's conflict landscape. Their roles, often nuanced and influenced by societal expectations, contribute to both the perpetuation and resolution of tensions. The efforts of women's organizations highlight the gendered dimensions of conflict resolution and the vital role women play in community support networks.

The interactions among different actors in Saida, from political forces to civil society, shape the escalation or de-escalation of conflicts. These dynamics, characterized by both competition and cooperation, reveal the complex web of interests and relationships that underpin the city's social fabric. The role of education, as a transformative force, emerges as a crucial element for future change, with the potential to shift societal dynamics toward greater inclusivity and understanding.

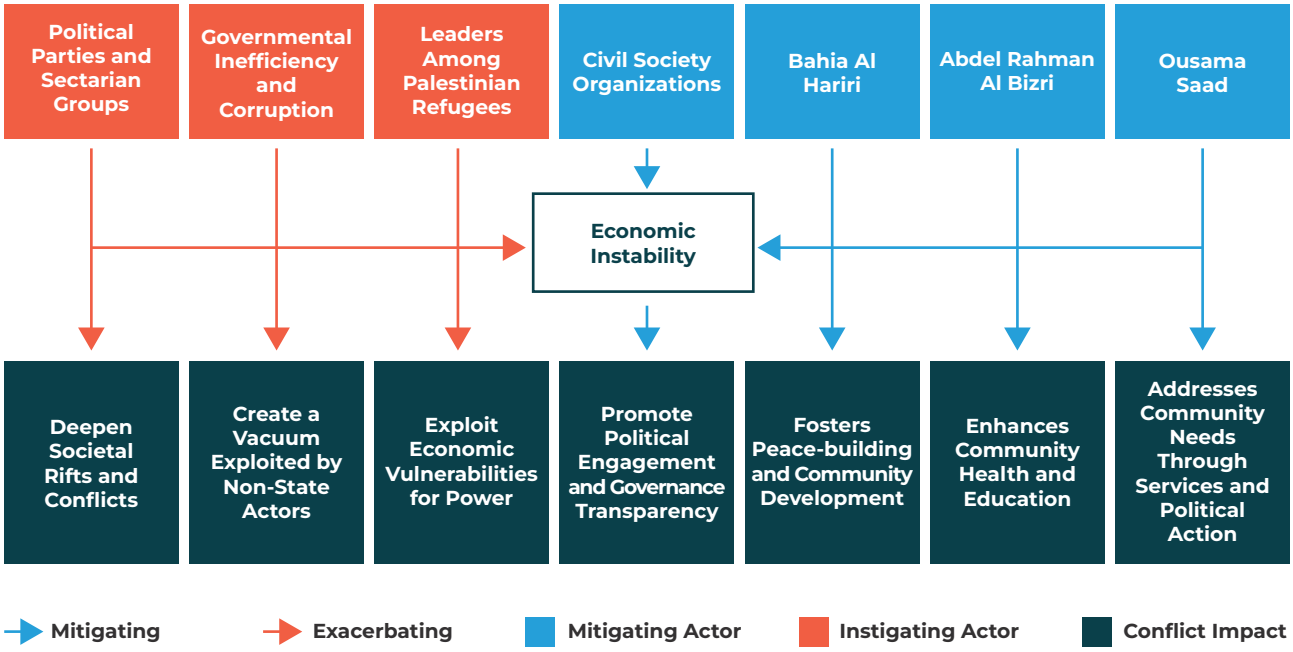

Diagram 9 Actors' contribution or mitigation toward economic instability in Saida

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

In Saida, peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms are shaped by the city's complex social and political landscape, where different communities, particularly the Lebanese and Palestinian populations, navigate their unique challenges and opportunities. For the Lebanese community, mechanisms often involve collaboration among various political and community leaders who strive to maintain harmony and resolve disputes through dialogue and negotiation. For instance, interviewees in Saida highlight how prominent figures and local politicians work together to de-escalate potential conflicts, particularly in contexts like the Ain Al-Hilweh camp where tensions can run high. One quote from the interviews underscores this collaborative spirit: "In Saida, positive relations exist among various political and prominent forces, collaborating to resolve tensions and avoid escalating conflicts."

The Palestinian community, however, faces distinct peacebuilding challenges due to its status and the unique socio-political dynamics of the refugee camps. Conflict resolution within the camps often involves local committees and Palestinian factions that negotiate to maintain order and address communal grievances. Despite these efforts, the camps sometimes experience violence and unrest, which are symptomatic of deeper socio-economic and political issues. These efforts are often described in the context of mitigating immediate crises rather than long-term solutions, as reflected by one participant: "In any tense situation, whether in Saida or the camps, political forces and parties always make efforts to resolve the problems peacefully."

Building on the existing mechanisms, there is an opportunity to enhance community-based peacebuilding initiatives that involve both Lebanese and Palestinian residents. Increasing the capacity of local NGOs and community groups that work across these divides can promote more integrated and sustainable peace efforts. Furthermore, fostering youth engagement and women's participation in peacebuilding processes can bring fresh perspectives and drive social cohesion. Educational initiatives that focus on peace education and reconciliation could also be pivotal, addressing historical grievances and promoting mutual understanding. As one interviewee suggests: "The emphasis is on hiring more women and youth, providing them with education, and developing their skills to help them contribute significantly in society", indicating a move toward more inclusive peacebuilding strategies that harness the potential of underrepresented groups.

6) Recommendations

- **Economic Empowerment through SMEs and Entrepreneurship:** Economic instability emerges as a pivotal source of tension within Saida, necessitating interventions that prioritize economic empowerment and inclusivity. Strategic efforts should focus on the creation of job opportunities through the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and support for entrepreneurial ventures, particularly those led by women and youth. Facilitating access to microfinance and business development services can empower these groups to overcome economic barriers, contributing to community resilience and stability.

- **Combatting Discriminatory Practices through Education and Policy Reform:** Discriminatory practices, especially those targeting Palestinian residents and other marginalized groups, exacerbate societal rifts. Education plays a critical role in combating these prejudices. Implementing comprehensive educational programs that promote understanding, tolerance, and respect for diversity is imperative. Parallel to educational initiatives, policy reforms aimed at eliminating discriminatory laws and regulations can provide a more equitable legal framework, ensuring that all community members have equal opportunities and rights.

- **Strengthening Civil Society for Community Support and Cohesion:** Civil society organizations (CSOs) and community groups stand as vital actors in Saida's social landscape, often bridging gaps left by governmental inadequacies. Supporting and strengthening these organizations, particularly those focusing on women's rights, youth empowerment, and vulnerable populations, can enhance their capacity to address community needs. Initiatives that foster community cohesion, such as interfaith dialogues and multicultural events, can further de-escalate tensions by celebrating diversity and promoting unity.

5. Mount Lebanon Governorate

1) Population and Demographics

Mount Lebanon is the region known as **'old Lebanon'** that was given early political autonomy by the Ottomans before the French expanded its territories in 1921 to include all current regions of modern Lebanon. Mount Lebanon is characterized by a **diverse population** that includes various ethnic and sectarian groups. It was known for its religious diversity, with significant Christian and Druze populations. It also entails a mix of Sunni and Shia Muslims, as well as other minority groups. Over time, the **demographic composition** in certain areas has **shifted**; for example, Barja is now entirely Sunni, Chiyah and Ghobeiri have become predominantly Shia, and Hay el Gharbeh is now a Sunni and Shia suburban neighborhood of Beirut. Christian Maronites are concentrated in Ain El Remmeneh. **Income disparities** exist within Mount Lebanon, with urban areas generally having higher income levels than rural areas. However, urban areas in Mount Lebanon are still filled with pockets of poverty.[97]

2) Social and Economic Dynamics

Socioeconomic status often correlates with religious and ethnic backgrounds, contributing to **complex social dynamics.** For instance, **poverty-stricken areas** in the Baabda district, also known as the Southern Suburbs of Beirut, are inhabited by mostly **non-resident Shia communities,** i.e., by tenants who are registered residents of other regions, such as the South or Bekaa. The socioeconomic status of this region sets it apart from other **Christian or Druze districts** while asserting Shia parties' dominance, such as the Amal Movement and Hezbollah. Armenian-inhabited areas of Burj Hammoud, on the other hand, are also established as a separate enclave of socioeconomic underserved communities, with the Armenian Tashnaq party establishing influence. **Sectarian and socioeconomic disparities** in Mount Lebanon may also be a factor in different political allegiances that are responsible for the formation of political alliances and, at other times, sectarian contentions.[98]

Mount Lebanon has a history of conflicts, including **sectarian tensions**, particularly during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). These conflicts have left **deep scars** and **unresolved grievances** within the community, such as those that existed between Druze and Christians in the Chouf Mountains or between Christians and Shia Muslims in the Southern District of Beirut. Historical grievances and disputes, especially related to **land ownership** and **political power,** continue to simmer and contribute to present-day tensions. However, land ownership and access to resources, including water, are contentious issues that can spark conflicts. **Competition for resources** often leads to disputes, particularly in rural areas.

Access to economic opportunities varies across the region, with urban centers offering more job prospects than rural areas. Economic mobility often depends on social and sectarian affiliations. This is particularly true in areas of sectarian closed enclaves, where jobs and economic opportunities are preserved in respective sectarian constituencies. Agriculture, tourism, and commerce are significant economic sectors. **Economic disparities** exist, with some areas heavily dependent on remittances from the Lebanese diaspora. The region's economy is vulnerable to external factors such as **national economic crises and political instability.** This is particularly the case as Mount Lebanon hosts a large portion of the Syrian and Palestinian refugees who also compete with local laborers for jobs and income.

3) Governance

Local governance structures are influenced by national politics and sectarian dominance. The region has a mix of political affiliations, which can lead to **divisions**. Residents align with various political parties, reflecting Lebanon's complex political landscape. This implicates all aspects of service provisions, including access to education, healthcare, and utilities that also vary between urban and rural areas. Infrastructure development is uneven, with urban areas benefiting more from investments. Hence, access to power instigates **electoral disputes** and **political maneuvering** that leads to recurring tensions, particularly around election times.

97. Lebanon Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019 (2022). Lebanon Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) and the World Bank. http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/PDFs/Poverty/Lebanon%20MPI%202022%20Report%20EN.pdf.
98. Salamey, I. (2021). The Government and Politics of Lebanon. Peter Lang Verlag. https://www.peterlang.com/document/1058650

1) Barja - Mount Lebanon

Figure 16 **Map of Lebanon, highlighting Barja - Mount Lebanon in red**

1) Community Profile

Barja's population reflects the broader diversity of Mount Lebanon but is predominantly inhabited by the Sunni Muslim community.[99] The age distribution in Barja is fairly balanced, encompassing multiple generations, from traditionalists to those embracing modern values. Socioeconomic status often correlates with religious backgrounds, contributing to intricate social dynamics.

Barja has been part of the historical conflicts in Mount Lebanon, particularly during the Lebanese Civil War, where sectarian tensions were a major factor. Historical grievances and disputes, including those related to land ownership and political power, continue to shape present-day tensions and divisions. The town has experienced various forms of governance influenced by sectarianism. The presence of Syrian refugees has also contributed to occasional tensions.[100]

Barja's history is marked by divisions between Chamoun and Jumblatt supporters, which later evolved into Chazliya and Adriya. In contemporary times the town has witnessed alignments with prevailing powers, from support for communist parties during the Soviet Union's peak, to alignment with the 14 March movement, and contemporary support to independent political movements and candidates. One participant stated: "Our community is fragile, as our thoughts are diverse and we struggle to unify around a single vision. Political pressure remains high in Barja," encapsulating the historical and ongoing political tensions that permeate the community.

Traditional values and cultural norms significantly influence social life in Barja, often closely tied to religious beliefs. Social hierarchies rooted in religious and sectarian affiliations can impact social cohesion. Strong family and community ties serve as both a support network and a potential source of division. Various Community-Based Organizations have attempted to shape the cultural life in this town, such as the Barja Cultural Center and Amis CLAC.

The community of Barja exhibits a notable sense of unity and familial cohesion, rooted in traditional practices such as respecting family elders and engaging in weekly family meetings. Despite this, the community faces political disagreements and a palpable generational gap. "Like any district, conflicts such as political and election-related issues can arise. Still, within our village, we set aside these conflicts and treat each other like a family", according to one participant, emphasizing the blend of harmony and underlying discord.

Education and a shift in focus toward the welfare of families in Barja have encouraged dialogue over conflict. One interviewee observed: "Previously centered around leadership, conflicts have shifted to focus on personal connections with army officers, police, politicians, and lawyers", indicating a significant transformation in the nature of conflicts.

Women and youth in Barja are at the forefront of navigating and addressing the community's challenges. Women's involvement in workshops and skill-building initiatives, leading to entrepreneurial ventures, showcases their pivotal role in mitigating economic conflicts. "Women who have participated in educational workshops now allocate a portion of their profits toward supporting further initiatives", according to a woman participant, which demonstrates the proactive stance they take toward community improvement.

99. Barja (n.d.). Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias. https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/7178463.
100. Dispute between Lebanese and Syrian refugees in Barja (2017). Civil Society Knowledge Center and Centre for Social Sciences Research and Action. https://civilsociety-centre.org/sir/dispute-between-lebanese-and-syrian-refugees-barja.

2) Major Actors and Roles

The government, identified by stakeholders as a primary actor, often comes under criticism for its role in exacerbating tensions. Decisions leading to the closure of public schools, a lack of security, and the absence of developmental projects are pointed out as catalysts for negative outcomes, particularly for the youth.

A participant in a FGD with community members said: "Barja ... is akin to a miniature Lebanon, encompassing all the conflicts found in the country at large. The influence of municipalities, a crucial local authority, remains significant, impacting familial attractions and biases."

An individual's pursuit of self-interest and immediate gains, exemplified during crises such as the gasoline shortage, underscores a broader community mindset inclined toward short-term benefits over sustainable development. This inclination toward immediate gratification is succinctly critiqued: "Conflicts do not arise without cause, and in this context, the government is often seen as a primary instigator. The economic crisis also plays a significant role, exacerbating tensions and contributing to the overall challenging environment."

