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Below the Surface
Results of a WhatsApp Survey of Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Lebanon

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seven years into the Syrian crisis and with almost a million Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon, a country of six million inhabitants, questions abound: 'how are the relationships between host communities and refugees evolving?', 'what are the needs on the ground?' and 'how do Lebanese and Syrians see the future?'. To get to the bottom of these questions, in 2017 and 2018, UNDP Lebanon piloted two qualitative WhatsApp surveys in the Bekaa region to learn more about the perspectives, needs, conflicts and fears of Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities. This report analyses the surveys' findings and reflects on how WhatsApp surveying can support humanitarian and development work in Lebanon and beyond.

WhatsApp is an effective tool for qualitative surveying for two reasons. First, WhatsApp is very popular and widely used, including among refugees. In Lebanon, for example, 84% of refugee households use WhatsApp[1]. Second, WhatsApp has the voice message function which allowed us to send survey questions as voice messages and collect people's stories directly including from people who are illiterate. 1036 people participated in our WhatsApp surveys in Lebanon (794 in Bar Elias and 242 in Qaraoun), sending us their stories as voice or text messages. Unlike other qualitative methods, WhatsApp surveying relies less on local gatekeepers, thus creating a direct link between international organisations and people on the ground. In the privacy of their homes and using a form of communication that is habitual and convenient, many Syrians and Lebanese were willing to share their ideas and perspectives.

More nuanced social stability analysis through WhatsApp

Qualitative WhatsApp surveying produces more nuanced social stability insights through a close analysis of people's stories. While quantitative surveying is important to achieve representative results, it tends to pull people towards generalizations simply by the way questions and answers are framed (e.g. 'how is the relationship between "the Lebanese" and "the Syrians"?' – as

if these are coherent groups that have only one type of relationship). By asking people about their personal experiences, qualitative surveying, on the other hand, produces stories which are personal, complex and contingent.

The report uses the survey results to shed critical light on two prominent narratives regarding Syrian refugees in Lebanon: One is the media narrative, which increasingly pits one homogeneous Syrian community against an equally homogeneous Lebanese community, arguing that Syrians put an intolerable strain on Lebanese society and resources. The other is a narrative emanating from academia and NGOs that claims that host community–refugee social networks remain strong in Lebanon, particularly in places such as Bar Elias and Qaraoun (the survey sites), which share confessional, historical and social ties with Syria and Syrian refugees and migrants.

This report, on the other hand, aims to piece together a more complex and contingent account of relationships between Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities, illustrating how they distinguish between different forms of relationships, how they contest who benefits and who does not from the Syrian presence, and how they negotiate sameness and difference.

One crucial finding is that there is not 'one relationship' between Lebanese and Syrians, but multiple relationships. Some have improved over time, particularly with neighbours and friends, while others have deteriorated, especially with employers, landlords and 'people on the street'. The survey also found that people's experiences are not well understood through generic labels, especially not national or confessional ones such as 'Syrian' or 'Sunni'. Rather, these categories need to be read in conjunction with more specific relationships mediated through gender, age and class but also friendships, neighbourly and employment relationships and local politics.

Further Uses of the 'Speak your Mind' WhatsApp tool[2]

WhatsApp surveying can serve as a real time design and monitoring tool to support humanitarian and development programming. People on the ground are extremely resourceful and know their locality best. By collecting input and feedback from

beneficiaries and the wider community before, during and after project implementation, the tool helps to remove barriers to inclusivity, facilitates 'on the spot' adjustments to programming and measures the impact of our interventions. In this way, WhatsApp surveying can enhance the accountability and effectiveness of humanitarian and development interventions over time.

The tool also allows for continued contact with respondents after they cross borders. Even when people change phone numbers as they move to new countries, they often maintain their WhatsApp contacts, either by linking their existing WhatsApp account to a new phone number or by continuing it on the previous number. Such cross-country communication could help protection actors to better track onward movements and understand the protection needs of refugees who returned or resettled. For instance, the tool could offer a means of communication with Syrian refugees after they have left Lebanon.

Bar Elias and Qaraoun: A comparative analysis

Qaraoun and Bar Elias pride themselves on being places of 'karam' (welcoming to the stranger). Both places have been extremely generous hosting refugee populations almost equaling their own population. Bar Elias, in particular, has opened its doors generously to Syrian refugees, accepting new arrivals from the Riyak evictions in 2017 and largely defying a trend which has seen many municipalities in Lebanon implementing curfews and other restrictions against Syrians. Most survey respondents in Bar Elias and Qaraoun reported that there are no tensions or conflicts in the area, suggesting that, overall, peaceful co-existence prevails.

That said, the stories from Bar Elias were more concerning than those from Qaraoun. Both host community members and refugees felt less safe in Bar Elias. Army raids, assault, exploitation and harassment were more common. Both Lebanese and Syrians reported frequent thefts and robbery. Lebanese were overall more negative about the Syrian presence and Syrians more worried about forced return. These differences between Bar Elias and Qaraoun may also reflect an urban/rural divide as fragmentation of social relationships and suspicion of refugees tend to be more concentrated in urban spaces. Much of the resentment in Bar Elias boils down to people's fears of 'losing control', which is embedded in broader anxieties around governance, living standards, the environment, culture, security and jobs. Some Lebanese resort to sarcasm in their stories, which portrays their sense of powerlessness and resignation. Bar Elias and Qaraoun are still places of karam, but hospitality has worn off as the Syrian presence has become both more securitised and otherised.

The needs of people in Bar Elias resembled those expressed in Qaraoun. Syrians were preoccupied with everyday needs of shelter, food and work, while Lebanese expressed concern about environmental risks and infrastructure debilitation in Bar Elias. Water was a shared concern, including lack of drinking water, pollution of the river and waste water management. Lebanese felt left alone with these environmental and health risks. As in Qaraoun, Syrians felt that they did not belong to the town and had few stakes in its development.

One concerning difference between Qaraoun and Bar Elias is that in Bar Elias segregation was not only described as a reality, but also as a solution to Lebanese–Syrian tensions. Indeed, for some Lebanese, segregation is not only desirable for security reasons, but also for 'cultural reasons', which sometimes obscures classism and social discrimination against poorer Syrians.

Much of the Lebanese frustration centres around the competition for construction jobs and the ownership of local shops. Some Lebanese claim that most shops in Bar Elias are now owned by Syrians and that Syrian demand has significantly driven up shop rental prices. Many Syrians counter that their work opportunities are very limited, not least by legal restrictions. They complain that employers frequently do not pay wages, making them feel powerless. Some conclude that working has become pointless and that not working may be safer to avoid exploitation and harassment. Syrian women, in particular, struggle to find work that is safe. They report harassment and exploitation by male co-workers, employers and Shawishes (local refugee camp managers).

Gender dynamics play an important role in shaping inter-community relationships. As most respondents in both surveys were men, we received more insight into how Lebanese masculinity is

enacted in relationships with Syrians. Much of the harassment and violence described was collective and happened between Lebanese and Syrian men. Yet, Syrian women were also harassed and shamed because of their gendered roles as mothers. In Lebanon, as in many other refugee contexts, Syrian women are seen as a threat to the Lebanese nation, as their children grow up in Lebanon, speak the Lebanese dialect and have never known Syria, making it more likely that they may want to stay.

In Lebanese conceptions, safety relates to 'knowing' and 'regulating' refugees in camps. The camp, rather than refugees per se, emerged as a site of imagined chaos and insecurity. For Syrians, the camp was only one of many sites of insecurity. The street, in particular, emerged as a site of fear. With violence intensifying in parts of Syria (at the time of data collection) and with the prospect of return looming, many Syrians talked about the security situation in Syria rather than in Lebanon when asked about safety 'in their area'.

Most Lebanese and Syrians agreed that the future of Syrians is not in Lebanon, but in Syria. Syrians overwhelmingly wanted to return to Syria as soon as conditions allow and were adamant that there is no future outside the homeland. Unlike the media discourse, very few Lebanese talked about 'safe zones' and 'forced return'. Rather, they expected refugees to return to Syria once it is feasible, not least because Lebanon has little to offer for securing a decent life for them and their children.

Young child in Bar Elias Informal Settelment -UNDP

1. Introduction:

This report aims to provide two analyses. First, it provides a comparative analysis of Qaraoun and Bar Elias, teasing out the similarities and differences in Syrian lives and host community–refugee relationships. Second, it analyses the micro-narratives emanating from the WhatsApp survey, seeking to capture Lebanese and Syrian experiences as much as possible through their own concepts and stories. The report relies on qualitative WhatsApp data collected in Qaraoun in November 2017 and in Bar Elias in March 2018. The focus of this report will be on Bar Elias. A separate UNDP research report on the findings of our WhatsApp survey in Qaraoun was published in April 2018. [3]

Qaraoun and Bar Elias share many similarities. They are both located in the Bekaa region and share a long history of Syrian labour migration as well as a similar confessional make-up (90% Sunni Muslim and 10% Christian). They are both known as places of hospitality (karam). Indeed, in 2017 alone, Bar Elias accepted more than 3,000 refugees – some say up to 6,000 refugees – who were evicted around the Riyak airbase. The mayor of Bar Elias was one of few in the region willing to accept more refugees. Yet, there are also important differences. Most obviously, Bar Elias is a big town close to the Syrian border with a sizeable refugee population. With 60,000 to 70,000 Lebanese and between 31,000 and 45,000 Syrian refugees, it is the second biggest town in the Bekaa after Zahle. Bar Elias also hosts around 7,000 Palestinian refugees. Qaraoun, on the other hand, is a village of 10,000 residents, approximately half Lebanese and half Syrian, located more remotely in West Bekaa.[4]

Bar Elias is strategically located with more trade and job opportunities as well as more development and humanitarian funding. A bustling town in Central Bekaa and an important trade hub on the road between Beirut and Damascus, Bar Elias has hundreds of shops dotting its main street on both sides. In Bar Elias, the municipality has been less involved in aid management with NGOs and Shawishes playing a bigger role. Communication between the municipality and international organisations operating in the area can be significantly improved. The municipality has complained that they do not always know what is being done in the area and who benefits from it. In Qaraoun, on the other hand, the municipality has

taken matters into its own hands, managing both informal settlements (IS) and aid distribution.[5]

And yet, the WhatsApp data from Bar Elias was more concerning than the data from Qaraoun. While Lebanese in Qaraoun were confident that 'things were under control', people in Bar Elias felt that control is slipping out of their hands. This sense of 'losing control' is curious. While the Bar Elias municipality lacks Qaraoun's sophisticated management capacity, it nonetheless tightly regulates the Syrian presence.[6] Key informants told us that the municipality has a database of all informal settlements which is updated every two weeks in collaboration with General Security. The Shawishes supply them with up-to-date information on the refugees residing in their ISs. While oversight is tight, it is less visible. With no curfew in place and fewer regulations on refugees' work and shelter, Bar Elias still goes against the tide of municipalities publicly restricting the movement of refugees.[7]

Yet, this research reveals that tensions are simmering not far below the surface. People feel less safe in Bar Elias, and both refugees and host communities report an increase in thefts in recent months. The fear of 'losing control' and 'chaos' translates both into security and cultural imageries. Many respondents expressed the need 'to organise the Syrian presence' and regulate the proliferation of informal settlements. They complained that there is no police station in Bar Elias[8]. Yet, security is not the only rationale for the regulation of the Syrian presence. Segregation is seen as desirable by some to preserve the 'Lebanese' character of the town. For example, some Lebanese would complain about the way Syrians display clothes and other goods outside their shops ('it's like a bazaar all the time'). In fact, imageries like 'bazaar' and 'tents' were used to encapsulate the cultural threat that Syrians allegedly pose to the Lebanese way of life. According to the ARK & UNDP perception survey, the percentage of people in the Bekaa who cited cultural differences as a source of inter-community tensions more than doubled last year. At the time of data collection it stood at 41% compared to a national average of 21%.[9]

These imageries also provide insight into perceptions of sameness and difference among Lebanese and Syrians. On the one hand, places such as Bar Elias, which share confessional as well as historical ties with Syrians, are often presumed to exhibit stronger host community–refugee social networks. On the

other hand, it appears that in those very places, perhaps because of the assumed cultural affinity, the need to express difference between the two communities is amplified. Syrians are portrayed as different and sometimes 'backward' people, whose lifestyle is unfavourably contrasted to 'modern' Lebanese conventions and trade.

Such depictions have to be read in the context of complicated historical relationships. Syrians in Lebanon were historically perceived as the underdog and the oppressor at the same time. On the one hand, Syrian migrant workers have formed an integral part of the Lebanese economy for decades performing low-paid work. On the other hand, they were associated with the Syrian army presence in Lebanon, which was particularly strongly felt in Bar Elias due to its proximity to the headquarters for Syrian intelligence gathering in Anjar.

Yet, while security and culture are important motifs in Lebanese–Syrian relationships, they are overshadowed by money and jobs. In fact, many Lebanese and Syrians primarily see their relationship as a material relationship, in which some people benefit, and others do not. However, who benefits and who does not is highly contested. While some Lebanese portray Syrians as 'stealing jobs' and 'taking aid', Syrians often see Lebanese as the beneficiaries of their presence through cheap labour, rent payments and economic growth as Syrians spend aid and wages in the local economy. Lebanese key informants agreed that the Syrian refugee influx initially boosted the economy in Bar Elias but argue that assistance has been declining since the end of 2016. This has reinforced the perception that refugees are, above all, a burden to the Lebanese economy.

Much Lebanese resentment centres around Syrian labour competition and the allegation that Syrians are taking over Lebanese shops in Bar Elias. Yet, stories expressing resentment coexist with many others which describe friendships between neighbours as well as local people standing up to abuse and racism. There are also more subtle accounts of conflict and social fragmentation beyond the refugee situation.

1.1. Methodology and Sample

The unique contribution of WhatsApp surveying is that it makes the collection of a large qualitative sample possible in a very short time (it would take weeks, if not years, to interview a 1000 people). It also helps to collect story data from very vulnerable populations, who are often hard to access for qualitative research, such as the unemployed and the illiterate. Among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, 23% of female heads of household and 8% of male heads of household are illiterate.[10] It thus reaches beyond the 'usual suspects' who tend to be referred for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). In doing so, the mobile method reduces the role of local gatekeepers such as Shawishes in accessing vulnerable people for research.

The WhatsApp survey also limits the power and interference of the researcher in people's stories. While the researcher still asks the questions, she cannot steer the narrative through follow-up questions or prompts. There is also no personal relationship between researcher and research participant that could produce social desirability or silencing effects. In fact, despite refugees' vulnerability and dependence on international institutions, many WhatsApp respondents challenged an international relief system that they often find removed from and unresponsive to their needs and concerns.

As such, the survey can help to amplify the voices of very vulnerable people whose stories are not usually heard by using a form of communication that they are comfortable with. Board any minibus or service in Lebanon and you will find people sending WhatsApp voice messages to friends and family – some very short and practical, others exhaustingly long descriptions of daily routine or personal encounters. Voice messages not only allow more to be said in less time, they also facilitate the inclusion of illiterate people in the survey. 89% of our respondents chose to reply to our survey questions via voice notes (VN).

1.2. Limitations

The method also has important limitations. As most qualitative research, the survey is not statistically representative of the populations surveyed. While creating larger qualitative samples, the WhatsApp survey can also introduce sampling biases. Sending WhatsApp messages requires phone numbers. In Qaraoun, the municipality supplied us with the phone numbers. In Bar Elias, local informants helped us to collect phone numbers

from Shawishes and local NGOs, professional and private networks. Such collection is facilitated by the fact that much information sharing and organisation around refugees and aid distribution already works through WhatsApp. Shawishes often set up WhatsApp groups to share information and send instructions and so do many NGOs and municipalities. Local informants often only had to pull the numbers of existing WhatsApp groups from their phones. Admittedly, collecting phone numbers through these actors also implies that the role of gatekeepers is not fully eliminated in WhatsApp surveying. That said, we do not have reason to believe that numbers were deliberately excluded from our sample not least because many WhatsApp messages criticized Shawishes and NGOs. All the phone numbers we received were already stripped of any personal information thus helping us to protect the anonymity of our respondents. By asking people about their gender, nationality, age and employment situation, we could nonetheless learn more about the demographic composition of our sample.

There may also be biases in who chooses to respond to the survey and who does not that we cannot fully account for. There might be a bias towards people with 'stronger views' on the refugee situation (both negative and positive) as people who are indifferent are presumably less likely to participate. Yet, this bias is probably cancelled out by other people who worried about the implications of negative portrayals of the Lebanese, the Syrians, the government or the UN and thus self-censored in their answers. The fact that we announced in our introductory message that we would compensate survey participants for their data usage also created a small financial incentive for participation that may have created further response biases.[11] That said, given that the replies we received were incredibly diverse with very positive views, very negative views and much in between, we were not able to detect a systematic bias towards particular perspectives.

Our sample suggests that the main bias of WhatsApp surveying is an under-representation of host communities and women. In Qaraoun, Syrians made up 87% of our sample compared to only 13% of participants who were Lebanese. We also struggled to reach out to women, who constituted 18% of our Qaraoun sample. In Bar Elias, we were able to increase female participation to a third of our respondents. Among refugees, female

Bar Elias : Gender and Nationality Breakdown
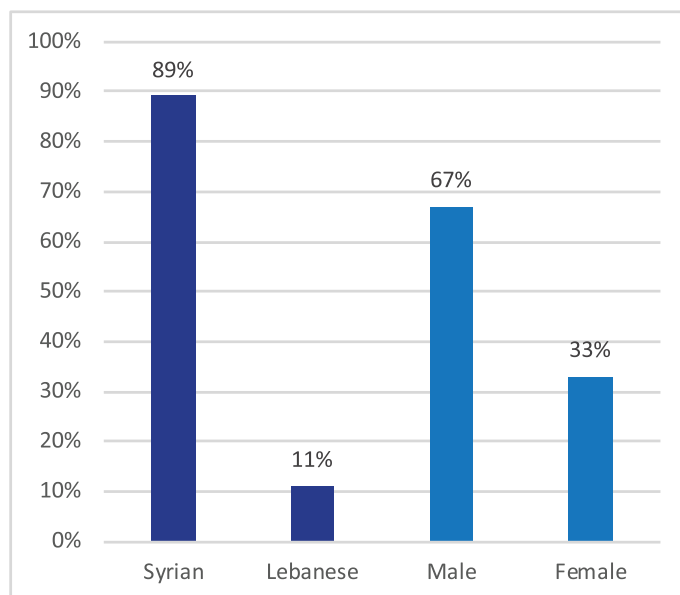
Qaraoun : Gender and Nationality Breakdown
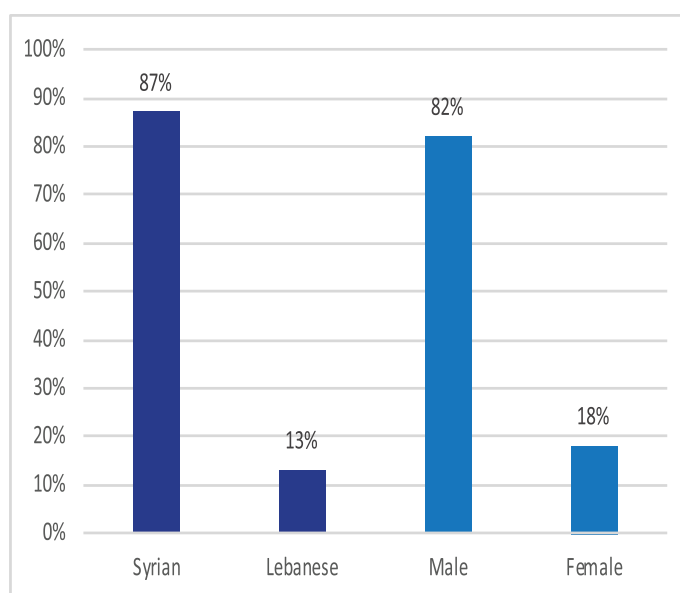
participation is lower as women have less access to the household phone. Their participation can be somewhat increased by varying the times at which questions are sent and running surveys for longer time periods to ensure women have more chances to reply to questions. For future surveys, we would suggest labelling a few questions as 'for women only' to make sure men hand over the phone to female household members.

Host community participation, at only 11%, remained low in Bar Elias. This partly reflects less interest among Lebanese to participate in a study by the 'UN', an institution that, many Lebanese believe, focuses exclusively on Syrians and

Palestinians. Another bias is produced through the phone numbers themselves. Local and international actors are more likely to hold phone data from Syrian refugees than from Lebanese citizens as part of their management systems. As in Qaraoun, we were able to reach more vulnerable demographics through the survey. Among those respondents who indicated their employment situation, 51% were unemployed. We also managed to reach different age groups. The age of our respondents ranged from 17 to 71, with the average age being 37.

Bar Elias # Replies by Question Breakdown

Legend: people who replied throught VN | people who replied throught text
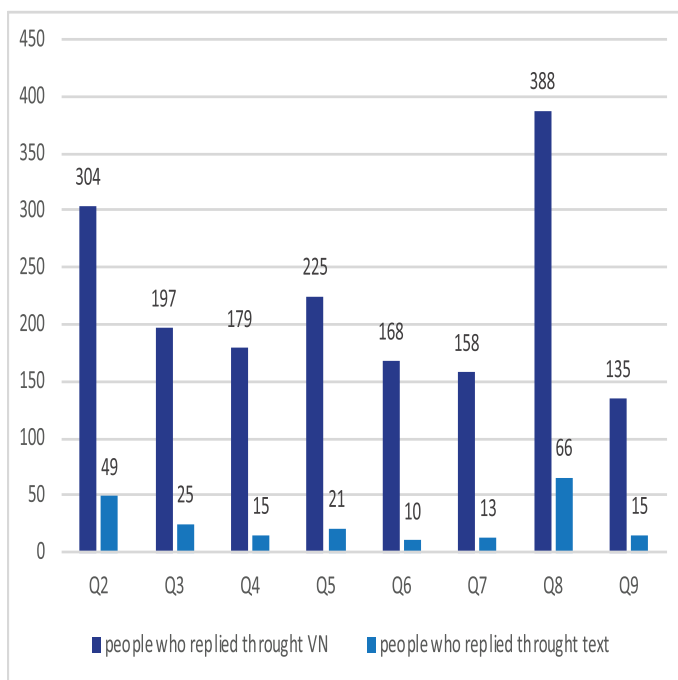
Many of these methodological limitations are not specific to the WhatsApp methodology but also affect survey taking and polling more generally. People might even be more honest and reflected in WhatsApp voice messages for two reasons. First, they are comfortable with that type of communication as this is how they communicate with friends and family and second, they have more time to reflect on their answers as they can choose when to reply to the question and in what format and length (unlike when a survey administrator suddenly knocks on your door and asks you to tick boxes in a questionnaire).

We ran the survey in Bar Elias over a month between February and March 2018, sending two to three questions every week. As in Qaraoun, the survey was preceded by FGDs and KIIs to triangulate with

the WhatsApp produced data as well as a design thinking workshop. Both Lebanese and Syrians participated in the workshop, co-designing the survey and helping us to reach out to the wider community to boost the survey's credibility.[12] Overall, out of 4,800 numbers, 794 people replied to our survey in Bar Elias, giving us a response rate of 17%, exactly the same as in Qaraoun. This is better than many online surveys where response rates are between 10% and 20%. Our survey was also more demanding as people were asked to send us voice and text messages to open-ended questions over a whole month.

Regarding the number of replies, 310 people replied to two or more survey questions while 484 replied to one question only. The questions with the highest response rates were Q2 ('What are the needs of your town?') and Q8 ('How do you see the future of Syrians in Lebanon?'). With Q8, we experimented with individual follow-up, reminding people through WhatsApp to reply to the question. This demonstrates that considerably higher response rates can be achieved through individual follow-up.

Q1: Please give us some basic information about yourself: your sex, your age, your nationality, your occupation and whether you are currently working. Please do not provide your name or any other personal information to help us to anonymize your data (not included in the graphic above).

Q2: What are the needs of your village/town?

Q3: What are your main fears and concerns? Do you feel safe in your area? And if not, what makes you feel unsafe? Could you tell us a story of a situation where you or some of your friends or family felt unsafe (without giving any names)?

Q4: Are there any tensions or conflicts in your area? If so, what are the reasons behind these tensions and can you give us an example of when you or people you know encountered these tensions or conflicts in your area?