A variety of non-state groups as well as state parties such as the Islamic Group, the Progressive Socialist Party, and the Future Party, emerge as significant players within Barja's conflict landscape. These groups primarily step in to address social and economic issues where the state has failed and work to mitigate conflicts. This occurs even though most of them are part of the government and state. Their efforts, driven by a mix of self-interest and a collective goal of conflict mitigation, reflect a complex relationship between state inadequacies, party interests, and community responses. One respondent reflects on this dynamic, noting that "most conflicts, whether social or economic, seem to stem from state failure. These groups work to mitigate conflicts rather than cause them."

Women, youth, and vulnerable groups occupy critical roles in the context of conflicts and tensions. Women, through participation in workshops and skill-building initiatives, not only contribute to their families' financial stability but also play a significant role in conflict resolution and mitigation efforts. A municipal stakeholder provided an example where such participation is crucial for communal stability stating that "women who have participated in educational workshops now allocate a portion of their profits toward supporting further initiatives, demonstrating their commitment to community improvement." Their entrepreneurial ventures, fueled by educational workshops, demonstrate a commitment to community improvement, albeit within a framework that requires further support and resources. Youth, on the other hand, influenced significantly by limited educational and employment opportunities, find themselves disillusioned. The inadequate quality of public education and the lack of access to higher education exacerbate their marginalization, pushing some toward negative coping mechanisms such as drug abuse and gambling.

The influence of prominent figures, including religious and political leaders alongside local authorities, is notable.

3) Key Issues and Interests

Political dynamics and the absence of effective leadership are central to the perpetuation of divisions within Barja. "Political parties have often prioritized their interests over the collective well-being of Barja's residents, leading to a sense of disillusionment and mistrust among the populace", according to a participant. This sentiment encapsulates the pervasive impact of political self-interest and leadership deficiencies on community cohesion. Additionally, the role of traditional associations, which "may have initially aimed to preserve cultural heritage and promote community cohesion", but whose influence has sometimes led to "ignorance and isolationism", further exacerbates tensions.

A community member said: "In Barja, the conflicts, predominantly political in nature, overshadow any social or financial reasons behind them."

Economic disparities and job opportunities emerge as significant factors, with tensions arising from "competition between different political groups for job opportunities", indicating the intersection of economic and sectarian divides. The mention of a conflict over a municipal appointment underscores the linkage between economic opportunities and political affiliations, spotlighting the profound impact of these disputes on social harmony.

Systemic corruption is identified as a primary driver of conflict, empowering warlords and entrenching political control.

Investing in youth through education is highlighted as an urgent need to ensure a more socially stable environment. One participant stated: "One key approach is investing in youth through education, thus recognizing them as the future." This perspective underscores the pivotal role of youth empowerment in fostering societal stability and progress. The acknowledgment of the youth's unrealized potential due to inadequate investment

in education and skills development underscores a crucial area for intervention.

The emphasis on education and economic empowerment indirectly highlights the critical role of women and girls in mitigating conflicts and contributing to societal stability. The advocacy toward "investing in youth" and the necessity of a "proper government apparatus" to address societal issues, reflect an awareness of the need for inclusive strategies that consider the unique challenges and contributions of all community members, including women and girls.

4) Dynamics

Within town, the fabric of relationships often serves as both the catalyst for conflict and the mechanism for its resolution. It is noted that when minor tensions arise, "the relationship among different parties is cohesive." The interactions frequently transition from potential conflict to concerted dialogue, illustrating a communal capacity for peaceful conflict resolution. This social resilience is further exemplified by how "the community collaborates effectively in resolving conflicts", which often leads to relatively short-lived issues.

A participant in a FGD with the local community said: "Despite some conflicts, such as political disagreements and generational gaps, the overall atmosphere is described as harmonious. However, there are underlying issues affecting the community, particularly concerning the youth."

The absence of sectarianism is highlighted as a crucial element in maintaining community cohesion. For instance, the equitable division of municipal lists among different village groups has been instrumental in minimizing conflicts, indicating a proactive approach to inclusive governance. However, the dynamics are not without their complexities. One respondent noted that "sectarian political parties often antagonize each other, and frequently collaborate to uphold their interests", revealing a paradoxical relationship where mutual self-interest can both spark and settle disputes.

Within these dynamics, certain individuals and groups can emerge as either conflict drivers or peacemakers. Government and large investors are perceived as winners due to their significant profits, whereas the youth face increasing challenges. The narrative underscores a sense of collective responsibility, yet a critical gaze is cast upon the government for its role in the systemic issues: "If we consider the situation carefully, we realize that if things remain unchanged, the outcomes will be very negative."
Women's opinions are valued, but with caveats—resistance can occur if women take on roles traditionally reserved for men, such as starting a political party. This resistance to women's full participation in political processes is a manifestation of deep-seated cultural norms and highlights a critical area for gender-focused conflict mitigation efforts.

The youth are described as agents of change, taking "individual initiatives and using social media to be heard", according to a participant. The importance of integrating youth into local organizations as a means of positive reinforcement and role modeling is emphasized. Their active participation represents a departure from traditional mechanisms of influence and signals a shift toward new forms of civic engagement, through serving as connectors in conflict dynamics.

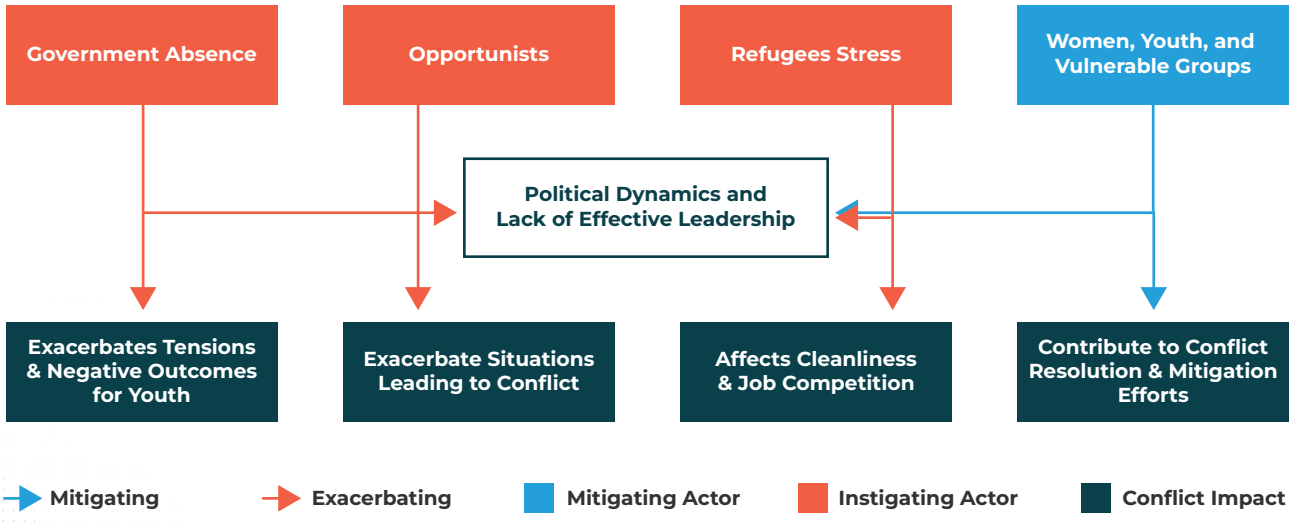

Diagram 10 **Actors' contribution or mitigation toward political dynamics and lack of effective leadership in Barja**

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

In Barja, community-based dialogues serve as a primary mechanism for peacebuilding and conflict resolution. These dialogues operate on the premise of inclusivity, bringing together diverse groups within the community to discuss issues and negotiate differences. One respondent captures the essence of these interactions, stating: "When minor tensions arise, everyone comes together to discuss and seek peaceful resolutions." This quote underscores a foundational aspect of Barja's conflict resolution approach: the reliance on cohesive relationships to facilitate communication and forge agreements.

However, the peacebuilding process in Barja is not without its complexities. Different communities within the town exhibit varying levels of conflict and cooperation. For instance, some areas might experience relatively minor tensions that are often resolved internally, while others, perhaps those with a higher concentration of refugees, might grapple with more pronounced economic challenges. A resident noted the practical approach to such situations: "The club, was initially used as the care center for Syrians. But due to the economic crisis, it now serves both Lebanese and Syrians." This example reflects a dynamic response to changing circumstances, illustrating adaptability in peacebuilding efforts.
Building on these existing mechanisms, there is potential to formalize the processes, such as establishing local peace committees with equal representation from various community groups, including women and youth. As reported in the interviews, there are "important actors who contribute to social cohesion and peace within the communities", including "reform-minded individuals who can be artists, activists, athletes, or average citizens." To leverage this, Barja could invest in capacity-building for these local influencers, equipping them with conflict resolution skills to mediate disputes effectively. Further, by ensuring that "vulnerable groups actively participate in our conversations", the community can broaden the spectrum of voices in peace processes, ensuring more sustainable and inclusive outcomes.

6) Recommendations

- **Economic Empowerment through Vocational Training for Women:** A critical intervention is the economic empowerment of women. This can be operationalized through the establishment of vocational training centers, which, according to local accounts, should integrate gender-sensitive curricula and linkages to financial institutions to provide credit. Such centers would address the specific gaps in women's economic participation and aim to increase their agency in the local market.

- **Political Inclusivity through Gender Quotas:** Political inclusivity is particularly salient in Barja, where the data points to the disenfranchisement of women in governance. Mechanisms such as gender quotas in local councils or facilitated entry points for women's political participation could serve as corrective measures to enhance representativeness.

- **Enhancing Access to Comprehensive Health Services:** In terms of healthcare, the interview data from Barja suggest that access to comprehensive health services, particularly mental health services, is inadequate. Interventions should be specific and data-driven, focusing on areas where gaps are most pronounced. These services should be scaled up, with a focus on culturally competent care and community-based outreach to ensure they are accessible to all genders and ages.

2) Hay el Gharbeh /Ghobeiri - Mount Lebanon

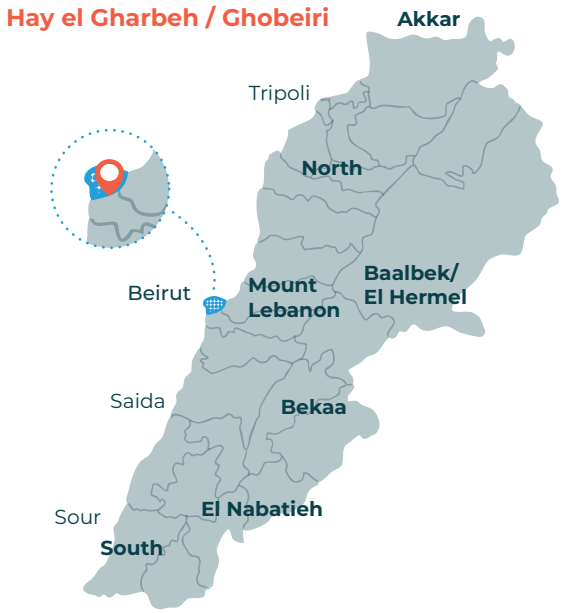

Figure 17 Map of Lebanon, highlighting Hay el Gharbeh/Ghobeiri - Mount Lebanon in red

1) Community Profile

Hay el Gharbeh/Ghobeiri does not appear on Google Maps, as it is an informal settlement. Part of its population includes stateless people and children. It is inhabited by mostly Shia Muslims along with Sunni Palestinian refugees who reside in the adjacent Sabra Palestinian Refugee Camp. Christians and other minority groups deserted the area during the Civil War. The presence of Syrian refugees has added to the demographic complexity, some of whom are Palestinians who have fled the Syrian conflict. There is a large number of foreign national groups, including Ethiopians, Filipinos, and other nationalities of workers. The neighborhood is also known to host stateless individuals. The area has also seen recruitment efforts by extremist groups in the past.

Historically, sectarian tensions have existed in this area, reflecting broader religious divisions in Lebanon. Armed Palestinian groups have historically clashed with the Shia Amal Movement on the outskirts of the Sabra Camp. The recent influx of Syrian refugees due to the Syrian civil war has strained resources and occasionally led to social tensions. The neighborhood has witnessed the presence of non-state armed actors, including tribal clans competing to control turfs in different neighborhoods and around the Sabra area. But Hezbollah and the Amal movement exert ultimate control. The neighborhood has grown over time to become a hub for illicit and trafficking activities.

Community relations in Hay el Gharbeh are characterized by a dual narrative of cohesion and conflict. On one hand, there exists 'calm' interactions between Lebanese, Syrians, and Palestinians, where major sectarian conflicts are notably absent. However, this semblance of harmony is periodically disrupted by clashes arising from individual interests and power dynamics within the community. For instance, disputes over parking spaces and access to utilities often escalate into conflicts, highlighting the fragile balance maintained in daily interactions. The use of public spaces for drug consumption further exacerbates community tensions, undermining the sense of safety and mutual respect. One participant noted: "Instances of unwarranted violence and theft against Syrians have been reported", underscoring the prejudice and hostility that Syrian refugees face within the community. A notable event in this regard was a conflict over generator subscriptions, where the exertion of control by dominant individuals within the community led to violent confrontations.

The evolution of these conflicts and tensions can be attributed to contemporary socio-economic challenges compounded by state failure. Political affiliations and the lack of governance have fueled an environment of insecurity and instability. Conflicts frequently erupt over trivial matters, such as parking disputes, but are indicative of deeper underlying issues. The prevalence of drug use among the youth and the lack of employment opportunities contribute significantly to the community's unrest. The absence of effective law enforcement allows for the unchecked rise of armed gangs and criminal activities, further destabilizing the community. One resident described the situation as follows: "Now, there are armed gangs that roam at night, and there is looting on the streets; weed and drug abuse."

Civil society organizations work on various issues, including conflict resolution and community development. Interviews with partners indicate that two groups are particularly active in the neighborhood and those are Right to Play and Tahade. The latter runs a kindergarten.

Organizations face **challenges** in working in Hay el Gharbeh due to several factors:

- **Informal Settlement Status:** As an informal settlement, Hay el Gharbeh often lacks proper infrastructure and official recognition, making it difficult for organizations to establish consistent and effective operations.
- **Economic Hardship:** Extreme poverty in the area means resources are scarce, and residents may prioritize immediate survival over engagement with external programs.

- **Political and Social Instability:** The region's political and social instability can pose risks to the safety and continuity of services for organizations trying to operate there.

- **Limited Funding:** Many NGOs rely on donations and grants, which may not be sufficient to address the extensive needs of the population in Hay el Gharbeh.

Women, youth, and vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled, and poor are disproportionately affected by these conflicts. Women, in particular, face targeted theft and harassment, a reflection of the broader gender dynamics at play in conflict-affected settings. The youth, on the other hand, are ensnared in a cycle of violence and crime, often as both perpetrators and victims. The community's reliance on the strongest individuals or armed groups for protection in times of conflict underscores the absence of a legitimate and effective governance structure.

2) Major Actors and Roles

At the core of the community's tensions, political parties such as Hezbollah and the Amal Movement stand out, with their actions either fueling or quelling disputes depending on the context. The role of such entities underscores the political dimension of local conflicts, wherein power dynamics significantly affect the peace and stability of Hay el Gharbeh. The worsening economic crisis, marked by rising unemployment rates, exacerbates community tensions, highlighting the economic underpinnings of the social strife. A member of the local community considers that: "Despite having qualifications, graduates often struggle to find suitable employment", pointing to the frustration and impatience brewing among the youth and broader population due to economic deterioration.

Discriminatory practices based on nationality or religion add another layer of tension within the community, leading to incidents that underscore the societal divide. For instance, a local community member noted that: "A Lebanese man's shooting of a Syrian delivery worker over a delayed delivery" illustrates how economic stress, compounded by prejudice, can lead to violent outcomes. Such incidents highlight the societal prejudices and lack of protectionism toward non-Lebanese marginalized groups, contributing to unequal opportunities and fostering a culture of discrimination and violence.

On the local and communal level, the presence of armed gangs and criminal elements, often operating discreetly or without clear affiliations to political entities, complicates the identification of responsible actors. These groups engage in a range of illicit activities, from drug trade to armed robbery, thriving in the absence of effective government intervention. Their activities underscore the challenges in ascertaining specific individuals or groups responsible for escalating tensions.

> **A participant in a FGD with the local community said: "In Hay el Gharbeh, the situation is further complicated by the involvement of armed gangs and criminal elements. Many individuals causing conflicts often wear masks or operate discreetly, making it difficult to ascertain specific actors responsible for escalating tensions."**

The influence of these actors and stakeholders on the socio-political landscape is profound, with political, economic, and social factors intertwining to shape the community's dynamics. The municipality's efforts to prioritize essential services amidst criticisms of resource distribution underscore the complexities of governance and public service provision in an economically strained environment.

Meanwhile, grassroots initiatives and cultural events emerge as vital avenues for promoting social cohesion and preserving cultural heritage, offering glimmers of hope in bridging community divides.

Women, youth, and vulnerable groups bear significant burdens during these conflicts, with economic challenges leading to psychological strain and strained family relations. The emergence of organizations aimed at addressing mental health issues and advocating for increased awareness around critical issues signifies the community's efforts to mitigate the impact of these challenges. Yet, the strained relationship between Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees, marked by perceived unfair treatment and frustration, further complicates the efforts toward social cohesion.

3) Key Issues and Interests

The community's narrative reveals a poignant sense of injustice stemming from socio-economic disparities, as articulated by participants who note the skewed distribution of aid and essential services. This inequality breeds competition and resentment, particularly when the provision of food parcels and necessities becomes a battleground for survival among the most vulnerable.

The manipulation of local informal and illicit activities by gangs emerges as a pivotal force in the perpetuation of conflict. These entities, operating with calculated discretion, extend their tentacles into various facets of the community's life, exploiting the desperation and vulnerability of marginalized individuals. Their control over the drug trade and other unlawful enterprises is not merely an asser-

tion of power but a systematic strategy to entrench their influence. Gangs capitalize on the economic hardship pervasive in Hay el Gharbeh, drawing individuals, especially the youth, into a vortex of criminality and dependence. The absence of effective governance and law enforcement provides fertile ground for these entities to flourish, exacerbating the community's plight.

A participant in a FGD with the local communities said: "The primary driver behind these conflicts is the pervasive use of drugs. This illicit trade fuels tensions and exacerbates existing rivalries, leading to further friction and animosity among the communities."

Economic instability and unemployment are underscored as the linchpins of tension, with the COVID-19 pandemic magnifying these challenges. The narrative of economic hardship interlinks with the shadowy operations of gangs, illustrating how poverty and lack of employment opportunities become conduits for gang manipulation. "Poverty, verbal abuse, disputes within the community, theft, economic hardship, drug abuse, and acts of violence", according to a participant, enumerate the multifarious triggers of conflict, painting a vivid picture of a community under siege from both visible and invisible forces of discord.

Figure 18 **Visual representations of political figures on the streets in Ghobeiri, Mount Lebanon.**
Photo credit: InfoPro/Oxfam.

To disentangle the community from this web of conflict, a nuanced understanding of the root causes is imperative. Addressing the socioeconomic disparities and the stranglehold of gangs on the informal economy necessitates a concerted effort that transcends conventional conflict resolution strategies. Initiatives aimed at dismantling the power structures of gangs and providing viable economic opportunities are critical. Equally important is the revitalization of the education system, ensuring that it serves as a bulwark against the allure of gang life and a pathway to socioeconomic mobility.

4) Dynamics

The landscape of conflict resolution in Hay el Gharbeh is marked by the pivotal contributions of specific actors and organizations. Notably, organizations like Tahade, alongside figures such as Abou Hassan Sabbagh or Abou Hassan Darwich supported by Hezbollah, are recognized for their instrumental roles in restoring community order. Their intervention, particularly in cases of robbery, has been crucial for rebuilding trust among residents, according to one participant. This underscores the significance of local leadership in addressing disputes and fostering a sense of cohesion.

Men within the neighborhood also play a vital role in reducing tensions, engaging in mediation efforts that promote dialogue and support. This collective action highlights the community's capacity for self-regulation and solidarity. However, a persistent challenge emerges from the community's reliance on connections with influential figures or gangs for dispute resolution, suggesting a need for more inclusive conflict management mechanisms that empower all residents.
The conflict dynamics in Hay el Gharbeh delineate a stark contrast between the winners and losers of these tensions. Marginalized groups—youth, women, and the economically disadvantaged—often find themselves on the losing end, facing heightened vulnerability. "These groups often suffer the most, facing increased vulnerability to exploitation, violence, and economic hardship", a participant reflected, highlighting the disproportionate impact of conflict on these communities. In contrast, those engaging in theft and criminal activities might temporarily benefit from the prevailing instability, exploiting others for personal gain.

A participant in a FGD with the authorities and stakeholders said: "Moreover, conflicts arise from a lack of governance and ineffective service provision. The absence of government presence leaves communities vulnerable to exploitation by powerful individuals or armed groups."

The interactions among sectarian political parties in Hay el Gharbeh are characterized by a blend of collaboration and antagonism. Despite their frequent opposition, these parties unite when it serves their interests, often prioritizing political control over public welfare. Although sectarian political parties often antagonize each other, they frequently collaborate to uphold their interests, revealing the calculated nature of these relationships, where power dynamics overshadow communal harmony.

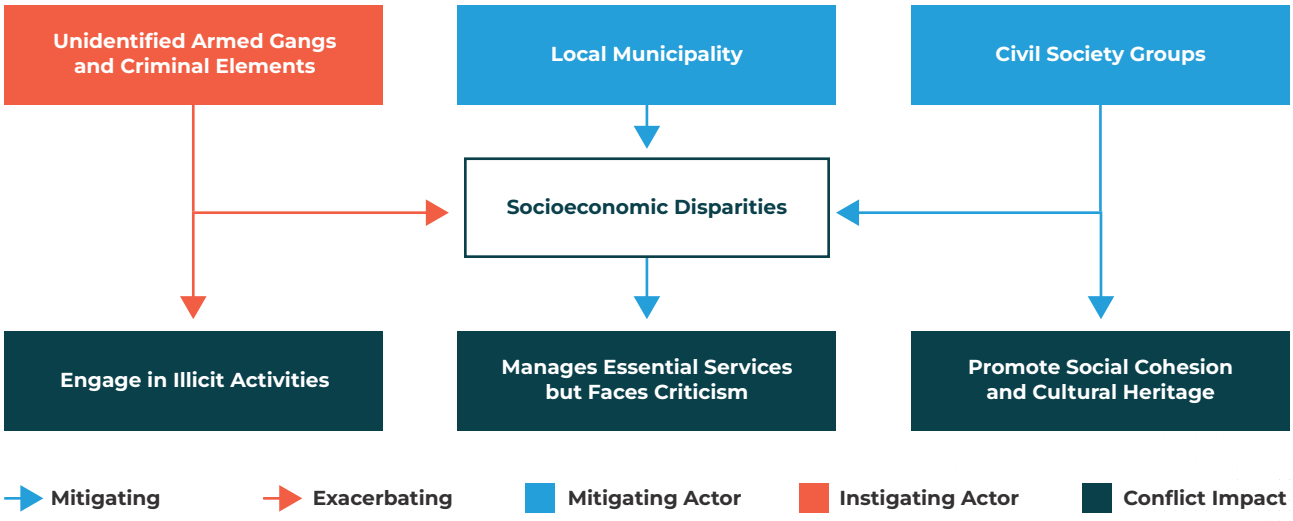

Diagram 11 Actors' contribution or mitigation toward socio-economic disparities in Hay el Gharbeh

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

In Hay el Gharbeh, some mechanisms for peacebuilding and conflict resolution are being utilized. One of the mechanisms involves community-based initiatives such as the involvement of organizations like Tahade and local figures supported by Hezbollah, which have been instrumental in resolving disputes and maintaining order. For instance, their efforts in mediating disputes and interventions in criminal activities have garnered recognition within the community. As one participant noted: "Figures such as Abou Hassan Sabbagh or Abou Hassan Darwich, supported by Hezbollah, have taken charge of resolving issues and restoring order." This suggests a reliance on local leadership and organizational support to mediate and resolve conflicts, highlighting the community's capacity for self-regulation and the importance of trusted local figures in maintaining peace.

Furthermore, the role of informal community leaders, particularly men in the neighborhood, has been significant in mediating disputes and fostering dialogue. Their involvement in conflict resolution activities demonstrates the community's reliance on traditional structures and personal relationships to manage tensions. This grassroots approach to peacebuilding is evident in the way community members come together to support one another, with men often taking the lead in these efforts. A participant mentioned: "Men within the neighborhood have actively contributed to reducing tensions", indicating the gender dynamics at play and the potential for expanding these roles to include more diverse community members, particularly women, and youth, to broaden the base of peace advocates.

However, while these existing mechanisms have provided some level of stability, there is substantial room for development and enhancement, particularly in formalizing and expanding the scope of these interventions. The current reliance on a few key figures and informal community leaders suggests a potential vulnerability—should these figures be unavailable or lose their influence, the system might falter. Thus, there is a critical need to establish more formalized peacebuilding frameworks that are inclusive of women and youth, providing them with the training and resources needed to take on leadership roles in conflict resolution. Expanding educational programs to include peace education curricula and life skills training can empower younger generations and women, equipping them with the tools needed to actively participate in and lead community peacebuilding efforts.

6) Recommendations

- **Economic Revitalization through Vocational Training and Educational Initiatives:** To revitalize the local economy, the establishment of vocational training centers is proposed. These centers will be designed to meet the specific demands of the local market, focusing on skills that are in high demand to ensure that participants have employment opportunities upon completion of their training. To promote inclusivity in economic initiatives, these vocational training centers will offer specialized programs and access for women and youth. This approach aims to address existing gender disparities and combat youth unemployment, providing these groups with the skills and opportunities they need to succeed. Furthermore, partnerships with local businesses will be facilitated to enable direct job placements for graduates of the training programs. By collaborating with local enterprises, this initiative will enhance sustainable economic development and ensure that the training provided is directly aligned with the needs of the job market. To enhance education in the community, efforts will be made to strengthen educational infrastructure. This will involve collaborating with NGOs to implement after-school programs aimed at bridging educational gaps, especially in areas with limited resources. Additionally, life skills training will be incorporated into the curriculum. By embedding conflict resolution and civic engagement into everyday learning, the goal is to cultivate well-rounded, community-minded individuals who are prepared to contribute positively to society.

- **Security and Community Stability:** To enhance security and community stability, community policing initiatives will be developed. These efforts will aim to foster cooperation between law enforcement and community members, with a particular emphasis on significant involvement from women's groups. Additionally, rehabilitation and reintegration programs will be implemented for former gang members. These programs are designed to disrupt the cycle of violence and recruitment, providing former gang members with the support they need to reintegrate into society and lead productive lives.

3) Chiyah-Ain El Remmeneh – Mount Lebanon

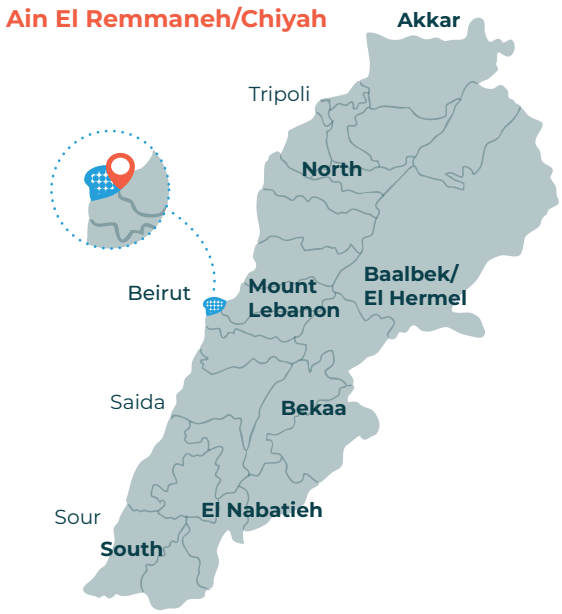

Figure 19 **Map of Lebanon, highlighting Chiyah-Ain El Remmeneh - Mount Lebanon in red**

1) Community Profile

Chiyah's population is predominantly Shia Muslim and Christian Maronite; the latter are concentrated in the area of Ain El Remmeneh. The age distribution in Chiyah is diverse, with a mix of young and older residents. Income disparities exist within the neighborhood, with pockets of poverty amidst relatively better-off areas.
Chiyah, like many areas in Beirut, has a history marked by the Lebanese Civil War and its aftermath, which left deep-seated sectarian tensions. The division between the Shia area and the Christian Maronite area, separated by the Damascus Road, witnessed the demarcation of the "green line" during the Lebanese Civil War. Historical grievances related to past conflicts continue to influence social dynamics and politics within the neighborhoods.