Q5: Are you satisfied with the work of the UN and NGOs in Lebanon? If not, can you identify the main problems you see with their work and suggest how they could be addressed?

Q6: Have you or your family and friends been affected by unemployment or job competition in

your area? If yes, could you tell us what happened? What are the reasons behind unemployment or job competition in your area?

Q7: How are relationships between Lebanese and Syrians in your village? Have they improved or worsened during the last year? And if so, why have they improved or worsened? What do you see as the main sources of tension between Lebanese and Syrians? Could you give an example of how these tensions manifest themselves in everyday life in your area?

Q8: How do you see the future of Syrians in Lebanon?

Q9: Feedback on UNDP project in Bar Elias.

1.3. Making Sense of Narratives

The data was subsequently analysed using 'narrative inquiry'. Narrative inquiry is a method which systematically collects, analyses and represents people's stories in their own words.[13] It is part of the 'interpretive tradition' in qualitative research which seeks to understand human experiences by making sense of their motivations and beliefs rather than to explain or predict them by identifying cause and effect.[14] It differs from other methods in that its primary data are words rather than observations (ethnography) or numbers (statistical analysis).[15] Narrative inquiry is a pertinent method for the WhatsApp survey because the stories people tell are the only entry point we have into their lives.[16] Narrative inquiry treats stories as knowledge per se as they give insight into 'the social reality of the narrator'. The assumption here is that people's views are not just their individual and isolated opinions but are informed by and reproduce wider social discourses in the spaces they inhabit. Narrative research values 'local knowledge', which is often diverse, messy, situational and partial.[17]

The point of narrative inquiry is not to find the most common answer (quantitative surveys are better at this) but to unravel what things mean, for example, by unpacking different types of Lebanese-Syrian relationships. Narrative inquiry draws our attention to contradictions, misunderstandings and blind spots in peoples' stories that can tell us a lot about local mentalities. Besides, the 'most common answer' focus can be misleading as it might be enough for a small minority to have extreme views and high motivation to stir tensions. There are

also ethical reasons for paying more attention to people's stories, to 'read' their stories and not only to analyse them. These stories are not just data points, they are also a way of connecting with refugees and host communities as human beings and not only as numbers or files. For this reason, the report tries, where possible, to quote people's replies at length. To give the reader a sense of the broad spectrum of replies received, we have included word clouds for each survey question in the report's annex.

In our case, narrative inquiry shed light on how both refugees and host community members make sense of their lives and relationships. The method helped to identify common ideas and frames, while also representing the diversity of peoples' perspectives. Our question was not whether each and every story we received was 'true' or 'objective', but what that story tells us about the mentalities, ideas, fears and social context of our respondents.

In using narrative inquiry, we acknowledge that it is impossible to grasp 'life as lived' or 'life as experienced' through narratives.[18] Instead, the report recounts 'life as told' in a particular social and power context, namely with refugees and host communities telling a powerful institution what they think, fear and need through an informal application. Their positionality towards the UN differs significantly. Many refugees depend on the UN for their basic needs and protection. Lebanese are much more independent from the UN and thus presumably more willing to speak plainly.

Scripted Narratives
One helpful distinction in making sense of the vast narrative material of the WhatsApp survey is between 'scripted' and 'unscripted' narratives. Scripted narratives are generic and impersonal; they paint relationships with very broad brushstrokes referring to 'the Lebanese' and 'the Syrians'. They follow a familiar script and reproduce narratives that circulate in the media and are common to many host community–refugee settings. They are based on hearsay rather than on personal experience or concrete evidence and often use fictitious numbers. For example, one respondent told us:

"The village suffers from the problems of the Syrians, for the Syrians have destroyed everything. They didn't leave any work for the people of the town, and we hear about thefts and harassment every-day, all because of the Syrians. We used to live

in peace, but there hasn't been any peace since they came here."

This story contains all the elements of a 'scripted narrative': It refers to Syrians as one homogenous community ('the Syrians'); it is based on hearsay rather than personal experience ('we hear about thefts'); and it is totalising in its portrayal of Syrians as a threat to safety and to employment ('they didn't leave any work for the people of the town'). The arrival of Syrians is depicted as a watershed fundamentally changing community life ('there hasn't been any peace since they came').

Yet, it is not only host community members who used scripted narratives. Counter-narratives by Syrian refugees can be scripted, too:

"The Lebanese are arrogant, and they consider themselves as superior to Syrians. Also, they're benefiting a lot from the Syrians, and if a Syrian tenant was late to pay the house rent, they immediately oblige him to leave the house."

The idea that Lebanese are benefitting rather than reeling from the Syrian presence was common in Syrian discourses. While this counter-narrative is an important corrective to the mainstream perception, which overwhelmingly depicts Syrians either as a burden or a threat, its absolute logic ('all Lebanese are benefitting') can be misleading. In fact, benefits appear to be very unevenly distributed among Lebanese people and largely accrue to employers, landlords and businessmen. The mayor of Qaraoun, for example, said that one local supermarket owner had admitted that his monthly profit had risen from USD 5,000 to USD 30,000 due to the refugee food cards.[19] Refugees in our survey claimed that the owners of food-card eligible supermarkets considerably overcharge, and they asked to be given cash payments to make cheaper purchases at alternative supermarkets instead.

Unscripted narratives
While some of our survey questions (as with most quantitative survey questions) invited generic statements, our main approach was to pull people away from stereotyped discourse and instead tell us about the situation in which they live. We were interested in unscripted narratives which are often missing in social stability analysis. Unscripted narratives are personal, complex and situational. They are sensitive to the contingency of relationships

and draw distinctions between different types of relationships. A good example is this story:

"Thank God, there aren't any tensions. On the personal level, I have Lebanese acquaintances and friends, and things are good between us. I'm 70 years old, so there aren't any problems between me and anyone, and there's friendship between us. However, the relationships are bad between the youth, but they're good between the old people, and we're all happy, thank God. The Lebanese old men are friendly and generous, but we're not at their level, and if they invited us over, we can't invite them back because our financial situation is terrible. As for relationships, they're good, and I'm a happy old man, thank God. May God bless Syria, Lebanon, and all other countries. Thanks a lot."

The narrator starts with his personal situation which immediately leads him to an important point: Inter-community relationships are contingent, in his case, on age. His relationships with Lebanese are good because he is old. The problem is between the young people.

Indeed, our analysis suggests that not all Syrians are perceived as a threat. Young Syrian men are perceived as a threat because of their participation in the labour market and their perceived capacity for violence. Young Syrian women are perceived as a threat due to their role in bearing children and the imagined collapse or change of moral values they symbolize. Old Syrian men and women are a non-category in this scheme. Yet, 'the happy old man' makes another distinction that is important. While relationships between old Lebanese and Syrians are good, they are steeped in inequality both socially ('we're not at their level') and materially ('we can't invite them back').

Our respondents also pointed out that different relationships follow different trajectories over time. Some have improved, while others have deteriorated. As one Syrian respondent explained:

"The relation between the Syrians and the Lebanese has improved from one side and deteriorated from another side. First, on the level of our relations with our neighbours, we've developed relations and friendships with them, so things have improved between us and the neighbours and citizens. However, due to unemployment, the treatment of the Lebanese on the streets isn't good. When we get

on a taxi or go to the market, we face molestation and irritation. They say that we've left our country and came here to beg for money from the UN. However, because we've been in this neighbourhood, our relation is good with the people, and there's respect between us, but we only face molestation on the streets, and we hear so much insults from the people on the streets, and sometimes violence is included…"

Another respondent made the same distinction and highlighted the tendency of people who are struggling to project their difficulties onto the other community. The solution is to cater to the needs of all people who struggle to make a living:

"Some of the relationships between the Lebanese and Syrians are improving, while others aren't. Relationships that are improving are those which are personal. For example, my relationship with my Lebanese friend is getting better, and our friendship is prevailing. However, the relationships on the general level are deteriorating. For instance, if I'm a Lebanese who can't find a job, I'd say to myself that the Syrians have taken all jobs, which causes hatred between both sides, and vice versa; if the Syrian can't find a job, he'll say that the Lebanese doesn't allow him to work and that the Lebanese hates him. These are the main problems. We hope you'll do something to fix those relationships and enhance the trust between both sides, and that you'll give both their basic needs. Thank you."

There is not one relationship between Lebanese and Syrians, but multiple relationships that follow different logics. While relationships with neighbours have improved over time as people support each other in daily life, encounters with 'Lebanese on the streets' and employers have deteriorated:

"Treatment is okay. There are people who are good, as well as people who are bad to us. Concerning the good ones, if we had any case of illness and we asked them for the car, they'd agree to take us in their car. As for those bad ones, we work for them, but they don't give us more than half of the pay. May God bless you."

The 'neighbour' emerged as one of the most positive figures in the story data, while 'the employer' and the 'house owner' were described as the most negative ones.

1.4. Critical Narratives

One interesting aspect of people's narratives was that some used metaphors, analogies and proverbs to convey their ideas and critique. Such analogies were a particularly powerful tool for refugees in crafting counter-narratives. One refugee told us:

"Thanks for the question, and I hope you'll get what I mean. We feel like a rabbit that its owner keeps feeding until it becomes fat, and then releases it in a forest full of lions that would feed on his flesh. We left our country and faced so much trouble, and we feel like a commodity. We help out everyone but in the end we find ourselves on the street. We've fled our country to find freedom, but we didn't find it…We've been in this prison for five years, and we can't take it anymore. We offer services to everyone, and our pay can barely get a drink for the kids. You're asking us those questions, but are there any solutions? No one is comfortable among us, and we save up money during the month to give the rent to the house owner so that he won't humiliate us. Thus, we deprive ourselves of our needs in order to pay the rent. Also, the house owners expel the

Young child in Bar Elias Informal Settelment -UNDP

tenants for trivial reasons, even if it's because of a little kid."

The story of the rabbit challenges the mainstream media narrative in which Syrian refugees are portrayed as 'taking': they are receiving resources from the international community, the Lebanese state and the host community. But this obscures another reality that feels often more pressing for refugees, namely that they are de facto 'a resource' that others make money off ('feed on his flesh') whether it is the landlord who can charge higher rental fees for their property or the employer who makes larger profits by paying Syrians less than the agreed wages. As one respondent put it: 'All the Lebanese people benefit because of the Syrians, either by renting houses, buying from the supermarkets, or being employees at the UN. So why do they criticize and humiliate us?' The story of the rabbit also alludes to negative coping strategies that have become widespread among refugees, such as reducing food intake or withdrawing children from school to pay rent.[20] The speaker also subtly questions the utility of the survey ('You're asking us those questions but are there any solutions?'), mirroring broader scepticism among survey participants of the ubiquitous data collection on refugees which appears to bring few, if any, changes to their lives.

1.5. Absent or Marginal Narratives

In thinking about narratives, it is also important to think about what was not said. Some stories are striking precisely because of their marginality. For example, Syrians rarely asked for political representation or legal regulation:

"We hope there will be a Syrian committee which is in direct contact with the UN so that it can directly convey the pains and concerns of the people. The host country does provide services to refugees, but they're not enough and do not satisfy their basic needs which include transportation and potable water. Also, we hope there will be control over house rents because they're expensive and variant. Some houses do not deserve the amount that's required, but one is obliged to pay this amount although his salary isn't enough at all. So, we hope you'll control the house rents in a way that satisfies both the land owner and the tenant."

While many Syrians asked for help with rent, and both communities complained about rising rents and landlords overcharging for substandard housing, few asked for rent control or other regulations of the market. This reveals a lack of trust by both Lebanese and Syrians in the state's ability or willingness to reign in the excesses of the market. The story quoted above is also one of the few where Syrians asked for more political representation vis-à-vis the UN.

There is also little indication of political mobilisation among Syrians with only one story pertaining to that theme: 'There is no conflict or tension, but three years ago, the Syrians staged a demonstration against the expensive house rent in Bar Elias. Since then, there hasn't been any demonstration or tension.' When discussing conflicts, few people spoke about sectarian conflict which might also reflect the fact that Bar Elias is an overwhelmingly

Sunni area.