Chiyah's Southern side maintains strong ties to Shia Muslim cultural norms and values while the Ain El Remmeneh maintains Maronite Christian practices. Social hierarchies often align with political and religious affiliations, impacting community cohesion. Social networks and community organizations play a significant role in the neighborhood's social fabric. But both sections of the neighborhood are hardly cohesive and mostly fragmented along sectarian lines. Still, women groups and activists play a role in melding both sides of the isle. Some notable women's organizations exist in the area, including Sawt Al Maraah (Voice of Women).

The Shia part of Chiyah is politically aligned with Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, who practice political dominance and security control in the area. The Ain El Remmeneh side is mostly controlled by the Lebanese Forces. Tensions escalated in 2021 when clashes erupted between the two sides during a Shia-led protest against the Port explosion investigation, as protesters attempted to cross into the Christian part of the neighborhood.[101][102] Political divisions along sectarian lines are common, with implications for local governance and representation. The local government of Chiyah, however, is predominantly Christian Maronites.

Positive interactions across sectarian divides can be noted as long as sensitive topics are avoided, but undercurrents of conflict exist, sometimes manifesting in direct confrontations over political and religious differences. Efforts to merge youths from different sects, such as the work being done by the Chabibeh Sporting Club, show initial success but are fragile, easily disrupted by external influences, such as the Tayyouneh clashes, highlighting the persistent sectarian biases.[103] Members of the community mention various initiatives that aimed to bridge both communities that were stalled by sectarian tensions. Participants in the FGDs recall an attempt to bring together youths from both neighborhoods 15 years ago, yet one participant concluded that: "Despite initial success, any progress made was quickly eroded by a small announcement on television, demonstrating the fragility of peace-building efforts."

The availability of basic services like healthcare and education can be uneven, with some areas facing infrastructure challenges.[104] The neighborhood has witnessed an influx of Syrian refugees, contributing to resource strain and social tensions. Hence, Sectarian tensions, political disputes, and competition for resources are potential triggers for conflicts within Chiyah.

101. Isaly, David. (2022). Close to the brink. Now Lebanon. https://nowlebanon.com/close-to-the-brink-2/
102. Alaeddine, L., Dorandeu, G., & Jalkh, J. (2022). Tayyouneh clashes: One year later, questions remain unanswered. L'Orient-Le Jour. https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1314720/tayyouneh-clashes-one-year-later-questions-remain-unanswered.html
103. One for all, all for one: Youth peace-building initiative (n.d.). Daleel Madani. https://daleel-madani.org/civil-society-directory/chabibeh-club/calls/one-all-all-one-youth-peace-building-initiative
104. Beirut City Profile (2021). United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/07/2021.07.19.pdf

Women and youth, including those with disabilities, are significantly affected, facing altered daily routines and mental health impacts due to conflict. Efforts to engage women in peace-building reflect a recognition of their potential to influence social change. This has been demonstrated during various occasions when women mobilized sectarian solidarity gatherings and activities against civil violence.[105] However, challenges persist, with societal and infrastructural issues impacting vulnerable populations disproportionately.

Women's roles in navigating and mitigating these tensions, especially within families and communities, highlight their crucial position in fostering dialogue and reconciliation. The formation and dissolution of peace committees and grassroots initiatives indicate a gendered approach to peace-building, emphasizing the importance of engaging women in these processes for lasting change.

2) Major Actors and Roles

The omnipresence of political parties is articulated through sentiments such as "the main actors in this area are the political parties." Their modus operandi involves the orchestration of division to consolidate power, a strategy evolved and adapted to the contemporary setting, wherein "criticism within the same religion is acceptable, but speaking negatively about one's own religious leader in front of someone from a different religion is deemed inappropriate", according to a participant, reflecting the complex religious and social fabric woven over the years.

A community member stated: "I grew up in Chiyah and even worked there. I lived through both the war and the post-war periods. The conflicts aren't just between Ain El Remmene and Chiyah; they also occur within the same area. While on the surface, these issues can be portrayed as sectarian conflicts involving groups like the Lebanese Forces, Kataeb, Amal Movement, Hezbollah, or even between Sunni and Shia, that's merely their prerogative. Deep down, this is not the case. It's political."

Delving into the past, the narrative from 1975 chronicles the ascendancy of political groups, whose influence endured and transformed with the unfolding of events in regions like Chiyah. This transformation is captured in the recounting of historical power shifts: "In Chiyah, the attributions of conflicts shifted from Palestinians to Syrians and presently to Hezbollah and Amal." Despite these shifts, the essence of conflict remains a perennial struggle for political ascent among various groups and clans.

The roles of women, youth, and vulnerable groups in the context of conflict are not just of passive recipients but of proactive agents of change. The youth are seen as harbingers of peace, with one participant highlighting their potential: "We can establish a small project that might unite the youths of both Christian and Muslim religions, through a step-by-step process." The youth-led initiatives emerge as a beacon of reconciliation and hope for a community fragmented by sectarian and political lines.

The influence of municipalities and their efforts toward conflict resolution is notably recognized in the initiatives targeting the social and educational development of women and children. An informant acknowledged: "I have collaborated with them on initiatives targeting women and children to raise awareness", signifying a collective move toward nurturing a generation steeped in values of peace and understanding.

The power dynamics within the community are diverse and complex. As one interviewee explains, "the key actors vary across different communities, primary actors might be armed political groups alongside drug lords and managers of illicit activities like prostitution." These actors not only underscore the varied nature of governance but also reveal the myriad challenges faced in the quest for community harmony.

3) Key Issues and Interests

Political parties are identified as the main actors within this intricate landscape, with a pointed focus on their role in maintaining control through division. The narrative suggests that these entities have a vested interest in sustaining a divided community, a strategy that has seemingly permeated the fabric of Chiyah and Ain El Remmeneh. A participant's reflection that, in 2024, individuals should be more conscious and less susceptible to the influence of these political leaders, encapsulates the community's awareness and growing weariness of political manipulation.

A community member said: "The main reasons for all conflicts are religion and sectarianism. A while back, the ABC mall would prohibit women from working there if they were wearing a Hijab. Instead of finding ways to reduce such issues, they are fueling it."

105. Kranz, M. (2019). In Beirut, women lead show of unity after night of tensions. Middle East Eye. Retrieved from https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/beirut-women-lead-show-unity-after-night-tensions

Amidst these challenges, the interviews bring to light the community's acknowledgment of the urgent need for initiatives that foster social stability. Awareness-raising sessions and educational discussions are highlighted as vital tools for correcting misunderstandings and altering perspectives. An intriguing insight comes from a speaker who recalls the influence of early exposure to divisive content: "They [peace activists] would make us watch videos, and try to convince us through games." The deep-seated roots of conflict that span generations underscore the importance of addressing the underlying narratives that fuel division.

Furthermore, the proposition to create clubs or activities that bridge diverse groups underlines the community's aspiration for shared spaces that promote positive interactions. This aligns with the broader vision of enforcing laws and rules that ensure equality and respect across societal groups, suggesting a recognition of the need for systemic changes to uphold community values.
However, the path to achieving these objectives is fraught with obstacles. The influence of political messaging, the challenge of altering long-held beliefs, and the impact of societal norms are cited as significant barriers. Civil initiatives, such as women leading shows of unity after the 2019 clashes or the "One for All, All for One" campaign, have failed to build local resilience against violence when faced with significant national and sectarian tensions. This is evident in the violence that erupted following the highly sectarian-charged protest led by Hezbollah and the Amal Movement against the anti-port explosion investigation, which crossed into a Christian area. This incident demonstrates that local peace initiatives cannot withstand larger and more overwhelming sectarian conflicts. Such instances highlight the fragile nature of peace-building efforts in the face of enduring conflicts and interests.

At the intersection of these issues, the role of women and the influence of upbringing emerge as critical themes for mitigating tensions. Initiatives targeting women and children for awareness and education are viewed as essential for instilling values of acceptance and respect from an early age. This reflects a strategic approach to conflict mitigation that leverages the influential role of mothers in shaping the perspectives of the younger generation.

4) Dynamics

One participant notes the scarcity of individuals committed to peace in the neighborhoods, stating: "There are few individuals in the area who actively engage in resolving conflicts." This observation underscores a community inclination toward violence as a default response to conflict, only seeking external intervention when situations reach a boiling point. Such interventions typically involve the municipality or the Lebanese Armed Forces, which "would then dispatch armed forces" in more severe cases, indicating a reliance on formal institutions for conflict resolution.

The reliance on the municipality and formal security mechanisms is echoed across testimonies. One individual recounts a personal experience: "I heard gunshots. It was a confrontation between drug dealers and the police, resulting in a gunfight." This anecdote not only highlights the community's exposure to violence but also underscores the critical role of formal security measures in maintaining order.

Despite this, the municipality's role is often reactive, stepping in when situations escalate significantly. The involvement of non-state or clan leaders in resolving major disputes suggests an underlying reliance on traditional authority figures for conflict resolution, especially in situations involving large groups or families. This duality of formal and informal conflict resolution mechanisms highlights the complex interplay of community dynamics in Chiyah and Ain El Remmeneh.

Political dynamics further complicate these relationships. The neighborhood is a microcosm of Lebanon's broader political fragmentation, with "numerous political parties and factions" driven more by loyalty to leaders than by the country's welfare. This fragmentation is contrasted with more unified political systems, pointing to a deep-seated issue of political loyalty that exacerbates community tensions.

A participant in a FGD with the authorities and stakeholders said: "In the last 15 years, we saw that they would communicate and interact well with each other, but anytime the slightest bit of conflict takes place, they go back to being sectarian and biased."

Yet, behind the scenes, political parties like "the Lebanese Forces and Amal Movement communicate to prevent conflicts from escalating", according to a participant in a focus group with the community, revealing a complex web of negotiations and alliances that operate beneath the surface of apparent antagonisms. This strategic collaboration among political entities, while not publicized, plays a crucial role in preventing violent confrontations, suggesting a nuanced understanding of conflict dynamics within the political landscape of the community.

Women, youth, and vulnerable groups occupy a pivotal role in the tapestry of conflict dynamics, offering unique perspectives and contributions to peace efforts. The involvement of women in the October 2019 revolution, for instance, showcases their active engagement and highlights their evolving role in the community. This shift toward greater educational opportunities and job access

for women marks a positive progression in gender inclusiveness and empowerment within the community.

The dynamics of conflict and tension in Chiyah and Ain El Remmeneh, as drawn from the interviews, depict a community navigating its challenges within a framework of both formal and informal conflict resolution mechanisms. The narrative underscores the critical role of the municipality, the strategic alliances among political parties, and the significant contributions of women and youth to peace efforts. These elements highlight the interplay of drivers and connectors in conflict dynamics, revealing both the challenges and avenues for conflict prevention and management in Chiyah and Ain El Remmeneh.

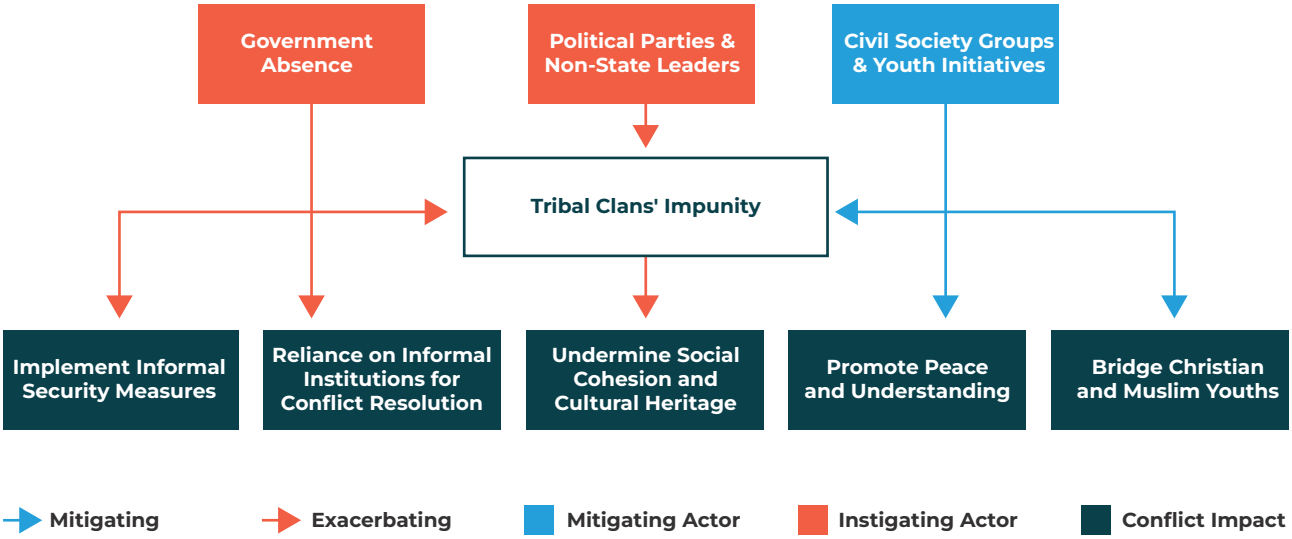

Diagram 12 **Actors' contribution or mitigation toward tribal clans' impunity in Chiyah and Ain El Remmeneh**

5) Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

The area is characterized by a dual system of formal and informal conflict resolution mechanisms. On the formal side, the local municipality often plays a central role when conflicts escalate to levels that require institutional intervention.
As one interviewee noted: "In more serious situations, community members would contact the municipality, which would then dispatch armed forces." This indicates a reliance on formal security measures to manage more severe disputes. However, this system primarily functions reactively rather than proactively preventing conflicts.

Informally, non-state actors such as clan leaders sometimes intervene in conflicts, particularly those involving large groups or familial disputes. This mechanism is more prevalent in the Shia community where familial and clan ties may influence conflict dynamics. An interviewee illustrated this by mentioning: "In Chiyah, clan leaders sometimes get involved." This involvement highlights a traditional form of conflict management rooted in social and familial hierarchies, which, while effective in certain contexts, may not always align with formal legal frameworks and could perpetuate sectarian biases if not carefully managed.

To build on existing mechanisms, there is notable potential for integrating more structured peacebuilding initiatives that involve grassroots movements and non-governmental organizations. Such efforts could bridge the gap between Shia and Christian communities in Chiyah and Ain El Remmeneh, by fostering dialogues that transcend sectarian lines. For instance, engaging women and youth in peace processes can be particularly effective, as these groups often bring new perspectives and are generally less entrenched in historical grievances.

A respondent reflected on the potential of youth, stating: "We need to activate the role of the youths who are part of a political group. They are the ones that are going to affect our children in one way or another." These politically active young individuals are often seen as role models and leaders by their peers and younger individuals. Their actions and beliefs can shape the attitudes and behaviors of the next generation. By targeting them in peace-led initiatives, the community can foster a culture of understanding and cooperation that will ripple

through the youth, ultimately helping to reduce tensions and promote long-term stability. Enhancing these cross-community interactions through education, community service projects, and interfaith dialogues can strengthen social cohesion and reduce the likelihood of conflicts escalating into violence.

6) Recommendations

- **Enhancing Community Engagement in Peace Initiatives:** Firstly, enhancing community engagement and ownership in peace initiatives stands out as a crucial intervention. The active involvement of local actors, particularly women and youth, in peacebuilding processes can significantly alter the dynamics of conflict resolution. Women, having played a prominent role in the 2019 October Revolution and progressively occupying higher societal positions, possess unique insights and capacities for fostering dialogue and reconciliation. Engaging women in leadership and decision-making roles within peace processes not only ensures a gender-inclusive approach, but also leverages their potential as agents of change. Educational initiatives targeting women in conflict mediation and peacebuilding, alongside platforms for youth to channel their energies into constructive community development projects, can mitigate sources of tension and foster social cohesion.

- **Establishing Shared Community Spaces for Dialogue:** Secondly, the establishment of shared community spaces for dialogue and interaction across different groups can serve as a critical intervention for reducing tensions. These spaces, envisioned as neutral grounds for cultural, educational, and recreational activities, can facilitate positive interactions among community members, challenging stereotypes and fostering mutual understanding. The emphasis on gender sensitivity in these spaces, ensuring equal access and participation for all community members, particularly vulnerable groups, can contribute significantly to altering the narrative around conflict and community relations.

- **Strengthening Formal Mechanisms for Conflict Resolution:** Thirdly, strengthening formal mechanisms for conflict resolution through building the capacities of local institutions is imperative. Enhancing the municipality's capacity to address community grievances, mediate disputes, and implement early warning systems for conflict prevention can reduce reliance on informal or clan-based resolution mechanisms, which often exacerbate tensions. Training municipal staff and local security forces on gender-sensitive approaches to conflict resolution and community policing can further ensure that interventions are inclusive and address the specific needs of all community members.

VI

Conclusion and Recommendations

1. Main Features of Community Conflict Dynamics

Building on the initial analysis, the Community Conflict Analysis Report highlights the intricate challenges facing various local communities in Lebanon, emphasizing the complexity of conflicts shaped by diverse economic, political, and sectarian factors. Through a conflict mapping across diverse regions, including Akkar, Tripoli, Bekaa, Mount Lebanon, and the South, the report not only highlights the underlying drivers of tension but also offers a glimpse into the resilience and agency within these communities, to forge pathways toward reconciliation and social cohesion.

Central to the discourse on conflict dynamics is the recognition of economic instability as a fundamental catalyst for discord. The pervasive unemployment, particularly among the youth, emerges as a recurrent theme across the mapped regions, underscoring the profound impact of economic deprivation on community stability. This economic strife exacerbates resource competition, contributing to an environment ripe for conflict.

Political and sectarian affiliations further entangle the narrative of conflict, with historical grievances and contemporary alliances fueling divisions within and between communities. The report illuminates the role of political manipulation in perpetuating cycles of violence, where sectarian identities are exploited for political gain, deepening the schism between different groups. This manipulation extends beyond local actors, as external forces—ranging from regional powers to international stakeholders—further complicate the conflict landscape, adding new layers of complexity.

Moreover, security concerns are prevalent in several communities, ranging from a general lack of safety to more serious issues involving armed groups and illicit activities.

Infrastructure deficiencies and poor housing conditions further compound these problems. Social integration issues are evident, particularly in communities with diverse populations including Lebanese nationals, as well as Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Gender disparities and political disengagement, especially among youth, also contribute to the overall challenges faced by these communities. The combination of these challenges creates a volatile environment where economic, social, and political pressures intersect, making it difficult for residents to achieve stability and prosperity.

Women in the 12 studied communities face challenges rooted in traditional gender roles and conservative cultural norms. These include limited access to education and employment opportunities, confining them to domestic roles and low-paying, informal jobs. Economic hardships and high poverty rates further exacerbate these issues. Women also encounter significant barriers to public and political participation and have minimal involvement in decision-making processes. Gender-based violence is prevalent, with limited legal protections and support services. Additionally, restricted mobility and social stigmatization, particularly in regions with high sectarian tensions, further marginalize women. Access to healthcare and support for women's rights remains inadequate, highlighting the need for comprehensive educational programs, economic empowerment initiatives, legal protections, awareness campaigns, and enhanced support services to address these pervasive challenges.

Amidst these challenges,[106] the report uncovers pockets of resilience and transformative potential within these communities. Women's involvement in peace-building initiatives emerges as a lifeline, highlighting the vital role of gender inclusivity in fostering social cohesion. Despite facing systemic barriers, women across these regions are pivotal in sustaining family units and community networks during times of crisis, underscoring their indispensable role in conflict resolution and community development. Their economic empowerment and greater inclusion in decision-making processes are key strategies for building more resilient and cohesive communities.

Youth engagement also stands out as a critical element for positive change, with education and vocational training pinpointed as vital tools for diverting young individuals from conflict, toward more constructive societal contributions. By addressing the root causes of youth disenchantment and providing pathways to employment and civic engagement, there is a potential to significantly alter the trajectory of communities toward peace and stability.

Grassroots initiatives and local NGOs are heralded for their efforts in bridging divides, offering practical support, and facilitating dialogue among conflicting parties. These organizations play a crucial role in conflict resolution, often stepping in where governmental and institutional responses falter. Their work highlights the power of communi-

106. The main challenges per community are summarized in Annex 11.

ty-driven solutions and the importance of supporting and scaling such efforts to achieve lasting peace.

This report calls for a holistic approach to conflict resolution that goes beyond addressing immediate tensions to tackle the systemic issues underpinning societal discord. Such efforts include fostering economic development, enhancing access to education, ensuring equitable distribution of resources, and promoting inclusive governance that reflects the diverse tapestry of the Lebanese society. It underscores the need for concerted efforts from both local and international actors to create sustainable strategies for peace, grounded in the realities of the communities they aim to serve.

2. Recommendations

To address the multifaceted nature of community conflicts in Lebanon, as illuminated by the local conflict mapping exercise, a detailed set of recommendations is proposed. These recommendations aim to foster sustainable peace, social cohesion, and economic resilience across the affected regions:

1) Economic Empowerment and Job Creation

1. **Develop comprehensive vocational training programs** tailored to local market needs, focusing on both traditional and emerging sectors, to ensure relevance and sustainability.

2. **Implement microfinance and small business support programs,** particularly targeting women and youth, to stimulate local entrepreneurship and create job opportunities.

3. **Encourage public-private partnerships** to invest in infrastructure projects and local industries that can drive economic growth and employment.

2) Educational Enhancements and Youth Engagement

1. **Strengthen the educational infrastructur**e by investing in schools, training teachers, and providing learning materials, with a focus on inclusivity and accessibility for all community members, including refugees.

2. **Launch initiatives** that integrate vocational training with formal education to provide youth with practical skills alongside academic learning.

3. **Create platforms for youth leadership and participation** in community development projects, enabling them to become active stakeholders in peace-building efforts. These initiatives should also focus on fostering youth civic engagement and citizenship, encouraging young people to take an active role in governance and community decision-making processes, thus building a sense of responsibility and ownership over their communities' future.

4. **Implement comprehensive drug prevention and rehabilitation programs** that include education, counseling, and support services, coupled with community engagement initiatives that provide healthy alternatives and activities for youth. Collaborate with local schools, NGOs, and healthcare providers to create a supportive network that addresses the root causes of drug use and promotes mental and physical well-being among young people.

3) Gender Inclusivity in Peace-Building Efforts

1. **Design and implement a mentorship and training program for women** that focuses on leadership skills, entrepreneurial opportunities, and active political participation, acknowledging their crucial role in conflict resolution and enhancing community resilience.

2. **Develop programs targeting women's economic empowerment** such as microloans, business training, and mentorship to start and grow their own businesses or programs, which would mainly focus on developing their leadership skills and political advocacy on municipal or national levels.

3. **Establish safe spaces for women** to gather, share experiences, and access support services, including legal aid, counseling, and healthcare. These centers would provide a secure environment where women can receive essential support, build social networks, and empower themselves through educational and professional development opportunities.

4. **Promote gender sensitivity training** within communities, local governance, and among all stakeholders involved in conflict resolution, to ensure women's perspectives and needs are adequately represented and addressed.

4) Social Cohesion through Community-Driven Solutions

1. **Support grassroots initiatives and local NGOs** in their efforts to mediate conflicts, promote dialogue, and implement community projects that address local needs and priorities.

2. **Facilitate inter-community events, cultural exchanges, and dialogue sessions** that bring together members of different sectarian and socio-economic backgrounds to build mutual understanding and respect.

3. **Invest in community centers** that offer recreational, educational, and social services, serving as neutral grounds for interaction and cooperation among community members.

5) Transparent Governance and Inclusive Political Processes

1. **Enhance the capacity of local governance structures** to respond effectively to community needs, through training on conflict sensitivity, negotiation, and inclusive decision-making processes.

2. **Implement mechanisms for community participation** in governance, including advisory councils and public forums, to ensure a broad range of voices are heard in the planning and implementation of local policies.

3. **Advocate for national policies** that promote equitable development and resource distribution across all regions, addressing the root causes of sectarian and political divisions.

6) International Support and Collaboration

1. **Encourage international organizations and donors to align their support with locally identified priorities,** ensuring that interventions are context-sensitive and driven by the needs of the communities.

2. **Facilitate partnerships between Lebanese communities and international counterparts** to exchange best practices, resources, and support for peace-building and development initiatives.

3. **Monitor and evaluate the impact of international aid on social cohesion and conflict dynamics,** adjusting strategies as necessary to maximize positive outcomes.

7) Environment-Friendly Community

1. **Implement sustainable water and land management practices,** through introducing water-saving technologies and supporting sustainable agriculture to reduce competition for resources and enhance food security.

2. **Promote community-led environmental restoration projects** such as reforestation and biodiversity conservation, and engage local schools and organizations in environmental stewardship to strengthen community ties and ecological awareness.

3. **Invest in renewable energy projects and promote energy-efficient practices** across communities to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, lower energy costs, and improve energy security, particularly in remote and conflict-affected areas.

VII

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

WE'AM Conflict Mapping

Background

Oxfam in partnership with Right to Play, SHiFT, and ALEF is implementing a European Union-funded project entitled "Working for Engagement, Acceptance and Mediation: A Community-based Approach to Social Cohesion in Lebanon – WE'AM". The project is implemented between March 2023 and February 2026 in Lebanon. WE'AM aims to leverage experiences and complementarities to build consensus and stimulate lasting social cohesion initiatives in Lebanon following three working streams: addressing drivers of tensions at the community level; disseminating gender-responsive conflict prevention and resolution tools and methods; mainstreaming community-level social cohesion into programming.

Purpose and Objectives

As part of the project design, the Consortium partners plan to complete 12 area-specific Conflict Mappings that serve the development and rolling out of the approaches and tools that contribute to addressing conflict drivers, tackling root causes of tension, minimizing the negative impact of the social instability in Lebanon, and maximizing the positive effects of WE'AM's interventions on the dynamics, relationships, and power influence of various groups.

This work will also serve as a starting point for the Consortium to understand the current tensions between community groups, and their willingness to engage in collaborative initiatives for the sake of addressing community problems while alleviating existing tensions and assessing the role that women play in promoting social cohesion. Data will be analyzed to allow the Consortium to investigate the history, local traditions, beliefs, trends, and scenarios, ensure engagement with relevant stakeholders in the focus areas, and get their buy-in on the project.

More specifically, the consultancy should aim at:

1. Conducting an Area Profiling with a view of exploring the characteristics and specificities of each community; including (but not limited to) their economic status, financial situation, access to services, social capital, protection status, civic participation, etc., to lay out the existing Power Dynamics in each area of intervention.
2. Identification of conflict drivers and actors to understand connectors, dividers, and triggers of tensions.

Consultancy Description

Within the framework of this consultancy, Oxfam is looking to contract a consultant to conduct 12 qualitative, area-specific Conflict Mappings. Studies are expected to be inclusive of all demographics and population groups within each target area.

Targeted areas include:

- Mashta Hammoud/Mashta Hassan – Akkar
- Fnaidek – Akkar
- Tikrit – Akkar
- Beddawi – Tripoli
- Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh - Tripoli
- Mina – Tripoli
- Deir Al-Ahmar – Bekaa
- Baalbek – Bekaa
- Saida – South Lebanon
- Barja – Mount Lebanon
- Ain el Remmeneh/Chiyah - Beirut
- Hay el Gharbeh/Ghobeiri - Beirut

Oxfam understands that considering the geographic reach of the assignment, the diversity of the areas, and the existing timeframe, individual conflict mappings cannot be comprehensive. The mapping of actors and conflict will present a solid basis for continued engagement in the areas and a good enough understanding of conflict dynamics.

Expected Deliverables

The consultant(s) is expected to deliver the following:

1. Submit an Inception report, including a detailed methodology, data collection tools (KIIs and FGDs), and target stakeholders, to be reviewed and approved by Oxfam and the Consortium partners;
2. Conduct a Literature Review of relevant published articles, reports, databases, and official records;
3. Submit a first draft list of actors and stakeholders involved in the Conflict Mapping in the areas of intervention (with a complete list to be included in the final report);
4. Carry out primary data collection with targeted stakeholders;
5. Submit clean, transcribed data sets;
6. Submit drafts of the report to Oxfam for revision. Oxfam reserves the right to provide two rounds of comments per draft as a minimum;
7. Present findings to Consortium members (including a PowerPoint Presentation summarizing main findings per area);
8. Submit a final report.