2. Bar Elias and Qaraoun: Places of Karam

Bar Elias has a reputation and self-perception of being a welcoming place for refugees. As one Syrian workshop participant put it: 'Bar Elias is indeed very hospitable. Last year there were raids and evacuations. The mayor at the time was so welcoming and was the only one to take people in. The governor sent memos to all West Bekaa municipalities about welcoming refugees and only this mayor did it. Majdel Anjar asked for money in return for example. We thank Bar Elias for this.[21]' As one key informant proudly proclaimed: 'We're much better and maybe the most-hospitable and efficient in welcoming refugees. If a camp burned down in Zahle, no one would rebuild it. No one else welcomed the refugees who were evacuated from Riyak'.[22]

Indeed, in the neighbouring, predominantly Christian town, Zahle, things have turned for the worse. Zahle municipality threatened to evict Syrian refugees living in overcrowded or otherwise non-compliant housing conditions in 2017.[23] The municipal police combed through refugees' residencies 'and coerced them to sign eviction notices that were then posted on their doors.'[24] The same key informant remembered: 'I was in Zahle barely two months ago working on a project in the ISs when 15 tents burnt down. The mayor refused to rebuild them. He said it's 15 tents less to worry about. This is what the residents of Zahle want from their municipality…'[25] Such evictions have unfolded in several Christian areas in 2017 including Bcharre, Miziara, Zahle and Hadath.[26]

This has reinforced the confessional narrative that 'Sunni areas have been the most tolerant of the Syrian presence…particularly…in the areas with a long history of hosting Syrians.'[27] Beyond purely confessional allegiances, scholars of migration have argued that 150 years of forced migration, asylum and integration 'were integral to the emergence of an acceptance of the "Other" and a local conviviality and tolerance of difference…' in Bilad al-Sham (Greater Syria and Lebanon).[28] Anthropologist Dawn Chatty documents a 'local cosmopolitanism' and argues that 'close social, economic, and kin-based contracts in the region have meant that many Syrians had social networks and capital to assist them in their early exile.'[29] Scholar Tahir Zaman points out that even though countries like Lebanon and Syria have not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, Islam offers alternative protection norms which refugees can mobilize to build local solidarity with host communities beyond the state ('The Prophet too was a forced migrant').[30] While these insights are helpful in making sense of Lebanon's remarkable capacity of absorbing at least one million refugees in a country of formerly only five million people, they somewhat neglect the more problematic moorings of power and inequality which underlie these migratory movements.

One important question is, 'who does the welcoming and why'? It is the mayor and the municipal board with varying levels of consultation with their constituencies.[31] Of course, offering refuge to Syrians fleeing the Syrian war has enjoyed broad Lebanese support. Apart from humanitarian and religious obligations, the closely intertwined Lebanese-Syrian history provides the backdrop to cross-border solidarity. Many Lebanese sought safety in Syria during the civil war and the 2006 war and are now reciprocating by offering Syrian refugees a sanctuary. Some sections of the Lebanese population also supported the uprising against the Syrian regime and thus were politically motivated to shelter Syrian refugees. Besides, many Syrians have lived in Lebanon before as migrant workers and thus had long-standing relationships with particular Lebanese villages which then welcomed them and their families once the war broke out.

But the mayors' welcoming attitudes often also reflect more particular interests, for example the interests of the landlords who benefit from renting out their lands to Syrian refugees which is more lucrative than agricultural use. Indeed, mayors are often landlords themselves and may thus have vested interest in the Syrian presence. When I asked a key informant whether the Lebanese accept the Syrian presence, he replied 'what can they do?'

Yet, the language has changed: 'Before no one would say, "let them leave already", now it does come up when you talk to family and friends. Some people expect them to go back to safe spaces,

others don't.' In the survey, several Lebanese used sarcasm to communicate their resentment against the Syrian presence. When we asked about the needs of Bar Elias, one Lebanese respondent hissed: 'Change the frontage of the town from Bar Elias to "Welcome to Damascus"'. Another sneered: 'We don't have any needs, because Syrians have opened shops that sell everything for the lowest prices ever'. When asked about the future of Syrians in Lebanon, one Lebanese respondent ironically replied:

"Their future is excellent, and the reason is that they arrive as cleaners or street sellers, but due to the huge aids that they receive, and due to the free medical care that they get, in addition to not being obliged to pay taxes, and not conforming to the Lebanese regulations, they accumulate fortunes that make their future even shinier, and this makes them succeed at owning properties and investments at the highest level. Thus, their future is excellent. Thank you."

This frustration blended with a broader sense of resignation: '80% of the youth in our town are unemployed, and the priority is for Syrians to work, and who cares?' One Lebanese explained: 'The town is also in need of asphalt and health services because we notice its lack of development. Most people have become used to the situation so they're no longer asking for anything.' Those who still ask, feel they are rebuffed: 'Whenever we go to the municipality and ask for paving the roads they make fun of us. They only know and respect us during the elections.'

2.1. Social Networks and Labour Migrants

Social networks are key to refugees' survival in Lebanon, yet access to such networks is highly unequal. Many of the refugees in our WhatsApp survey complained that access to assistance, work, housing and legal status depends on knowing the right people or in their words, 'having the power of an intermediary'. The more vulnerable refugees are and the more recent their entry into Lebanon, the less likely they can avail themselves of such networks.[32] Indeed, few Syrian respondents described long-lasting social ties or historical networks in our sample. The experience of being 'alien' or an outsider was omnipresent. As one Syrian respondent told us:

"The Lebanese people believe that the Syrians are inferior, and the Syrian doesn't have any rights or

dignity. Examples are plenty; they can't be listed. Whenever anything happens, the Lebanese talk to us condescendingly. They think that the Syrian is an outsider who has different morals and principles. That's how the Lebanese people treat us, although we and the Lebanese belong to the Sunnah sect in this neighbourhood. They are the first, while we're the last..."

The relationships that people did describe were often more local and recent, for example relationships between neighbours which both Lebanese and Syrians forged through living closely to each other. There is often an assumption in social stability analysis that refugees in Lebanon are essentially former seasonal workers who brought their wives and children after the Syrian war erupted.[33] This is not borne out in our sample. Many Syrian refugees made the distinction between 'Syrian workers' who came before the crisis and have access to jobs and Syrian refugees who are cut off these vital networks. Refugees in our FGDs also highlighted the physical separation between 'workers' and 'refugees'. Workers tend to live in different camps with more traditional Shawish arrangements. One refugee explained:

"The Shawish of the refugee camps is different from the worker camp. The first one pays rent just like us, while the latter gets paid instead. His daily pay is huge, thus he's well respected by everyone."

Another added:

"Our Shawish isn't a real Shawish. He's not the one that built the camp. We only chose him to represent us and inform us about everything new. We as refugees only deal with the Public Security. Thus, our Shawish's responsibility is only to represent us in front of any committee. He's not the same as the Shawish of the camps that include workers who have been here long before the war started."

There were few people, at least in our sample, who talked about living or working in Lebanon before the crisis. Many Syrians described how they became 'regular workers' because they are not legally allowed to work in their area of specialisation: 'I work with computer, phone hardware and software. I've worked at several shops, and I've never been given my full right. Thus, I'm no longer working in my domain, so I'm now working as a regular worker.' Another respondent highlighted:

"The Syrians that came to Lebanon aren't illiterate, and there are many doctors, engineers and pharmacists among them. However, they're not allowed to work in Lebanon, just because they're Syrians. What future will the Syrians have if they're not allowed to work within their domains? ...All the Syrians who came to Lebanon after the war started are only allowed to work in construction and agriculture. Why is that? Don't we have any educated people? Most Syrians have degrees, so why aren't you allowing them to have jobs within their domains?"

Another important aspect is that Syrian refugees move a lot within Lebanon, which makes social networks less durable. In the VASyR 2017, this 'forced mobility' became apparent. 55% of refugee households called to participate in the survey were unreachable.[34] Of those, 22% had moved to another area in Lebanon.[35] Within the VASyR sample, 12% of households had changed accommodation in the last six months, and 10% were planning to move in the following six months.[36] The main reason for these moves is evictions by the landlord.[37] This pressure by landlords was pervasive in the survey: "How can the tenant save himself from the house owner? How would I feel safe if the house owner might force me to leave the house at any time? In addition, if another tenant offered to pay more to the house owner, he'd immediately replace us with him. Where would we go if the house owner forced us to leave at any moment? On the other hand, some people are in a good situation, so they pay the rent for the entire year. What's the use of your studies if you can't provide us with safety as tenants? We hope you'll save us from the house owner who keeps telling us that other people offered to pay more, which puts us under pressure. Thanks anyways."

Whatever networks still exist with host community members are often not perceived to be horizontal. Syrian refugees describe rampant exploitation, particularly in the relationship with employers and landlords. Debt also increasingly defines host community–refugee relationships. While the ability of taking on debt throws refugees a lifeline, it also

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entraps them in relationships which are often marked by dependence, fear and threats.

2.2. Syrian Army Presence

In many ways, the more recent history is more instructive than the distant past in grasping Lebanese–Syrian dynamics in the Bekaa. The incorporation of Syrian labour migrants into the Lebanese economy after independence, coupled with the Syrian army occupation, created a difficult power situation: Syrians in Lebanon were the underdog and the oppressor at the same time, and not everyone made the distinction between the 'powers that be' and those who toiled under them. For example, historian John Chalcraft documented how 'views of the army became views of Syria, and then of Syrian workers. There was no clear separation of the economic and the political, or the "base" and the "superstructure".[38] While Syrian workers in Muslim areas were not directly targeted during the civil war (unlike in Christian areas), any perceived association with the Syrian army could put them at risk.[39] Bar Elias was directly affected by the Syrian military presence (1976-2005), especially since Anjar hosted the largest base of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon after the Israeli invasion in 1982.

In the ARK & UNDP perception survey, 81% of people in the Bekaa said that memories of the Syrian army occupation still impair relationships with Syrians. In fact, the ARK & UNDP survey found that 'independent of other factors, those with more negative memories of the Syrian occupation were also more likely to evaluate relations between Lebanese and Syrian refugees as negative'.[40] Reflecting upon Lebanese perceptions of Syrians, one key informant in Bar Elias exclaimed: 'They hate the Syrians, because they remember the Syrian army. My dad and my uncle were both beaten up by the army.'[41] Several Syrian WhatsApp respondents also related Lebanese attitudes towards them to the history of occupation:

"The Syrians love the Lebanese people, but the Lebanese still hold on to an old grudge, so they think that all Syrians are the same, and that all of them have treated the Lebanese in a similar way. However, the old situation is different from the new one. We're in war now. They were also in war back then, and the army has affected them and assaulted them, while we as civilians weren't among the army and didn't come to Lebanon before. Among the Syrians present in Lebanon now, 3% have been in the Syrian army that served in Lebanon long ago. However, the rest of the people are innocent, and they're respectful people who have nothing to do with the old incidents. Thus, this had led to a sort of anger among the Lebanese people…"

The motif of 'occupation' was recurrent in Lebanese stories and some Lebanese respondents saw the refugee presence as a re-enactment of occupation:

"Syrians have occupied the whole country, and nothing is left for the Lebanese. The future of the Syrians is excellent, while it's expected that we might go to Zimbabwe or the island of Hannibal or look for a country that will host the Lebanese because Syrians have left nothing for them, for they have possessed everything. For example, the employees of hospitals, associations and schools are all Syrians, because the employers have replaced the Lebanese employees with Syrian ones. Soon the Lebanese flag will be replaced with the Syrian flag."

This is not to say that Bar Elias is not a place of karam. It has opened its doors generously to Syrian refugees, accepting new arrivals even now when most municipalities have chosen a more regulative approach towards refugees. In fact, according to key informants, there were proposals at the municipality of introducing a curfew against Syrians which were resolutely rejected in the municipal council even by those who have become very critical of the Syrian presence.[42] They considered a curfew as violating the spirit of humanitarianism that Bar Elias stands for.

The point is also not to argue that sectarian allegiances do not matter. While security, culture, class and jobs are dominant themes across confessions, recent survey data shows that attitudes towards the Syrian presence tend to be more negative in Christian and Druze areas. Human Rights Watch has argued that evictions of refugees have so far predominantly occurred in Christian areas.[43] While several Lebanese respondents talked about 'organizing the Syrian presence', no one talked about forced evictions and few insisted that Syrians should return to 'safe spaces' in Syria. Bar Elias and Qaraoun are still places of karam, but hospitality has worn off as the Syrian presence has become both more securitized and otherised.