Timeline

This consultancy is expected to be finalized in 3 to 4 months since the contract signature as per the following timeline. The days refer to working days and reflect the maximum number of working days for the completion of a deliverable.

Deliverable	Timeline
Submit Inception Report	10 days
Conduct Literature Review	10 days
Submit the first draft list of actors and stakeholders involved in the Conflict Mapping in the areas of intervention	10 days
Complete data collection	20 days
Submit the first draft report	15 days
Organize a workshop for the Consortium to present findings (with PowerPoint Presentation)	7 days
Submit the Final Report with all annexes	7 days

Qualifications of the Consultants/Consultancy Firm

- Graduate degree or equivalent working experience in peacebuilding or conflict studies or other relevant fields;
- Proven experience working in conflict-torn and fragile states and communities;
- Minimum of 5 years of working experience and a strong background in developing methodologies and research work, conducting surveys, conflict analyses, contextual studies, and similar publications including collection and interpretation of qualitative data;
- Strong facilitation and community engagement skills;
- Proven skills related to qualitative participatory research;
- Fluent in spoken and written English and Arabic;
- Solid knowledge of the Lebanese historical and political context, as well as the social dynamics of the different populations;
- Cultural sensitivity and cultural understanding of the areas of intervention.

Management of the Assignment

This study is commissioned by Oxfam and facilitated by the Consortium partners working in the different geographic areas mentioned in this ToR. The consultant/consultancy firm will coordinate the associated task requirements, and logistical and operational support needed with the different partners.

The administration and oversight of this assignment will be managed by Oxfam.

Expression of Interest (EOI)

Interested consultants should submit their:

- CV or an overview of the consultancy firm with updated CVs of consultants and the role of each under the scope of this assignment for firms;
- A Technical Proposal which includes a detailed methodology and a workplan for the study;
- A Financial Proposal detailing all costs associated with the assignment;
- 2-3 samples of a previous Actors Mapping and/or Conflict Mappings produced before.
- Oxfam in Lebanon reserves the right to reject any and all bids, including the bidding processes, or not to award the contract at any time, without thereby incurring liability to the affected bidders.

Please submit the full application documents to (as mentioned above) to lb_oitprocurement@oxfam.org by no later than midnight of July 16th, mentioning “WE’AM Conflict Mapping” in the Subject Line.

Annex 2: Data Collection and KIIs and FGDs Sampling

1) Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) were informed by open-ended questions designed to compile in-depth information that would sufficiently address the research questions of the conflict analysis. Forty-eight (48) KIIs were conducted with a diverse range of stakeholders and local actors who could provide insights into the community's conflict dynamics. These included civil society activists and organizations, local authorities, refugee representatives, and other interlocutors. The interviews conducted with heads of municipalities or members of local authorities within the 12 targeted communities sought to gather data on conflict mapping and contribute to the development of comprehensive community profiles. WE'AM's partner organizations were interviewed to gain context on the ground. The remaining key informants were selected based on preliminary assessments and the recommendations of WE'AM's partner organizations, which could provide the most relevant, diverse, and comprehensive information on the conflict dynamics in the targeted communities. A preliminary list of key informants to be interviewed was prepared, maintaining a margin of flexibility to add or change the list in consultation with WE'AM partners (See List of KIIs in Annex 9). The final list comprised 48 participants with a gender distribution of 50% women and 50% men.

2) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Participants Sampling Strategy

Focus group discussions (FGDs) and participant sampling strategy involved convening twenty-five (25) FGDs with community members and stakeholders. Each FGD consisted of about 8-10 community members, and the FGDs covered all twelve targeted areas, ensuring gender and refugee inclusion among other critical demographics. Women constituted 49.6% of participants in all FGDs (See Annex 8 for Selection Criteria). Based on a preliminary desk review and assessment, two types of FGDs were organized. The first type, centered around local authority, involved members of respective municipalities and Mokhtars, along with relevant actors and stakeholders to probe for issues, relations, and conflict dynamics (See Annex for KII list). The sampling strategy for these FGDs was based on a selection process informed by a literature review, identification of major actors and stakeholders by WE'AM implementing partners, and a comprehensive master list based on their characteristics. The second type of FGDs gathered community members to probe for local views about issues driving tensions, with the selection ensuring adequate representation across community diversity. Refugee community FGDs aimed to encompass both Syrian and Palestinian participants, held at the local level in areas identified as refugee-tension-sensitive. The recruitment process for FGD participants was based on inclusive criteria, with partners assisting in identifying suitable community members for participation.

3) Field Observations

Field observations served as an indispensable component, offering a vital means to gain a comprehensive understanding of the targeted communities. After the FGDs, InfoPro moderators engaged thoroughly in capturing significant insights through direct interaction with the targeted areas' environment, alongside collecting photographic evidence. This approach enhanced the depth and breadth of the research, forming a clearer perspective on the focal communities. Observational notes and photographic documentation acted as invaluable assets in assessing the presence and implications of tensions within these communities. Observations were structured around key domains, including assessments of political or sectarian symbols, housing and infrastructural conditions, demographic composition, and the environmental landscape, among others. The incorporation of these field observations into the research methodology aimed to strengthen the triangulation of data collected from desk reviews, KIIs, and FGDs, ensuring the accuracy, reliability, and validity of the findings and providing a robust foundation for the inception report. A total of 25 observations were documented.

Annex 3: InfoPro Protocols and Ethical Standards

Data Collection Ethical Standards

InfoPro data collection teams followed InfoPro protocols and ethical standards when conducting surveys, key informant interviews, or focus group discussions:

- At the start of each interview or focus group discussion, data collectors read a standard informed consent and confidentiality statement explaining that the client is collecting information to gain a thorough understanding of the different research questions.
- All information remained private and confidential. Only team members had access to information.
- No names were used when reporting the findings.
- Participation was voluntary. There was no penalty for declining to participate. Respondents may decline to answer specific questions or participate in an activity, and they may end their participation at any point without penalty.
- Researchers asked participants for oral/or written consent to participate and permission to audio-record the conversations.

Risk Mitigation

Sensitive topics were likely to arise during the quantitative or qualitative data collection, which may cause participants discomfort, such as embarrassment or emotional distress. To minimize potential risks, the data collection team took precautionary steps to create a safe space for sharing perspectives and experiences:

- Efforts were made to conduct surveys, interviews, and group discussions away from eavesdroppers and in locations that ensure privacy, or are comfortable for respondents if not fully private.
- InfoPro data collectors reiterated that conversations will remain confidential and remind all participants to be respectful and maintain privacy as well.
- InfoPro data collectors refrained from indicating personal characteristics of individual respondents that played a part in their selection (e.g. refugee status, religion, people with illness, mental health issues, HIV/AIDS, economically or educationally disadvantaged children in orphanages or juvenile justice systems, pregnant women, minority groups, hard familial circumstances, social pressure, etc.)
- InfoPro data collectors refrained from discussing the content of surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions among themselves except when they were in private settings.

Remote Modalities

InfoPro recognizes the importance of flexibility and participant comfort in the research process. Remote modalities, such as online surveys and virtual interviews, offer a contemporary and convenient alternative to traditional in-person interactions. This approach becomes particularly relevant when considering factors like personal security, accessibility, and the need for physical distancing. These digital avenues ensure a diverse and inclusive reach, accommodating the preferences and circumstances of participants. In tandem with these advancements, InfoPro remains in its commitment to the highest standards of safety, confidentiality, and ethical conduct throughout the research.

The following procedures were followed to ensure that difficult situations are handled appropriately by InfoPro data collectors:[107]

- Pose all questions in a supportive and non-judgmental way.
- Allow distressed individual time to collect himself/herself.
- If the impact of a discussion is too harmful to a participant, end the survey, interview, or FGD.
- End all surveys, interviews, and FGDs on a positive note, reminding participants that the information they shared is important and will be used to help others.

107. Data collectors who do not follow these guidelines will be immediately dismissed from their work on the study.

Annex 4: WE'AM Key Informant Interview: Conflict Mapping Tool

Date:
Location (Caza/ Governorate):
Interviewer:

Introduction

Thank you very much for setting aside time to talk with me today.

Research Introduction:

Hello, my name is _____, and I am a representative of InfoPro Research. I express my sincere gratitude to you for dedicating your valuable time to participate in this interview as part of the WE'AM (Working for Engagement, Acceptance, and Mediation: A Community-Based Approach to Social Cohesion in Lebanon) Project, commissioned by Oxfam. Your perspective is crucial to our work, and we highly value the insights you bring to the table.

This interview is integral to our broader objective of understanding current tensions among community groups and assessing their willingness to collaborate on initiatives aimed at addressing communal challenges while fostering social cohesion. Additionally, we aim to explore the significant role that women play in promoting unity within communities.

The data collected will be meticulously analyzed, providing the Consortium with insights into the historical context, local traditions, beliefs, trends, and scenarios. This understanding will enable meaningful engagement with relevant stakeholders in the focus areas, ensuring their active participation and support for the project.

Once again, thank you for your participation; your input is invaluable in shaping the success of this project and contributing to the enhancement of social cohesion in Lebanon.

Confidentiality: As we commence, it's important to assure you that your privacy is our priority. All identifiable information gathered during this interview will be strictly confined to the research team and will not be utilized in the report. We pledge not to disclose any information about you or your shared insights to anyone outside our team. Furthermore, your name will be excluded from the report, ensuring that none of your shared information can be traced back to you in the report.

Interview Timeframe and Procedure: The conversation will take up to 60 minutes. We will ask you several questions during this timeframe.
Consent to Participation: Do you agree to participate in the study and take part in this Key Informant Interview?

Permission to Record: If you don't mind, I would like to ask for your permission to record our interview. The audio recording will allow us to listen to the conversation later and transcribe the information you provide. I want to assure you that the recordings will be strictly confidential, and accessible only to our team. Once the study is finalized, we will delete all the recordings to ensure your privacy. Your consent for the audio recording is greatly appreciated, you may choose not to have this interview recorded. Please, let me know if you have any concerns or if you prefer not to participate in this activity.

BEGIN RECORDING Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Interviewee Profile:
Would you please introduce yourself?

Interviewee Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Employment	Current Position

1. Profile and Context of Conflict(s)/ Tension(s):

1. Can you provide an overview of the historical context of conflicts/tensions in your community over the past decade, highlighting key events and developments? Please make sure to state what is, in your opinion, the nature of the described existing/ongoing tensions or potentially emerging clashes in your community? (example: economic, poverty, disputes, refugees, sectarian, lack of services, etc.)

2. How would you characterize the evolution of these conflicts/tensions, including those of contemporary socio-economic challenges and state failure? And which conditions or factors do you think directly lead or contribute to this evolution? [INTERVIEWER: Probe for more recent issues].

3. How have women, youth, and vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled, poor, or refugees been affected or implicated in these conflicts/ tensions?

4. Which conflict element(s) affect(s) (or is/are influenced by) women/ girls differently from men/ boys and other genders?

2. Major Actors and Interests:

1. Who are the prominent actors involved in the conflicts/tensions within your community, considering different levels (international, national, local, communal, tribal)?

2. How would you describe the characteristics of these groups and the nature of their activities? (INTERVIEWER: Probe for specific types of characteristics [Activist/Influencer, Business Association/Social enterprises, Academic Institutions, Sports Associations, FBO, Government, IGO, INGO, UN Agencies, Local Authority, National Authority, NGO/CSO/CBO, Non-State Armed Group, Political Party, Refugee Armed Group, Refugee Group, Security, Service Provider, Women Group] and their respective activities: political, economic, social, related to refugees, religious, illicit, etc.)

3. What is in your perspective the positioning of the main identified groups or actors in the current socio-political landscape of your community? [INTERVIEWER: ask about influence, primary objectives, demographics, economic status, financial status, protection status, political and civic participation, access to services, etc.]

4. In your assessment, how significant is the influence of these actors in shaping the conflicts/ tensions: how do they contribute to fueling and resolving conflict?

5. Can you discuss the roles, if any, that women, youth, and vulnerable groups play during situations of conflict/tension?

6. What are some priorities youths and women organizations are advocating for? Who are the main women groups, women influencers, and youth groups? What is the diversity of these groups (sect/nationality/political affiliation/funding/who they are affiliated to basically or who initiated these groups or local initiatives)?

3. Conflict Drivers:

1. In your expert opinion, what are the root causes of conflicts/tensions in your community, and which issues do they primarily revolve around? [INTERVIEWER: Probe for issues such as economic disparities, job opportunities, sectarian or cultural differences, refugee relations, competition over resources and services, land and water disputes, etc.]

2. Can you identify any connections or commonalities among the identified causes of tension/ conflict? [For example, competition over jobs fuels sectarian tensions]

3. Do you think that there are related drivers or accelerators of tension/conflict in the community? Are any of the identified areas of tension attributed to gendered disparities (socio-economic roles, norms and values, gender movements, etc.) Can you specify? [INTERVIEWER: Probe for gender minorities as well]

4. What are in your opinion the most urgent needs that should be addressed in your community in order to ensure a more socially-stable environment?

4. Dynamic Relationships between Actors:

1. Can you elaborate on the interactions and relationships among different actors, and how they influence the escalation or de-escalation of conflicts/tensions? [INTERVIEWER: Probe for the role of women, youth, and vulnerable groups in the relation dynamics]

2. Are there individuals or groups that emerge as winners, losers, advocates, or spoilers in specific conflict/tension contexts and their resolution? And how do you foresee these dynamics evolve in the future and, hence, affect social cohesion?

3. To what extent do rational calculations of gains and losses shape these relationships and conflict dynamics? How?

4. Who do you think these women, youths, and vulnerable groups are likely to support or oppose, and why? [Probe as to how would women be positioned in such support or opposition and why?]

Annex 5: WE'AM Focus Group Discussion: Conflict Mapping Tool

Date:
Location (Caza/ Governorate):
Number of participants:
Moderator:
Notetaker:

Introduction

Thank you very much for setting aside time to talk with me today.