3. Needs

The needs of people in Bar Elias resembled those expressed in Qaraoun. Syrians were preoccupied with everyday needs of shelter, food and work (Figure 2), while Lebanese expressed concern about environmental risks and infrastructure debilitation, especially roads, in Bar Elias (Figure 1). Water was a shared concern including lack of drinking water, pollution of water and waste water management. Lebanese felt left alone with these environmental and health risks:

"Recently, our town has imported waste from villages and towns like Bhamdoun, Aley, Kahhaleh, Sawfar and Bsous, and it's dumping it in the chaotic Bar Elias landfill. We've contacted the members of the municipality several times, but they said they have nothing to do with this. So, we spied and saw that a huge amount of waste is being disposed in our landfill, which is producing toxic substances. Also, we don't know the nature of this waste, whether it is from hospitals or factories, or if it needs special ways of treatment. Our municipality only buries the waste…The Lebanese state has built a waste sorting plant in Bar Elias, but it hasn't been activated until now. We consulted them many times, but it was all in vain."

A particular agony was the pollution of the Litani River. One respondent lamented: 'Our town is in need of…cleaning the Litani River because its foul smell is killing us.' Another complained: 'Our main need is sanitation. We suffer a lot from sanitation, especially during summer when foul smells are emitted.' Curiously, for some the need for infrastructure repairs in Bar Elias would go seamlessly together with the need for 'organising Syrians' as if they are related manifestations of the same problem ('chaos'):

"Our needs in this town include repairing the roads and organising the issues of the Syrians, because chaos is prevailing in the village. The roads are full of potholes, and the sewage is unorganised, so whenever it rains the sewage floods. For example, a flood took place yesterday on Al Mikkawi and Al Nahriyya roads…"

Indeed, one interesting difference with the Qaraoun sample was that Syrians already entered the Lebanese discourse in thinking about their needs. Several Lebanese articulated 'control and organisation of Syrians and their camps' as a need. One respondent enumerated: 'First, we need more organisation in the town. Second, we need to organise the Syrians, find them jobs different than their current work, and organise their random housing. Third, we need the roads that flood in Bar Elias to be repaired…' Another Lebanese respondent explained: 'We need many things, the most important of which is founding a police station due to the chaos. Also, infrastructure needs to be repaired and rehabilitated in many places, including water and sewage. In addition, we suffer from the problem of the Litani River.' The need for more policing was acutely felt also because Bar Elias, despite its considerable size, does not have a police station. Yet, this need for policing appears to be rather selective, applying to Syrians but not to Lebanese. A local informant claimed that most Bar Elias residents oppose establishing a local police station as they are wary of the rules and restrictions it would impose on Lebanese life, for example, regarding celebratory shootings.[44] Another respondent framed 'the problem' in the following way:

"Tension and conflict started long time ago, and that's because the Lebanese no longer accept the presence of Syrians in the region. We say, for example, that there is no work, house rent has become expensive, and thefts have increased, all because of the Syrians. Second, they ride their motorcycles in an immoral and bothering way, which causes so much disturbance in the village. Thus, the only solution is to organise the camps and put someone in charge of them. There are some camps in Bar Elias that function this way, and we hope all the other camps will become like that."

Another interesting difference with Qaraoun was that both Lebanese and Syrians in Bar Elias were more confrontational, their replies reflecting a more fundamental unravelling of the social fabric far beyond the refugee question:

"If we told you our needs, would you respond to us? … Everyone is hating each other in this village, so how would we love and help each other? Everyone is seeking his own good, and no one is good to others anymore. You want to know what the needs are? A job with a respectful salary, a good living, getting a house loan which is every citizen's right.

However, when we want to take a house loan, we'll be humiliated, and they'll barely give us $1,000. People are tired and fed up. Give us our rights and we'll give you development. And you're still talking about our needs..."

The story seems to challenge the very premises of the question. Essentially it appears to be saying this: 'Don't talk about "needs", give us "our rights" and we will be able to provide for ourselves and advance our societies. The Lebanese are only asking for what is their due ("their rights") rather than "begging for alms"'.

Syrians also challenged the premises of the question. Some saw the question about the 'needs of the town' as an insult to them. As in Qaraoun, they made clear that they are not part of the town and thus the 'town's needs' are not of their concern:

"First, you're asking me about the needs of this town, but I'm not from this town. I'm only a Syrian refugee, but the Syrian refugee has nothing to do with the Lebanese affairs. I even don't know what to say about the way he's being treated. Just watch the news and you'll know how he's being treated. We have no privileges here, neither on the educational level, nor on the medical and nutritional levels. Thank God, the UN is supporting us to survive. "

Another Syrian refugee challenged the very logic of the idea that a 'town' could have needs:

"Our needs as refugees are plenty. Instead of investing millions of dollars in sewage, garbage trucks, municipalities and buildings that we build, and the public services which we build for the Lebanese, feel with the Syrian refugee. You're asking about the needs of the towns, but the towns don't need anything. The Syrian refugee is the one who's in need. Enough with stealing. "

'Things don't have needs, people have needs', especially the Syrian refugees. Yet, instead of catering to these needs, international organisations invest in the infrastructure that the Syrians then build 'for the Lebanese'. He urges: 'feel with the Syrian refugee'.

3.1. 'Separation as Need'

Another concerning difference with Qaraoun was that in Bar Elias segregation was not only described as a reality but as a desirable solution to Lebanese-Syrian tensions. One Lebanese respondent claimed: 'one of the projects that might benefit the village is separating the citizens from the refugees in order to lessen conflicts.' Some Syrians agreed, seeing segregation as a way of creating security. One Syrian woman from close-by Majdel Anjar explained:

"In addition, we need a park in Majdel Anjar, because the one they've established last year has become accessible by Syrian and Lebanese people, which is creating racist fights. We hope you will construct a park for Syrian kids only, accompanied with their moms, and forbid adults from entering it, for this is safer and more beneficial."

The 'need' for separation not only extends to the living, but also to the dead. As in many other places, Bar Elias suffers from a chronic shortage of spaces for burying the Syrian dead.[45] But in Bar Elias, at least in the discourse of some Syrians, the issue does not only revolve around limited space and superstition. Refugees also expressed the sentiment that Syrian bodies are not welcome in the Bar Elias cemetery: 'The most important need in our town is establishing a cemetery for Syrians, because we find so much trouble when a Syrian dies. In other municipalities, Syrians get buried in the cemeteries of the municipality, except for Bar Elias wherein burying a Syrian is totally forbidden.' A cemetery for Syrians is portrayed as the solution:

"If a Syrian's relative died, he wouldn't know where to bury him so they stay at the hospital for more than four days, and keeping a corpse at the hospital would cost him four or five million. Our situation is horrible…We hope you'll establish a cemetery for Syrians in Bar Elias."

4. Conflicts and Tension

Most people in Bar Elias and Qaraoun reported that there are no tensions or conflicts in the area. One respondent told us: 'Thank God, there aren't any racist conflicts or problems in this area. Things are very good, and our neighbours are kind. There is coexistence, and there aren't any problems.' Many Syrians emphasised that they prevent conflict by avoiding interactions with people they do not know. As in Qaraoun, people gave more insight into conflict dynamics when asked about their safety, fears or job situation than when directly asked about tensions. This also reflects a broader sense in Bar Elias that 'things are bubbling under the surface'. They are not out in the open, yet.

Respondents who talked about conflict would mention a variety of conflicts, including conflicts between powerful families (particularly in light of the upcoming elections), between citizens and the municipality, between sports clubs, between neighbours, between children and between Lebanese and Syrians. As the word clouds in the annex show (Figures 3 and 4), Lebanese talk primarily about Lebanese and Syrians primarily about Syrians. This may reflect the fact that many conflicts unfold within the two communities rather than between them. The ARK & UNDP survey found that only 12% of Lebanese said that there are no tensions between Lebanese in the area.[46] Economic competition for jobs and resources was cited most frequently as a source of tension followed by political and sectarian conflicts. Among Syrians, tension around aid distribution was reported as a conflict factor. That said, two types of inter-community conflict emerged, which were often interlinked: first, an apprehension of Syrians because they were perceived to be different (culture, class and gender) and second, resentment against Syrians because they were perceived to be too similar (i.e. competing for the same material resources and jobs).

4.1. Culture and Class

Separation and distance between the communities also emerged as a major theme when we asked people about tensions and conflicts. Indeed, for some Lebanese, segregation of communities was not only desirable for security reasons, but also for cultural reasons:

"In my opinion which is considered racist, I hope all Syrians and foreigners will be gathered in one place, wherein they won't mingle a lot with the people of the town, so when we enter Bar Elias, we won't feel that we've entered Al Hamidiyah market. We want to enter our village and see our people, and not see someone fighting or arguing with someone else. We don't know all those people…I hope my opinion won't be considered racist."

The quote is particularly interesting because it reveals the larger discursive field in which the debate about the Syrian presence takes place. The speaker opens with the admission that his opinion is considered racist, indicating that his ideas have elicited push-back and outrage before, and he ends with the plea that his views won't be considered racist by the UN. The reference to Al Hamidiyah market is curious. Al Hamidiyah market is the central souk in Damascus. In fact, the image of the bazaar was used more broadly as a cultural marker for expressing differences between Lebanese and Syrians.[47] One Lebanese key informant pondered:

"We don't have the same culture; do you know that? We used to think we are the same, but we are not. The Syrians who came to Bar Elias are the 'tent Syrians' even in Syria, not the 'apartment Syrians'. Not because they are poor but because of their cultural level…I will give you an example. The Syrians when they rent shops they display the goods outside. In Lebanon, we don't do that. They put the clothes, shoes outside…it's like a bazaar all the time."

As in Qaraoun, some Lebanese would depict living in tents as a 'Syrian lifestyle' rather than as a living condition borne out of hardship. Yet, behind notions of cultural differences often lurks discrimination against poorer people. When we organised the workshop to co-design the survey with Lebanese and Syrian community stakeholders, one Lebanese woman walked into the room and then turned around immediately, telling me with an accusatory look: 'Only Syrians here' before a single person had uttered a word. Refugees are more destitute than not only the rich Syrian tourists who used to frequent the area for shopping and dining, but also the Syrian workers who used to come to Bar Elias seasonally. Such ideas are more often expressed by

people who are better off. The UNDP-ARK survey found that negative perceptions of the Syrian refugee presence, after controlling for other factors, was greatest among Lebanese households with the highest monthly income. [48]

In our FGDs, Syrian participants talked about their marginalization in Lebanese society because their financial situation makes it more difficult to partake in social life. Some felt that social acceptance was linked to 'outer appearances' and owning status symbols such as expensive mobile phones. One participant explained: 'Now, any time a kid sees a man in an old pair of pants or not looking his best, he'll tell his parents, "He's Syrian". Same if he's not doing well financially.' One Lebanese key informant claimed that 'you look like a Syrian' has become a way of insulting people.

Yet, the notion of Syrians as a cultural or social threat often blended with their depiction as an economic threat:

"They're dominating all jobs, and they're found everywhere with their disgusting and foul smells. As soon as you reach the entrance of the village, you'll immediately find Syrian clothing and footwear shops, then you'll find [shop name omitted] which is ours, and then you'll find Syrian shops everywhere again. Their smells are so disgusting. In addition, of course there are conflicts, and many violent fights have taken place before. In the end, they're taking over our work. The workers at the new hospital that they want to construct will be Syrian of course, and they wouldn't hire us because the funding is European, and so of course they'll hire Syrians only."