Research Introduction:

Hello, my name is _____. I work for InfoPro Research and we were commissioned by Oxfam to conduct a focus group for the WE'AM (Working for Engagement, Acceptance and Mediation: A Community-Based Approach to Social Cohesion in Lebanon) Project.

This work will also serve as a starting point for the Consortium to understand the current tensions between community groups, and their willingness to engage in collaborative initiatives for the sake of addressing community problems while alleviating existing tensions and assessing the role that women play in promoting social cohesion. Data will be analyzed to allow the Consortium to investigate the history, local traditions, beliefs, trends, and scenarios and ensure engagement with relevant stakeholders in the focus areas and get their buy-in on the project.

Confidentiality: Before we begin, I want to let you know that we will keep all the information or examples you give us during this conversation private. We will not share any information about you or anything you tell us about anyone who is not on our team. Your name will not be mentioned in the report. This way, nothing you tell us will be connected to you in the report.

Interview Timeframe and Procedure: The conversation will take up to one hour and a half. We will ask you several questions during this time frame, and my colleague will be taking notes.

Permission to Record: If you don't mind, I would like to ask for your permission to record your conversation and take photos during our focus group session. The audio recording will allow us to listen to the conversation later and transcribe the information you provide. As for the photos, they will be used for reference purposes and to enhance our understanding of the group dynamics. I want to assure you that both the recordings and the photos will be strictly confidential, and accessible only to our team. Once the study is finalized, we will delete all the recordings and photos to ensure your privacy. Your consent for both the audio recording and photography is greatly appreciated, but please let me know if you have any concerns or if you prefer not to participate in either of these activities.

BEGIN RECORDING Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Explain: Your role (as participants) is to:

- Speak up and don't speak over anyone else
- One person talks at a time
- Share your own thoughts and ideas; do not feel you have to agree with your neighbor
- Be open, participate, and have fun

Icebreaker Questions:

We'd like to start by asking each of you to introduce yourselves to the group. Please, only give your first name. We will go around the table starting with ___. Just give us your name, age, nationality, gender, and your employment status.

- Participant Profile:

Would you please introduce yourself?

Participant Number	Participant Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Employment

1. Profile and Context of Conflict(s)/ Tension(s):

1. What is your perspective on this community's relations? How are things going?

2. Can you provide an overview of the historical context of conflicts/tensions in your community over the past decade, highlighting key events and developments? Please, make sure to state what is, in your opinion, the nature of the described existing/ongoing tensions or potentially emerging clashes in your community (example: economic, poverty, disputes, refugees, sectarian, lack of services, etc.).

3. How would you characterize the evolution of these conflicts/tensions, including those of contemporary socio-economic challenges and state failure? And which conditions or factors do you think directly lead or contribute to this evolution? [MODERATOR: Probe for more recent issues].

4. How have women, youth, and vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled, poor, or refugees been affected or implicated in these conflicts/ tensions?

5. Which conflict element(s) affect(s) (or is/are influenced by) women/ girls differently from men/ boys and other genders?

2. Major Actors and Interests:

1. Who are the prominent actors involved in the conflicts/tensions within your community, considering different levels (international, national, local, communal, tribal)?

2. How would you describe the characteristics of these groups and the nature of their activities? (MODERATOR: probe for specific types of characteristics [Activist/Influencer, Business Association/Social enterprises, Academic Institutions, Sports Associations, FBO, Government, IGO, INGO, UN Agencies, Local Authority, National Authority, NGO/CSO/CBO, Non-State Armed Group, Political Party, Refugee Armed Group, Refugee Group, Security, Service Provider, Women Group] and their respective activities: political, economic, social, related to refugees, religious, illicit, etc.)

3. What is in your perspective the positioning of the main identified groups or actors in the current socio-political landscape of your community? [ask about influence, primary objectives, demographics, economic status, financial status, protection status, political and civic participation, access to services, etc.]

4. In your assessment, how significant is the influence of these actors in shaping the conflicts/ tensions: how do they contribute to fueling and resolving conflict?

5. Can you discuss the roles, if any, that women, youth, and vulnerable groups play during situations of conflict/tension?

6. What are some priorities youths and women organizations are advocating for? Who are the main women groups, women influencers, and youth groups? What is the diversity of these groups (sect/nationality/political affiliation/funding/who they are affiliated to basically or who initiated these groups or local initiatives)?

3. Conflict Drivers:

1. In your expert opinion, what are the root causes of conflicts/tensions in your community, and which issues do they primarily revolve around? [MODERATOR: Probe for issues such as economic disparities, job opportunities, sectarian or cultural differences, refugee relations, competition over resources and services, land and water disputes, etc.]

2. Can you identify any connections or commonalities among the identified causes of tension/ conflict? [For example, competition over jobs fuels sectarian tensions]

3. Do you think that there are related drivers or accelerators of tension/conflict in the community? Are any of the identified areas of tension attributed to gendered disparities (socio-economic roles, norms and values, gender movements, etc.) Can you specify? [MODERATOR: Probe for gender minorities as well]

4. What are in your opinion the most urgent needs that should be addressed in your community in order to ensure a more socially stable environment?

4. Dynamic Relationships between Actors:

1. Can you elaborate on the interactions and relationships among different actors, and how they influence the escalation or de-escalation of conflicts/tensions? [MODERATOR: Probe for the role of women, youth, and vulnerable groups in the relation dynamics]

2. Are there individuals or groups that emerge as winners, losers, advocates, or spoilers in specific conflict/tension contexts and their resolution? And how do you foresee these dynamics evolve in the future and hence affect social cohesion?

3. To what extent do rational calculations of gains and losses shape these relationships and conflict dynamics? How?

4. Who do you think these women, youths, and vulnerable groups are likely to support or oppose, and why? [MODERATOR: Probe as to how would women be positioned in such support or opposition and why?]

Cohort 1: Local authorities and community leaders - FGD Tool

1. What is your assessment of community relations, and how would you describe the current situation?

2. Provide a concise overview of the historical context of conflicts/tensions in the past decade, emphasizing key events and their nature (e.g., economic, sectarian, lack of services...).

3. How have conflicts/tensions evolved, considering contemporary socio-economic challenges and state declining services provisions? What recent issues have contributed to this evolution?

4. Who were/are the significant actors who trigger tensions in the community (Probe for international, national, local, political parties, communal, tribal, family, or other types of actors)?

5. Describe the interests of these groups, including their influence on conflicts (e.g., political, economic, social). [how are they positioned in their community? What is their source of influence? Their economic status, financial situation, protection status, etc. How are these elements sources of power/influence or vulnerability/alienation?]

6. Who were/are the significant actors who mitigate tensions in the community (Probe for international, national, local, communal, tribal, family, or other types of actors)?

7. What roles do women, youth, and vulnerable groups play during conflicts/tensions or mitigations, and what priorities do youth and women organizations advocate for?

8. What are the two-three most important causes of conflicts and tensions in your community, and how are they connected?

9. How can these causes of tension and conflicts be addressed to produce a socially-stable environment? What are the priority projects for your area to tackle social instability?

10. Who wins and who loses from these tensions and conflicts (Probe for women, youths, and vulnerable groups, and explore their positions toward required resolutions)? And how do you assess the current inter-group dynamics and their evolution in the near future?

Cohort 2: Local Community and Refugee FGD Tool

1. How would you describe the current relationships within the community (Probe for inter and intra-community relations, and also include host-refugee relations when applicable)?

2. How are women, youths, the disenfranchised, and People with Disabilities (PWDs) affected by these conflicts?

3. What conflicts or tensions have developed over time in your community, while highlighting key events related to factors like poverty, sectarian issues, or inadequate services? How?

4. How have these tensions or conflicts been evolving over the past few years and what major factors can be attributed thereto? [Probe for socio-economic challenges and state shortcomings]

5. Identify the key individuals or groups that have played a role in escalating tensions within the community (consider organizations, political parties, tribes, families, or influential individuals).

6. Explain the interests of these actors and their impact on conflicts, including political, economic, and social dimensions. What is their influence in your area? And how do they acquire their influence and power – or lack of it? [Probe for the different dimensions of power dynamics and socioeconomic status of each group]

7. Who has been instrumental in reducing or mitigating tensions within the community?

8. What roles do women, youth, and vulnerable groups play during conflicts, and what priorities are advocated by youth and women organizations in these situations?

9. Identify the two to three main causes of conflicts and tensions in your community and explain their connections.

10. What are the main priority domains that should be addressed to create a socially stable environment and mitigate tensions in this area?

11. Explore who benefits and who suffers from these tensions and conflicts, focusing on the perspectives of women, youths, and vulnerable groups, and their stances on potential resolutions.

Annex 6: Community FGD Selection Criteria[108]

Area	Women Participants	Men Participants	Total Participants*	Participants 18-30	Participants 31-50	Participants 51 and above	Total Participants*	Nationality
Baalbek	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Syrian
Deir Al-Ahmar	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Syrian
Fnaidek/ Machta Hammoud-Machta Hassan/ Tikrit	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Syrian
Refugees from Beddawi	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Palestinian
Refugees from Saida	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Palestinian
Baalbek	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Mixed
Beddawi	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Lebanese
Chiyah-Ain El Remmeneh	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Lebanese

108. The sampling strategy of community members participating in the FGDs was based on ensuring the adequate representation of community members across their diversity. Selection was driven by preference for participants affected by tension and conflict issues that have been highlighted in the profile of the different communities (Literature Report).

Each Community FGD included 4-5 men and 4-5 women, while ensuring a good presence/ participation of youth (up to 50% of the FGD participants). The recruitment process of the FGD's participants was based on the distribution and criteria identified in Annex 6, and the partners helped only in filling the gap when needed.

Area	Women Participants	Men Participants	Total Participants*	Participants 18-30	Participants 31-50	Participants 51 and above	Total Participants*	Nationality
Deir Al-Ahmar	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Lebanese
Fnaidek/ Machta Hammoud-Machta Hassan/ Tikrit	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Lebanese
Ghobeiri	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Lebanese
Mina/Jabal Mohsen - Al Tebbeneh	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Lebanese
Saida/Barja	4-5	4-5	8-10	4-5	2-3	2-3	8-10	Lebanese

* PWDs will be taken into consideration and included as much as possible in all FGDs

Annex 7: Field Observation Template

FIELD OBSERVATION FORM

Observation Criteria	Assessment
Neighborhood	[] Mashta Hammoud/Mashta Hassan – Akkar [] Fnaidek – Akkar [] Tikrit – Akkar [] Beddawi – Tripoli [] Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh – Tripoli [] Mina – Tripoli [] Deir Al-Ahmar – Bekaa [] Baalbek – Bekaa [] Saida – South Lebanon [] Barja – Mount Lebanon [] Ain El Remmeneh /Chiyah – Beirut [] Hay el Gharbeh/Ghobeiri – Beirut
Location	[] Google Maps location saved
(a) Political or sectarian symbols (No photographic evidence)	[] Observed List of visible symbols: ----------
(b) Presence of political party offices (No photographic evidence)	[] Observed List the names of the political party offices: ----------
(c) Housing and infrastructural conditions (Observe the buildings and structures in the streets and take pictures)	Are any of the following observable? [] Structures in dangerous condition [] Quality of structures below standard [] None Please, take pictures of any damaged structures
	Are any of the following observable? [] Street lighting not functional/available [] Basic services (provision of water) not functional/available [] Physical dangers – such as fallen debris, rubbish piles, collapsed buildings, etc. [] Open sewerage/wastewater trenches/pits [] Waste littered around the area
(d) Demographic composition (Use Observation)	Syrian residents: [] Yes [] No
	Palestinian residents: [] Yes [] No
	Lebanese residents: [] Yes [] No
(e) Quality of water (Check the water when visiting the venue for the FGs)	[] Satisfactory [] Unsatisfactory

Observation Criteria	Assessment
(f) Sewage system (Observe the sewage systems in the streets and take pictures)	[] Satisfactory [] Unsatisfactory
(g) Waste disposal systems (Observe the waste disposal systems in the streets and take pictures)	[] Satisfactory [] Unsatisfactory
(h) Potential military checkpoints (No photographic evidence)	[] Available (not visually documented) Please, list the number of military checkpoints that you observed
(i) Extent of gender mixing in public spaces (Take pictures of the people in the public spaces)	[] High [] Low [] None

Annex 8: FGD's Data Collection Report

#	Area	Category	Date	Venue
1	**Baalbek**	Deir Al-Ahmar - Lebanese	15/01/2024	Deir Al-Ahmar Municipality
2	**Baalbek**	Deir Al-Ahmar - Authority	15/01/2024	Deir Al-Ahmar Municipality
3	**ML**	Saida/Barja - Lebanese	15/01/2024	Flow Café
4	**ML**	Saida - Palestinians	15/01/2024	Flow Café
5	**ML**	Saida - Authority	15/01/2024	Flow Café
6	**Baalbek**	Baalbek/Deir Al-Ahmar - Syrians	18/01/2024	Baalbek Municipality
7	**Baalbek**	Baalbek - Mixed	18/01/2024	Baalbek Municipality
8	**Baalbek**	Baalbek - Authorities	18/01/2024	Baalbek Municipality
9	**Akkar**	Machta Hammoud - Machta Hassan - Authorities	24/01/2024	Machta Hassan Municipality
10	**ML**	Ghobeiri - Lebanese	25/01/2024	Simar Restaurant
11	**ML**	Ghobeiri - Authorities	25/01/2024	Simar Restaurant
12	**Tripoli**	Mina/Jabal Mohsen - Al Tebbeneh - Lebanese	25/01/2024	Shift Qobbe
13	**Tripoli**	Mina -Authorities	25/01/2024	Shift Qobbe
14	**Tripoli**	Jabal Mohsen - Al Tebbeneh -Authorities	25/01/2024	Shift Qobbe

#	Area	Category	Date	Venue
15	**Akkar**	Tikrit -Authorities	25/01/2024	Rafic Hariri School - Tikrit (Library)
16	**Akkar**	Fnaidek – Authorities	25/01/2024	Fnaidek Municipality
17	**Baalbek**	Deir Al-Ahmar - Syrian Refugees	31/01/2024	Deir Al-Ahmar Refugee Camp
18	**ML**	Barja - Authorities	31/01/2024	Clac, Martyrs' Park, Barja, Al-Maabour
19	**Akkar**	Fnaidek/Machta Hammoud-Machta Hassan/Tikrit -Lebanese	01/02/2024	Rafic Hariri School - Tikrit
20	**Akkar**	Fnaidek/Machta Hammoud - Machta Hassan/ Tikrit - Syrian	01/02/2024	Rafic Hariri School - Tikrit
21	**ML**	Chiyah - Ain El Remmeneh -Lebanese	01/02/2024	Right to Play Center – Ain El Remmeneh
22	**ML**	Chiyah - Ain El Remmeneh - Authorities	01/02/2024	Right to Play Center – Ain El Remmeneh
23	**Beddawi**	Refugees from Beddawi -Palestinians	03/02/2024	Ribbat Community Organization
24	**Beddawi**	Beddawi - Lebanese	03/02/2024	Ribbat Community Organization
25	**Beddawi**	Beddawi - Authorities	03/02/2024	Ribbat Community Organization

Annex 9: KIIs Distribution by Community

Community	Name of Interviewee	Gender	Organization	Organization Type
Akkar	Hanane Khalil	Woman	Social Activist	Activist/Influencer
Akkar	Rola Moussa	Woman	Al Hadatha Organization	NGO/CSO/CBO
Akkar	Mirvat Mohammad Sayyed	Woman	Social Activist	Activist/Influencer
Akkar	Randa Ali Khatib	Woman	Social Activist	Activist/Influencer
Akkar	Sonia Abed el Karim Zakaria	Woman	Social Activist	NGO/CSO/CBO
Akkar	Iman Mostafa	Woman	Lawyer	Activist/Influencer
Total/Community	**6**	**Men**	**0**	
		Women	**6**	

Community	Name of Interviewee	Gender	Organization	Organization Type
Baalbek	Moufti Bakr Rifai	Man	Dar el Fatwa	Religious leader
Baalbek	Mostafa el Chall	Man	Head of Municipality	Local Authority
Baalbek	Kassem Mohammad	Man	Social Activist	NGO/CSO/CBO
Baalbek	Rola Zayter	Woman	RDFL	NGO/CSO/CBO
Baalbek	Fatima Abed l Wahad	Woman	Peace Labs	NGO/CSO/CBO
Baalbek	Idtidal Jammal	Woman	Municipality Member	Local Authority
Baalbek	Omar Traboulsy	Man	Oxfam	Partner
Total/Community	**7**	**Men**	**4**	
		Women	**3**	

Community	Name of Interviewee	Gender	Organization	Organization Type
Barja	Helen Damaj	Woman	Barja Cultural Center	NGO/CSO/CBO
Barja	Ahmad Al Ghosh,	Man	Mokhtar Barja	Local Authority
Barja	Zainab Hamieh	Woman	Social Activist	Activist/Influencer
Total/Community	**3**	**Men**	**1**	
		Women	**2**	
Beddawi	Rola Ghomrawi	Woman	Social Activist	NGO/CSO/CBO
Beddawi	Khaled Hannouf	Man	Municipality Member	Local Authority
Total/Community	**2**	**Men**	**1**	
		Women	**1**	

Community	Name of Interviewee	Gender	Organization	Organization Type
Chiyah - Ain El Remmeneh	Edmond Gharyous	Man	Head of Municipality	Local Authority
Chiyah - Ain El Remmeneh	Zoheir Gharyous	Man	Mokhtar Chiyah	Local Authority
Chiyah - Ain El Remmeneh	Ghada Nakhle	Woman	Social Activist	Activist/Influencer
Chiyah - Ain El Remmeneh	Fatima Traboulsy	Woman	Social Activist	Activist/Influencer
Chiyah- Ain El Remmeneh	Naziha Dakroub	Woman	Director of SDC in Chiyah, President of Ishrak Local Organization, and Social Activist	NGO/CSO/CBO
Total/Community	**5**	**Men**	**2**	
		Women	**3**	

Community	Name of Interviewee	Gender	Organization	Organization Type
Deir Al-Ahmar	Lateef Kozah and Sami Habchy	Man	Head of Municipality	Local Authority
Deir Al-Ahmar	Rima Berkachi	Woman	Social Activist	Activist/Influencer
Deir Al-Ahmar	Ali Raad	Man	Creadel	NGO/CSO/CBO
Total/Community	**3**	**Men**	**2**	
		Women	**1**	
Fnaidek	Samih Abed l Hay	Man	Head of Municipality	Local Authority
Total/Community	**1**	**Men**	**1**	
		Women	**0**	
Ghobeiri	Amal Zahwe	Woman	Social Activist	Activist/Influencer
Ghobeiri	Mahmoud Zahwi	Man	High Impact Community Member	NGO/CSO/CBO
Total/Community	**2**	**Men**	**1**	
		Women	**1**	

Community	Name of Interviewee	Gender	Organization	Organization Type
Jabal Mohsen - Al Tebbeneh	Bassel Al Haj	Man	Social Activist	Activist/Influencer
Jabal Mohsen - Al Tebbeneh	Ali Ajaya	Man	Mokhtar Tebbeneh	Local Authority
Jabal Mohsen - Al Tebbeneh	Wael Negro	Man	Jabal Mohsen Community Center	NGO/CSO/CBO
Jabal Mohsen - Al Tebbeneh	Houssam Al Toum	Man	Mokhtar Tebbeneh	Local Authority
Jabal Mohsen - Al Tebbeneh	Suha Alloush	Woman	UTOPIA	NGO/CSO/CBO
Total/Community	**5**	**Men**	**4**	
		Women	**1**	

Community	Name of Interviewee	Gender	Organization	Organization Type
Machta Hammoud - Machta Hassan	Hassan Al Ahmad	Man	URDA	NGO/CSO/CBO
Machta Hammoud - Machta Hassan	Mohamad Khaled	Man	Head of Municipality	Local Authority
Machta Hammoud - Machta Hassan	Khaled Fahed	Man	Municipality Member	Local Authority
Machta Hammoud - Machta Hassan	Rima Rachid	Woman	Social Activist	Activist/Influencer
Total/Community	**4**	**Men**	**3**	
		Women	**1**	
Mina	Amer Haddad	Man	Social Activist	Activist/Influencer
Mina	Najia Ashlal	Woman	Municipality Member	Local Authority
Total/Community	**2**	**Men**	**1**	
		Women	**1**	

Community	Name of Interviewee	Gender	Organization	Organization Type
Saida	Bader Kawwam	Man	Municipality Police	Local Authority
Saida	Elias Al Jiz	Man	Mokhtar Mar Nkoula	Local Authority
Saida	Wedad Al Sabea	Woman	SAMA for Development	NGO/CSO/CBO
Saida	Maha Broom	Woman	Retired Dean	Activist/Influencer
Total/Community	**4**	**Men**	**2**	
		Women	**2**	
Tikrit	Abdallah Ahmad Gue	Man	Head of Municipality	Local Authority
Total/Community	**1**	**Men**	**1**	
		Women	**0**	
National	Stephanie Abboud	Woman	ALEF Programs Manager	Partner
Total/Community	**1**	**Men**	**0**	
		Women	**1**	

Community	Name of Interviewee	Gender	Organization	Organization Type
South and Mount Lebanon	Janine Chehade	Woman	RTP Project Manager	Partner
Total/Community	**1**	**Men**	**0**	
		Women	**1**	
Tripoli and Akkar	Maher Ialy	Man	SHIFT Project Manager	Partner
Total/Community	**1**	**Men**	**1**	
		Women	**0**	

Annex 10: Field Observation Report

Neighborhood	Political or sectarian symbols	Presence of political party offices	Housing and infrastructural conditions (House)	Housing and infrastructural conditions (Street)	Demographic composition	Quality of water	Sewage system	Waste disposal systems	Potential military checkpoints	Extent of gender mixing in public spaces
Mashta Hammoud/ Mashta Hassan – Akkar	None	None	None	None	Syrian and Lebanese residents	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	1 military checkpoint	Low
Fnaidek – Akkar	None	None	None	1. Physical dangers – such as fallen debris, rubbish piles, collapsed buildings, etc.	Syrian and Lebanese residents	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	0	Low
Tikrit – Akkar	None	None	1. Quality of structures below standard	1. Street lighting not functional/ available 2. Physical dangers – such as fallen debris, rubbish piles, collapsed buildings, etc. 3. Waste littered around the area	Syrian and Lebanese residents	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	0	Low

Neighborhood	Political or sectarian symbols	Presence of political party offices	Housing and infrastructural conditions (House)	Housing and infrastructural conditions (Street)	Demographic composition	Quality of water	Sewage system	Waste disposal systems	Potential military checkpoints	Extent of gender mixing in public spaces
Beddawi – Tripoli	Observed	Observed	1. Structures in dangerous condition 2. Quality of structures below standard	1. Street lighting not functional/ available 2. Physical dangers – such as fallen debris, rubbish piles, collapsed buildings, etc. 3. Open sewerage/wastewater trenches/pits	Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese residents	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	1 military checkpoint	High
Jabal Mohsen/ Tebbeneh	Observed	Observed	1. Structures in dangerous condition 2. Quality of structures below standard	1. Physical dangers – such as fallen debris, rubbish piles, collapsed buildings, etc.	Syrian and Lebanese residents	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	1 military checkpoint	Low
Mina – Tripoli	Observed	Observed	1. Structures in dangerous condition 2. Quality of structures below standard	1. Physical dangers – such as fallen debris, rubbish piles, collapsed buildings, etc.	Syrian and Lebanese residents	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	1 military checkpoint	Low
Deir Al-Ahmar – Bekaa	None	Lebanese Forces Office	None	None	Syrian and Lebanese residents	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	1 military checkpoint	High

Neighbor-hood	Political or sectarian symbols	Presence of political party offices	Housing and infra-structural conditions (House)	Housing and infra-structural condi-tions (Street)	Demo-graphic composition	Quality of water	Sewage system	Waste disposal systems	Potential military checkpoints	Extent of gender mixing in public spaces
Baalbek – Bekaa	Observed	Hezbollah portraits, flags, and slogans	None	1. Waste littered around the area	Syrian, Palestin-ian, and Lebanese residents	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfac-tory	2 military checkpoints	High
Saida – South Lebanon	Observed	Observed	None	None	Syrian, Palestin-ian, and Lebanese residents	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	1 military checkpoint	High
Barja – Mount Lebanon	Observed	Observed	None	1. Street lighting not functional/ available	Syrian, Palestin-ian, and Lebanese residents	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	0	High
Ain El Rem-meneh / Chiyah - Beirut	Observed	Kataeb office for youth and students	None	1. Street lighting not functional/ available	Lebanese residents	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	3 military checkpoints	High

Neighbor-hood	Political or sectarian symbols	Presence of political party offices	Housing and infra-structural conditions (House)	Housing and infra-structural condi-tions (Street)	Demo-graphic composition	Quality of water	Sewage system	Waste disposal systems	Potential military checkpoints	Extent of gender mixing in public spaces
Hay el Gharbeh/ Ghobeiri – Beirut	Observed Flag of Amal move-ment, portraits of Shia religious figures, large photos of young men as martyrs	None	1. Structures in danger-ous condi-tion 2. Quality of struc-tures below standard	1. Street lighting not functional/ available 2. Physical dan-gers – such as fallen debris, rubbish piles, col-lapsed buildings, etc 3. Open sewer-age/wastewater trenches/pits 4. Waste littered around the area	Syrian, Palestin-ian, and Lebanese residents	I was not able to assess the quality of water since the FGD was con-ducted in a different area. The observa-tions were made on a separate date during a visit to the region in question - Hay al Gharbeh.	I chose not to take pictures because the region felt unsafe, and it was clear I was an outsider. Despite the lack of rain that day I visited Hay al Ghar-beh, heavy rainfall from the pre-vious day had caused significant flooding in most of the streets I traversed. Muddy water pooled in various areas, con-taminated with litter, debris, and stray trash bags car-ried by the rainwater.	Unsatisfac-tory	0	None It is important to note that I'm not stat-ing that different genders do not mix in public spaces. This may or may not be the case. I am stating, however, that I did not observe any mixing during my brief visit.

Annex 11: Summary of the Findings

Community	Profile	Key Challenges	Recommendations
Mashta Hammoud/ Mashta Hassan	Predominantly Sunni Muslim, significant Syrian refugee population	Economic instability, lack of security, youth unemployment	Vocational training, community policing, governance dialogue
Fnaidek	Predominantly Sunni Muslim, significant Syrian refugee population	Unemployment, resource competition, illicit activities	Vocational training, microfinance, social cohesion initiatives
Tikrit	Diverse population, significant youth demographic	Political disengagement, economic adversity, gender disparities	Governance transparency, capacity building, equitable infrastructure
Beddawi	Mixed population, mostly Lebanese as well and Palestinian refugee population	Economic crisis, political tensions, poor housing	Economic support programs, conflict resolution mechanisms
Jabal Mohsen/ Tebbeneh	Predominantly Sunni Muslim along Alawites, high political tension	Sectarian divides, high unemployment, security issues	Community dialogue, job creation programs, security enhancement
Mina	Mixed population, coastal city	Economic instability, refugee impact, infrastructure issues	Infrastructure development, social integration programs
Deir Al-Ahmar	Predominantly Christian, historical disputes	Economic challenges, resource competition, political disengagement	Economic initiatives, resource management, political engagement
Baalbek	Diverse population, historical significance	Sectarian tensions, economic hardships, security concerns	Economic empowerment, security improvements, social cohesion efforts
Saida	Predominantly Sunni Muslim, Lebanese Syrians and Palestinians, armed groups	Political tensions, economic instability, infrastructure challenges	Political dialogue, economic support, infrastructure development
Barja	Predominantly Sunni Muslim, governance issues	Governance challenges, economic disparity, social tensions	Governance reforms, economic initiatives, social services

Community	Profile	Key Challenges	Recommendations
Hay el Gharbeh/ Ghobeiri	Mixed population, urban area	Economic disparity, governance issues, political tensions	Economic support, governance improvements, political dialogue
Chiyah - Ain El Remmeneh	Mixed population, historical conflicts	Sectarian tensions, economic hardship, social integration issues	Community dialogue, economic initiatives, social integration efforts

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