4.2. Job Competition and Unemployment

Indeed, at its core, Lebanese outrage is not only about the way Syrians display clothes outside their shops, but also about the fact that they should own shops at all. Bar Elias is a strategic trading hub with profitable shops on the main road connecting Beirut and Damascus. Some Lebanese claim that most shops are now owned by Syrians and that Syrian demand has significantly driven up shop rental prices: '90% of the shops in Bar Elias are run by Syrians, which has caused most Lebanese businesses to stop...' Another Lebanese respondent complained: 'I was personally affected. I have a clothing and footwear shop. The number of shops in Bar Elias has increased from ten to 100 after

the Syrians came to Lebanon, which has deeply affected work.' One report estimated that around 100 new shops have opened in Bar Elias since 2011, primarily catering for Syrians (especially clothing), filling a market gap rather than replacing previously existing shops.[49] A local informant, on the other hand, claimed that 60% of Bar Elias shops are now rented by Syrians, posing direct competition to Lebanese shops in the domains of clothes, home appliances, carpentry, butcheries and restaurants.[50]

Syrians counter that their work opportunities are very limited, not least by legal restrictions. Since 2016, Syrians who want to operate a business in Bar Elias have to register it in a Lebanese person's name, leading to a de facto sponsorship system.[51] This has been lucrative for Lebanese sponsors who extract a fee for this business partnership, but often do not otherwise invest in the shop. In March 2017, the governor took the decision to close around 40 designated Syrian shops in Bar Elias and asked the municipality to implement it.[52] This followed the widely publicised decision 1/41 in January 2017 by the Ministry of Labour which specified 'businesses, occupation and crafts, and jobs that must be limited to Lebanese only'.[53] The municipality did not implement the decision, allegedly because of pressure by Lebanese landlords who benefitted from renting their shops to Syrians.[54] Between January and April 2017, several dozen protests against Syrian labour competition and shop ownership unfolded across Lebanon, including in Bar Elias, Ali El Nahri, Ghazze, Majdel Anjar and Zahle. While few protests have been recorded in 2018, the issue has not lost any of its salience. In the ARK & UNDP perception survey, inter-community competition for the establishment of businesses/shops almost doubled from 45% in September 2017 to 80% in February 2018.

Syrians who work in shops reported that they were sometimes mistaken for the owners, feeding into Lebanese perceptions that Syrians have taken over all shops:

"Sometimes I work at a certain place, being a worker who can perform any kind of tasks, so the Lebanese would think that I've rented the shop at my own expense, but the Syrians are forbidden from renting shops. However, I'm a worker at the shop. For example, I was working for a Lebanese man, and the people used to think that I've rented the shop, and the income was all mine. Thus, they attacked us and beat us."

Others felt that when they rent shops they have to pretend to be employees to ward off public anger:

"If the Syrian opened a shop, the whole village would stand against him, but he would keep going and he wouldn't respond to them. Also, if he wasn't protected by a Lebanese, they'd get him out of the shop. Thus, for example, he has to say that the shop is for a Lebanese man and that he's only an employee at the shop, while in fact he's the one that rents the shop and pays the price of goods. However, he's obliged to lie to the people and say that he works for a Lebanese man and not alone."

According to a Lebanese key informant, one Syrian investor had rented several shops in the previous year, which hiked up prices, essentially rearranging the economy on his own terms. Yet, he portrayed it as an ad hoc incident which has been halted in its tracks. Another key informant claimed that the situation continues with a few Syrian merchants renting the shops. Rental prices for a small but centrally located garage in Bar Elias have allegedly reached up to USD 1000 per month. That said, the bulk of Syrians are excluded from shop ownership.

Indeed, both Lebanese and Syrians were frustrated about the lack of job opportunities, particularly in the field of construction. Many attributed the lack of work to lower Syrian wages:

"Unemployment exists because Syrians have come here and took over all the jobs. If a person takes 1,800,000 per month, the Syrian offers to take 600,000 only. Thus, most people have become unemployed, and those who have certificates keep them stuck on the wall just to observe them because there is no hope for work in the country… In the field of construction, the Lebanese used to take $6 per meter, but the Syrian offered to take only $2. Thus, of course there is unemployment."

Yet, Syrians were equally frustrated with the legal restrictions imposed on their fields of employment, leaving manual work as the only possible option:
'There are no job opportunities, and we're not allowed to work in any field that we want. If the Syrian was allowed to open shops, of course he would have done it, but they are not.' One Syrian woman lamented:
"Syrian men are suffering due to job vacancies. No matter how important the Syrian is, and no matter how many high certificates he has, he'll always stay a

regular worker or employee, and he'll never become a manager. Hence, the tension between the Syrians and the Lebanese is due to job vacancies."

Other Syrian respondents pointed out that Syrian and Lebanese work is interdependent rather than competitive as Syrians work for the Lebanese. As in Qaraoun, many Syrians observed that the main problem is unemployment not job competition:

"They say that we've taken their jobs, and that we work while they don't. However, if they didn't work, we wouldn't be able to work as well, for we work for the Lebanese, since we don't have companies or shops to work at. Therefore, if their situation was good and they were working, we'd work with them. So, the unemployment crisis is the cause for problems."

A Lebanese mukhtar observed that much of the job competition is between Syrians:

"The conflict is Syrian vs Syrian. The first wave came and took jobs and residence, and the second and third waves are now in conflict with the 'old' Syrians [from the start of the Syrian crisis]. The newer they are, the cheaper they are willing to go."

Indeed, the 2018 VASyR found that unemployment among the Syrian labour force stands at 40% (61% for women and 35% for men).[55] For those, who manage to find work, exploitation is a pervasive experience. Syrians complain that employers frequently do not pay agreed wages, making them feel powerless and exploited. Many conclude that working has become pointless and that not working may be safer to avoid exploitation and harassment:

"If a Syrian worked for somebody, they wouldn't give him his full pay, and they would tell him to cover additional work to get the money. Thus, he would rather leave work than work for free."

Another Syrian worker added:

"Unemployment exists because there is no work. One of us looks for work but he can't find any, and those who find work are avoiding it, because there is so much exploitation due to the daily pays…For example, if the Syrian works for someone, and the employer doesn't need him at work anymore, but he has to pay him $200 or $300, he won't give him anything."

Syrians feel that there is nothing they can do about exploitation:

"Last summer, I worked for four months, but the employer didn't give me my pay, and he deprived me of my right. However, we can't say anything because we're in the host country, so we can't ask for anything. I've sent many people to my ex-employer to pressure him to give me my money because I have a family, and we have to pay the house rent and many other expenses, but he didn't give us anything."

Indeed, it is in the relationship with employers and in spaces of work that much of the tensions and violence that Syrians reported unfold:

"Our fear is due to the fact that we work with a Syrian boss, so whenever a Lebanese sees us taking any job, he beats us as well as our boss, because as you know, the Syrian works for a cheaper pay than that of the Lebanese. Thus, many times we go to work, but the Lebanese beat us to leave work, so we go back home."

A Syrian woman pointed out:

"In addition, my husband works a lot but he doesn't get his right, and he gets threatened whenever he asks for his money because 'we're illegal' as they say…"

Syrian illegality means that unless they have local networks, refugees have little choice but to remain silent in the face of abuse. Only 27% of refugees in Lebanon have legal residency.56 To the extent that Syrians talked about protection, they would usually refer to friends and neighbours, rather than to local authorities or international organisations:

"My husband has worked for several people, and he met one of them in a shop. My husband asked him for his money, but his ex-employer attacked him, so the people of Al Majdal intervened to stop the fight. They also expelled the Lebanese ex-employer because he's rude and because he attacked my husband whose reputation is very good and has got many acquaintances in Al Majdal; thus, they supported my husband. Therefore, my husband always escapes hardship in an unbelievable way." Syrian women struggle to find work that is safe. Some report sexual harassment and exploitation by male co-workers, employers and Shawishes. With a

third of our sample being women, we learnt more about the struggles of female-headed household. One important theme was women and work:

"I did not answer the question because I didn't get it. Generally, I live in a collective building, and since we're all women here, we need work. We're looking for work but we're not finding any. Also, we're not finding a safe workplace for us as women, and whenever we find work we get more and more exploited, which makes us fearful of working at places which we don't know, because each one of us has a family and responsibilities."

Her reply alludes to some of the shortcomings of the WhatsApp tool as currently designed. Due to the data volume, it was not possible for us to individually follow up to clarify questions or to ask for more information. For example, what is the relationship between the women who live together? Are they related? What type of exploitation is she referring to? Does she mean sexual exploitation? Another story may be instructive here:

"We've been really affected by unemployment, and there are no job opportunities for males or females. I'm speaking from my own experience, for sometimes I have to work in order to provide my daughter and my sick mother with their needs, so I should work in order to do that. However, there is no work, and when we find work, we get very low pay. For example, I go and work in agriculture from dawn to 12 p.m., and I only take 7,000 L.B.P. We've heard that the employer gives the Shawish 10,000 LBP for each worker, and the Shawish takes 3,000 from each pay, and gives only 7,000 to each worker. Thus, my monthly income doesn't reach 30,000 ($20). In addition, if we find work in another area, we can't take it because we can't move due to our illegal residence permit. Another thing that makes me stay at home is that I'm sick. Also, the employers and co-workers cause me so much irritation, and I don't like to talk about such stuff. This is a reason for unemployment as well. I'm not working now."

The reference to employers and co-workers causing her irritation as well as her admission that she doesn't like to talk about these things suggests that she is referring to sexual harassment at work. She also mentions the role the Shawish plays a plays as an intermediary between employer and employee, taking a substantial proportion of an already extremely low pay. Yet, exploitation is not limited

to agricultural work in the field where women have little protection but imbues all public and private spaces.

A young Syrian teacher told us about her experience of sexual harassment and stalking both at work and at home:

"My greatest problem is that I'm looking for a job. My sister and I live alone. We have no brother, no mother and no father, and all of our relatives have left us. Also, the UN dismissed us lately. So, I'm always looking for a job, and whenever I find a job, the employer would start harassing me verbally. I used to work at a school, so the principal wanted me to go out with him, and when I refused, he gave me more classes and he put me under so much pressure. The last problem that happened with my sister was two years ago, when she left her fiancé because they had many fights. After that, he started sending us threats, and he kept talking to my sister. Also, we used to see him a lot in our building, and he used to threaten to hit her or kidnap her. We sent his name and personal information to someone we know who works at the State Security, so he arrested him for two days only. Although he signed a pledge saying that he won't approach us again, it got worse because we have no one. In addition, whenever I found a job, he'd go to the boss and make up lies about me so I get fired. I talked to all associations about our problem. I need a job, because after the UN dismissed me, my situation worsened, for now I'm not receiving fuel nor food aids. Only God knows how we're surviving. My problem is that whenever I complain to anyone, he exploits me more and more. Three months ago, he approached me and followed me with his friend on his motorcycle, and I saw someone I know who works at the municipality. I told him about my problem, so he talked to him and scolded him for approaching us, but he as well took advantage of the situation and started talking to me at 1 a.m., and he wanted me to go out with him. I don't know what to do, and whom to complain to."

The story illustrates how women get trapped in more and more exploitation, as they turn to 'other men' for protection, who then only end up deepening their entrapment. The story also shows how even with wasta ('someone we know who works at the State Security'), engaging public actors was ineffective at least ('he arrested him for two days only') and harmful at worst ('he started talking to me at 1 a.m.'). These predicaments, of course, are by no means unique to Syrian women in Lebanon, but without legal protection, women are forced to trade different types of exploitation and harassment in their quest for safety.

One Dollar Shop in Bar Elias -UNDP

4.3. Gendered Conflicts

Gender dynamics play a crucial role in shaping inter-community relationships. As the majority of respondents in both surveys were men, we received more insight into how masculinity is enacted in the relationship between Lebanese and Syrian men.[57] Much of the harassment and violence described was collective and happened between Lebanese and Syrian men:

"We're living in constant tension as if we're in a jungle. They'll never accept us. Here, the strong swallows the weak, just like a jungle. To them, we're nothing. We can't do anything here. Things are terrible between us. I've told you this before; yesterday I went at night to get medicine for my daughter, so a group of men attacked me and used weapons as if I'm a criminal. Thus, we don't feel safe going out at night after 7 or 9 p.m."

Another Syrian respondent observed:

"Of course, there's tension and hate, but we don't know why. For example, our friend has been attacked by about 40 or 50 men. They beat him up and hurt him a lot. We don't know why."

Yet, women are also targets of gendered tension dynamics. Survey data suggests that cultural prejudice and conflict are rising dramatically in the Bekaa. Between our perception surveys in September 2017 and February 2018, the percentage of people who cited 'cultural differences (like how women behave)' as a source of inter-community tension, rose from 26% to 41%, almost double the national average (21%).[58] In our FGDs, Syrian women talked about the difficulties they experience due to their role as mothers.[59] One young Syrian woman recounted her experience giving birth at a hospital as follows:

"The doctor and nurse hit me while I was giving birth. She didn't want me to give birth. When it's your turn, remember, it's excruciating pain. The doctor didn't want me to scream, so she hit me. Have you ever seen a woman give birth without screaming? Now when we're in our ninth month, we start worrying about what it will be like to give birth. Why do they keep telling us to stop giving birth? Why else would I get married if it's not to continue my family and future generations?"

The fear that Syrian women constitute a demographic threat to the Lebanese nation translates into targeted harassment of women:

"When my husband goes to work, I go to the market with my four kids to buy our necessities, so the Lebanese start insulting me for giving birth to all those kids, and they say that they themselves don't give birth to so many kids, so the Syrians came to Lebanon and started reproducing. These are our main reasons."

More complex still is Syrian women's role regarding sexual morality. Here the message is very contradictory. On the one hand, Syrian women are often portrayed as more conservative than Lebanese women. On the other hand, they are depicted as 'loose',[60] willing to engage in prostitution or, rather, 'survival sex'. A young Lebanese woman in Bar Elias told me that Syrian women are selling sex, which has led to a broader moral degradation in the town and changing male behaviour towards Lebanese women. She said that Lebanese women do not feel safe walking outside after 5 p.m. One Lebanese stay-at-home mother told us via WhatsApp: 'There is no safety here. Although I don't know anyone whom anything has happened to, I don't let my daughter go out alone due to the numerous terrifying incidents and stories that we hear. So, we as women no longer go out alone, and we don't even send our daughters alone to the shop.'

But Syrian women reported similar fears about moving in public space:

"There's safety here in Anjar, but whenever I walk on the streets or go to the market, I don't feel safe due to the way people look at me, and I always feel that something is about to happen. Men on the streets are mischievous, and there's no police, nor control over security. Thus, there isn't so much safety in Bar Elias and Deir Zannoun, but it's better in Anjar. Conflicts always take place in Bar Elias and Deir Zannoun, and the way they look at women is bad."

5. Safety

5.1. Internal Safety

Reports about safety were worse in Bar Elias than in Qaraoun. Both host community members and refugees reported an increase in thefts. The type of theft described was often intrusive and violent with strangers forcing themselves into people's homes or people being violently robbed on the street. This is mirrored in the ARK & UNDP survey, where the percentage of people who worried about the threat of crime rose in the Bekaa from 6% to 20% in the last year.[61] Lebanese increasingly attribute such crimes to the presence of Syrians. 86% of people in the Bekaa said that 'the presence of a large number of Syrian refugees in this community has contributed to more incidents of crime and violence', an increase of 25% compared to last year. 'Syrian', 'thefts' and 'over- crowdedness' were prominent words in Lebanese discourses (Figure 5):

"Our main problems are: first, the over-crowdedness of our town with Syrian refugees whose number has exceeded the population of the region. Also, our fears are due to the thefts that are prevailing in the village by the Syrian refugees. We were robbed, but we caught the thieves. So, I'm always worried about my children because of the lack of safety in the country…"

Another Lebanese respondent pondered:

"Safety is found and not found at the same time. Before the region became overcrowded with the Syrians, the situation was safer. We used to go out and wander freely. Now we're afraid to be approached and robbed, because the Syrian here is an outsider, and whatever he does, no one will catch him or know his identity."

For Lebanese, safety is related to 'knowing' and 'regulating' refugees in camps. The camp, rather than refugees per se, emerged as a site of imagined chaos and insecurity. This may also partly explain why tensions and feelings of insecurity are higher in mid-sized towns, such as Bar Elias. They lack the familiarity of the village, but also the security infrastructure and acceptance of anonymity in big cities:

 "The situation has become better than before, due to the organisation that has taken place in camps, after it was all corrupt. We never put anything in front of our house, and if we put a gas bottle it'll be robbed if the house is near a camp. Also, there were many people who weren't registered and whom we didn't know. For example, if a theft by one of the camp residents took place, we wouldn't know his identity. However, now they're making everyone register, and the security committee knows everyone."

Syrians shared many of these fears. Yet, for them, insecurity came in equal measures from people they know (the landlord, the employer) and people they did not know (the stranger, the thief):

"May God bless you. Thanks for those questions. There is a lack of safety in our region. Once a man knocked at the door, and my daughter was next to the window, so he told her to open the door and he'll give her a biscuit. She opened the door, but my neighbour was visiting us so together we pushed the door to stop him from entering the house. He was trying to push the door too, but we managed to close the door and he ran away. Since then, my kids and I are always afraid. Also, the house owner attacked my neighbour asking her for the house rent. Our other neighbours saved her and stopped the fight. We're always afraid, so we hope you'll find us a solution or help us travel in order for my kids and I to live in peace."

While for Lebanese the camps constituted a site of suspicion where violence and chaos are bred and then brought into the outside, for Syrians the camp was only one of many sites of insecurity. The camp, the work place, the house and the street all emerged as sites of potential abuse.

"Throughout the street we see men cursing the Syrians, and we see men with their lower sides naked in their cars. There is so much chaos in Bar Elias and there is no monitoring. Given that we're Syrians, they always tell us that we're ISIS or Jabhat Al Nusra because we wear black. There is a disabled man in the camp, and he was able to receive wheelchairs from the UN. However, the person in charge of the camp wanted to sell them because no one took his permission before, so he refused to let them bring them in and he started insulting and humiliating the disabled man. Also, he started insulting us because we're Syrians and he's Lebanese. He also told us that we're not worth charity, as though he's the one who

pays for the aids that we receive."

Stories were also heavily coloured by recent events, particularly the kidnapping of a young Syrian girl, which induced widespread fears among Lebanese and Syrian parents.[62] Yet, for Syrians, fear for their children was enmeshed with their condition of illegality and precarity, which forces more children into labour:

"No, there's no safety in our camp. About two months ago, a girl was kidnapped while selling tissues or gum. Thus, the situation isn't safe at all. What's scaring us is the chaos and the lack of supervision. Hence, all the kids are forced to go and work, and some people are kidnapping them…"

As in the Qaraoun sample, Syrians were particularly fearful of army raids:

"We don't feel safe in this area due to human and security reasons. There are many raids on the camp, and many conflicts take place between the refugees and the townspeople. Many things make us feel unsafe, including the raids. Sometime ago, the army threw a sound bomb while everyone was asleep. It was around 12 a.m., so everyone woke up terrified due to the bomb. Thus, we don't feel safe here at all. In addition, two kidnapping incidents have taken place in this area…"

Similar to Qaraoun, perceptions of safety were not only linked to physical safety but also to material safety, particularly the ability to pay for rent, food and medicine. Much anxiety related to fear of evictions, both by landlords and by the Lebanese state:

"We're afraid of being expelled from the camp if we didn't pay the electricity and water bills. We're also afraid of floods because the tents drown whenever it rains, and we're afraid of storms and fires…We also afraid the police might come and arrest the men because their residence permit isn't renewed."

Another Syrian respondent lamented:

"Our fears are of the Lebanese state, because we always hear that they want to send the Syrians away, and that we're forbidden to work. If we didn't work, how would we survive? How would we pay the house rent and the school expenses? These are our fears. We don't fear the Lebanese citizen because

his situation is as bad as ours. If the situation wasn't bad in our homeland, we wouldn't have come to this country, for each one of us loves his homeland. Another thing is that they always threaten to send us away, but the situation is still horrible in Syria, and whenever a Syrian man goes there, they either oblige him to enrol in the army, or he'll be arrested. Personally, I have two sons who reached the age of entering the army. Thus, if I went to the Syrian border, they'd immediately take them to the army, and I don't have other kids. I'm a 60-year-old man, one of my sons is 22 and the other is 17, and our papers are illegal. So, we can't go back to Syria because its situation is bad, and it's deteriorating. We all hear about the situation of Damascus through the news. Our region is Darayya. It doesn't have any houses anymore because they're all ruined, including our house, and there is no work there anymore. Also, entering it has become impossible. And house rent is too expensive in cities, and there is no work to pay it if we want to live in a city. We hope the Lebanese state will bear with us, for none of us is comfortable. We also hope our town will return as it was before, so we would immediately return to it. So, the issue of sending us away is troubling us on a daily basis."

The story is interesting, not least because it creates solidarity between the Syrian refugees and Lebanese citizens whose situation is as bad as that of the Syrian.

Contestations around security – Lebanese complaints about the lack of formal security and Syrian perceptions that they are already overly securitised – also play out in the debate around curfews. Some Lebanese respondents demanded a curfew enforced by the police, which prevents Syrians from moving during the night, similar to the curfew in place in Qaraoun. Syrians, on the other hand, saw the lack of a curfew as an indication that Bar Elias was safer than other surrounding areas:

"Thank God, there is safety in our region. No one approaches us here, but our friends in the neighbouring regions are forbidden to go out after 8 p.m., even if they had an emergent case like giving birth or illnesses. Those who violate the law for the first time have to pay 20,000, and it'll be doubled next time. So, our region is safer than other regions."

Yet, only because there is no formal curfew in place, does not mean that Syrians will feel safe to move after dark. Many Syrians have internalised the

curfew regime: whether a curfew is officially in place or not, moving at night constitutes a punishable transgression. As one Syrian refugee elaborated:

"Concerning safety, it's forbidden to wander at night, either by the state, or by the rogues. And if you want to walk on the street, you'll be bullied a lot but you have to keep silent or else you'll be beaten. We've seen such incidents; once we saw a group of Lebanese guys who attacked a Syrian and hit him for no valid reason. We're also insulted because we're Syrians. Hence, Syrians are disliked in Lebanon and we have to ignore curses and insults or else we'll be beaten. The only thing that makes us feel safe is sticking to our boss. Personally, I was insulted many times for no reason. They treat us like outsiders and slaves here. Thus, staying at home is safer at night and sticking to our boss is safer during the day…"

5.2. External Safety

When we asked people whether they feel safe 'in their area', our assumption was that they would talk about safety in Bar Elias. Yet, for some Syrians the framing of the question was confusing. One Syrian respondent replied: 'I didn't get the question. Do you mean here or in Syria?' Another respondent explained:

"If you mean in Lebanon, the situation is good in our region, and there is no conflict. Nevertheless, if you mean our region in Syria, there was a bloody war between two parties which are the Syrian Regime and the Free Syrian Army. We were subject to so much trouble, including siege, beating and humiliation. Those were from both parties not only one, for both the Syrian Army and the Free Syrian Army were against the poor people who had nothing to do with the war, and they took no one's side. We were also subject to so much insults and cursing. In addition, some people would disappear, some would die, and some would be injured. Thank God, we were among those who survived all those issues. Hence, my family and I left Syria before anything happened to us."

The quote reveals again that, for a displaced people, references to 'their area' are unsettling; the area in which they used to live in Syria is not 'their area' anymore, and the area in which they live in Lebanon will never truly be 'theirs'. The quote is also instructive in that it dispels the myth that people are either with the Syrian regime or the opposition.

Rather, the war is seen as between those who have some power and resources and 'the poor people'. Yet, for some Syrians, the question was unsettling beyond feelings of foreignness in Lebanon. Rather, in their security conception, the boundaries between internal and external safety were more fluid or had collapsed altogether:

"I hope this stays confidential, I'm really afraid someone from the Syrian regime would capture me and take me back to serve with the Syrian regime in Syria. This is my greatest fear, because it's happened with other people who were taken to the Syrian regime in Syria. For example, yesterday I was standing on the street, and a car that looked like it belonged to the intelligence approached me. They kept asking me questions, but they didn't introduce themselves. They took all of my information, so I'm afraid of moving in the area now… "

In fact, Syrian respondents in Bar Elias talked much more about the situation in Syria than in our previous survey in Qaraoun (November 2017). Part of the reason may be that violence in Eastern Ghouta and in Afrin was particularly intense when we conducted the survey in February/March 2018. Experiences and events in Syria forcefully spilled into people's narratives also pointing to the traumatisation of many of our respondents:

"Our house is in Douma, and the situation isn't good there at all, due to the intense bombing there. We've been living here for eight years, and we're communicating with our relatives in Syria who have been besieged for five years. We used to live in Ghouta in Syria, and we left it eight years ago, and the situation there is still not good."

Another respondent recounted:

"After ISIS was expelled by the Kurds, who are supported by the USA, the situation has become better somehow, and food has become more available. However, we became fearful again after the Turkish military went to fight with the Kurds…In addition, due to the situation, flights, and bombing, most children are suffering from involuntary urinary reflex now…When some kids hear that a military airplane is approaching, they urinate in their clothes involuntarily, and some pass out. As for the fear of the people, especially the adults, it's from the repetition of the old scenario, which is the scenario of ISIS and the Kurds, because it's expected that war

between the Kurds and the Turks will be soon."
Yet, the conflation between safety in Lebanon and Syria may also speak to Syrian fears as the spectre of return is hanging over their heads. With political demands for the imminent return of Syrian refugees intensifying, the security conditions 'in their areas' in Syria are affecting their safety perceptions. Yet, even for those not fearing imminent return, the binary 'Lebanon: safe, Syria: unsafe' does not hold anymore:

"We can't find safety at all. I'm a Syrian, and I was beaten because I exposed a Lebanese who was stealing, so he came with his gang and beat me. Our region is ruined, and my house in Syria is also ruined. So where is safety? There is no safety, neither here nor in Syria. We hope the situation will become better."

Some people were considering returning to Syria, trading one type of insecurity for another:

"There's no safety. My two kids have been kidnapped six months ago. One of them is 12 and the other is 14. During the past two months, nothing has happened with us. However, 15 days ago, my neighbour's daughter was kidnapped, but the police brought her back, thank God. On the level of work, some employers don't give us anything, and others give us half of our pay only. In addition, our problems are: the difficulty of providing the house rent, and the lack of security for children, so we worry about our children when they go to school and return home. We've considered going back to Syria, but it's also impossible because the army might capture me. All Syrians suffer from those problems. May God bless you."

6. What Future for Syrians?

Most Lebanese and Syrians agreed that the future of Syrians is not in Lebanon, but in Syria. Indeed, Lebanese and Syrian word clouds for that question are very similar with the phrase 'Syrians will go back to their country once the situation becomes better' very prominent in both discourses (Figure 7 and Figure 8). While many Lebanese emphasised that Syrians are guests in Lebanon, very few talked about 'safe zones' in Syria or 'forced return'. Rather, they expected refugees to return of their own accord once it is safe to do so. Syrians were grateful for Lebanese hospitality and expressed their wish to return to Syria. One elderly Syrian woman told us:

"We hope that every Syrian will return to his country, and that things will cool down in Syria. Syrians have been here for 6 years, but the Lebanese have been good to us, and they've hosted the Syrians. May God bless them. We're all siblings, and we love each other."

Yet, the question about the future of Syrians in Lebanon also unearthed considerable frustration among Lebanese: 'All you care about is the Syrians, while we, the Lebanese people, are living in bad situations. The Syrians work while the Lebanese doesn't, and he can't even eat properly.' As in many other refugee contexts, some Lebanese hold on to an image of the refugee as a privileged subject whose life is imagined to be much better than that of the citizen:

"The future of the Syrian is better than that of the Lebanese in Lebanon, for the situation of the Syrian is better than my situation, as well as the situation of everyone else. The UN gives him aids, and he works too, while we're unemployed and we watch him silently. I wish I was a Syrian!"

These ideas are not borne out by the data which shows that 51% of Syrians live in extreme poverty in Lebanon.[63] Syrian refugees retorted that, while for a minority of well-off Syrian merchants the situation in Lebanon is good, the vast majority of refugees are struggling:

"The future of the Syrians in Lebanon is very bad. They always tell us that we've occupied their work, and they oppress us. As for the rich merchants that came from Syria, they've established businesses and their situation got better. The simple people, on the other hand, are suffering a lot."

The idea of refugees as privileged subjects was also contradicted by fellow Lebanese, many of whom argued that there is no future at all for Syrians: 'Honestly, they don't have a future here, because most Syrians are workers, and workers have no future.' Another respondent said: 'There's no future for the Syrians at all, because it's been completely destroyed. Thus, they have neither a past, nor a future.'

In many ways, Syrians increasingly resemble Palestinians in the popular imagination. Many Lebanese drew a parallel between Palestinians and Syrians in Lebanon, fearing that the latter will not be able to return – similarly to the former. In recounting the history of the Syrian migrants in Lebanon before the Syrian crisis transformed people from transitory migrants into long-term refugees, Chalcraft observed:

"Nonetheless, almost from the outset, Palestinians were regarded as more controversial. Unlike the Syrians, the Palestinians had not come voluntarily, and in practice they had no home to go back to… Controversy about migrants was therefore coloured by larger strategic concerns, and while these only became more acute over time with regard to the Palestinians, for the time being, Syrians were seen in an altogether more positive light."[64]

Historically, the difference in the way Syrians and Palestinians were perceived and legally treated precisely came down to the former's ability to return to Syria. With that option of return largely foreclosed, at least for the time being, Syrians increasingly find themselves in a situation similar to that of Palestinians in Lebanon, with mounting restrictions on work and movement. Unlike the Palestinians, whose numbers have been decreasing in the last decades, Syrians are perceived as a demographic threat:

"Our main fear is that the Palestinian issue might be repeated with the Syrians, where in the Syrians will settle here, because their numbers are much more than ours. Also, the security situation is unstable. On the personal level, my son was stabbed with a knife by one of the Syrians for a trivial reason. So,

our greatest fear is that the Syrian refugees might settle in Lebanon, which would make us lose our country forever, because nothing would remain for us if their numbers stayed that huge."

Syrians overwhelmingly wanted to return to Syria as soon as conditions allow and were adamant that they do not have a future in Lebanon. The idea of the 'homeland' was pervasive in their stories. As in Qaraoun, many insisted that 'a person's future is only in their homeland':

"We hope we'll return to our country, for every human being wishes to be in his homeland among his people and family, but our circumstances don't allow us to go back. The Lebanese are trying to expel us, but where will we go this time? Things aren't good in Syria to return to it. When things get better,

we'll immediately go back. We don't want to obtain the nationality. We only want them to welcome us as guests until things get better in Syria. Thus, we hope things will calm down so that we'll go back without being expelled…"

That said, many Syrians could conceive of a life outside of Syria if provided with the conditions for a decent life. These conditions do not exist in Lebanon for even the Lebanese 'are unable to secure their futures inside their own country'. This is imagined to be very different for Syrians who move to Europe where refugees can obtain the 'European nationality' and be 'treated just like a regular citizen'.

As in Qaraoun, many Syrians expressed compassion with the situation of the Lebanese:

A family inside an Informal Settelment in Bar Elias -UNDP

"No one can determine the future of the Syrians in Lebanon, because both the Syrians and the Lebanese are suffering. The Lebanese are right with their reaction, because a huge number of Syrians have entered Lebanon, while this country can't tolerate all those people, in terms of infrastructure and work. No one knows what will happen in the future. I mean that both the Syrians and the Lebanese are under so much pressure, but no one can do anything or help in any way."

Syrian perspectives on their future were not only grim because of the inability to educate their children in Lebanon and the prospect of forced return, but also because of the everyday humiliations they experience in Lebanon:

"The Lebanese don't respect the Syrians and they don't give their workers their rights. They look at the Syrians as though they were trash. A Syrian kid has been hit by a car, but no one helped him. Thus, there's no future for the Syrians here in Lebanon, for there's no education for the kids, so they don't have education nor a future. My daughter is 12 years old, and no official school agreed to enrol her. She's eager to learn, so she always enrols in trainings only. This is our future here in short."

Another refugee said angrily:

"Are you fooling us? The Syrian doesn't have a future here. We're being treated like Sri Lankans, Filipinos, Indians, and Ethiopians. There aren't any good relations among us, because the Lebanese think that they are superior. We don't have any future. We've been destroyed."

6.1. Psychological Exhaustion

In Bar Elias more than in Qaraoun, anxiety and exhaustion emerged as a psychological condition of refugees' liminal existence:

"I don't know what to say. I don't feel safe at all. One can't feel safe outside his homeland. I keep worrying about my kids since they go to school until they come back. If someone approached them on the street, they couldn't say anything. Thus, living is too hard. May God be with us."

Another Syrian respondent described refugees' psychological exhaustion as follows:

"There are no conflicts or tensions here. However, those who live outside their homeland always feel psychologically tired."

In some refugee stories, 'death' was used as a metaphor to describe living in a context in which their misery has become normalised:

"We're oppressed all over Lebanon, and not only in Bar Elias. We're alive yet we're dead. Our problems are many, and I hope you can help me. We have been dismissed from the UN, and our situation is horrible. I have five children who are all hungry. I used to feed them through the UN aids. My husband is unemployed and he's unable to find a job. Also, I haven't received fuel for two months, and you know how cold it is here. I'm desperately in need of help...."

Another refugee expressed: 'We're living in a camp, and we're drowning in mud and poverty. We can't afford even bread, and we're dying of hunger, thirst, and coldness.' Some felt that dying would be better than living in this situation:

"The situation of the Syrians is terrible because the Syrian suffers a lot. There's no safety, nor work. Syrians live in terrible conditions, and most Syrians are too poor. Also, most Syrians are sick, but they're unable to get any treatment or any medicine. We wish we could die, which would be better than living in such horrible conditions."

Another refugee added, 'we don't want money or anything. We only want to go back to our homeland. We prefer to die under bombardment.'

Syrians are exhausted from years of displacement and hardship, leading some to believe that anything is better than this. This sentiment may also inspire ill-informed returns at a time when facts on the ground are created. On 29 June 2018, around 300 Syrians crossed the border from Arsal into Syria's Qalamoun, the first enactment of so-called gradual and voluntary return. In November 2018, the Minister of State for Displaced Affairs, Mouin Merehbi estimated that 55,000 refugees have returned since June. Among those, 7000 left under the supervision of the Lebanese General Security.[65] Despite his fears of being drafted into the Syrian army, one refugee told the media upon departure: 'All I want is to return to Syria and not leave it again. Enough of being a refugee.' [66]

7. Conclusion

Perspectives on Lebanese and Syrian relationships are diverse, complex and contradictory. Qualitative WhatsApp surveying is an effective way of unpacking these dynamics. It demonstrates that people themselves produce complex and subtle analysis both of their own situation and their relationships with others. In the privacy of their homes and using a form of communication that is habitual and convenient, many Syrians and Lebanese were willing to share their ideas and perspectives. In this way, narrative research through WhatsApp can also add depth and complexity to quantitative findings. It suggests, for example, that when Syrians are asked about safety in 'their area' they may evaluate the safety of 'their area' in Syria rather than in Lebanon. It shows that mistaking Syrian employees for shop owners may feed into Lebanese perceptions that most shops in Bar Elias are now run by Syrians. It provides a glimpse into how cultural differences are constructed around seemingly mundane everyday practices, such as the way Syrians arrange goods in a shop. Such notions obscure how much Lebanese discomfort centres around the poverty rather than the culture of Syrian refugees.

Overall, the survey suggests that peaceful co-existence prevails as Lebanese and Syrians have empathy for each other's situation. Overt conflict and security incidents remain rare. Bar Elias and Qaraoun are still places of 'karam' (being welcoming and generous to the stranger). People's stories also revealed that Lebanese-Syrian relationships are much more complex than both the media and the civil society narrative presume. Both Qaraoun and Bar Elias are overwhelmingly Sunni areas (most Syrian refugees are Sunni, too), yet inter-community relationships were much better in Qaraoun than in Bar Elias, casting doubt on the 'confessional narrative'. Part of the reason may be that, as a mid-sized town and trading hub, Bar Elias lacks either the familiarity and cohesion of a small village or the security infrastructure and anonymity characteristic of big cities.

The survey found that there is not 'one relationship' between Lebanese and Syrians, but multiple relationships. Some have improved over time, particularly with neighbours and friends, while others have deteriorated, especially with employers, landlords and 'people on the street'. Yet, the stories also reflected notable discontent that is brewing not too far under the surface, particularly in Bar Elias. Among Lebanese, frustrations abound, and the refugee crisis emerged as only part of a larger crisis of confidence in governance and falling living standards. Syrians are exhausted of years of displacement and fearful of the future.

Clothing Shop in Bar Elias -UNDP

Annex - Word Clouds

Figure 1. Lebanese Responses: What are the needs of your village?

Figure 2. Syrian Responses: What are the needs of your village?

Figure 3. Lebanese Responses: Are there any tensions or conflicts in your area?

Figure 4. Syrian Responses: Are there any tensions or conflicts in your area?

Figure 5. Lebanese Responses: What are your main fears and concerns? Do you feel safe in your area?

Figure 6. Syrian Responses: What are your main fears and concerns? Do you feel safe in your area

Figure 7: Lebanese Responses: How do you see the future of Syrians?

Figure 8: Syrian Responses: How do you see the future of Syrians?

ENDNOTES

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