



Advancing Alternative Migration Governance



Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Protection amidst Crises.

AUB Interim report

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AUB	American University of Beirut
CAMALEON	Cash, Monitoring Evaluation, Accountability & Learning, Organizational Network
CAT	Convention Against Torture
CDC	Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
COVID – 19	Corona Virus Disease
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
EPI	Expanded Program on Immunization
GoL	Government of Lebanon
GSO	General Security Office
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
HRW	Human Right Watch
ICLA	Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance
IFYC	Infant and Young Child Feeding
ITS	Informal Tented Settlement
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LPC	Lebanon Protection Consortium
MHC	Mobile Health Clinics
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PHC	Primary Health Centre
PIN-SK	People in Need – Slovakia
RHUH	Rafik Hariri University Hospital
SEED	Socio-Economic Enhancement and Development
SI	Solidarités International
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Introduction

Protection is a broad term often practiced by a multitude of formal and informal organizations, states, and humanitarian actors through local, national, and global efforts. However, protection remains hard to define or encompass through a fixed set of tools and approaches, and the situation on the ground can often be elusive to researchers, humanitarian actors, governance sectors, and the general public. In Lebanon, Syrian refugees are referred to as “temporary displaced persons”, and Lebanon has reiterated that it’s not a country of asylum, rather one of transit (Fakhoury, 2017; LCRP, 2019; Lebanon Support, 2020). Having not ratified the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees nor its 1967 protocol, the Lebanese government has declared its right to sovereignty regarding the determination of status according to Lebanese laws and regulations (LCRP, 2019). This has been met with opposition from several humanitarian actors, such as UNHCR, and NGOs, that have argued that the refugee status is important for garnering aid (Janmyr, 2018). Since protection manifests itself differently for Syrians that aren’t ‘registered as refugees’ (also called de facto refugees), we agree with Janmyr (2018) that the usage of the term refugees is a necessity for protection, and will address them as such in this work.

This interim report, as part of Work Package 4 of the Advancing Alternative Migration Governance [ADMIGOV] project, aims to provide an overview on the current situation and history of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the legal and medical protection framework, and measures put in place amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and economic crisis. Two case studies are profiled, Zahle and Saida, to compare the conditions and main challenges faced in two different types of settlements, informal tented settlements (ITSs) and urban collective shelter housing, respectively. As such, this work aims to study how protection is practiced on the ground in reflection to protection principles, regulations, and laws in place, and the changes to protection under the dynamics of Covid-19, socio-political unrest, and economic crisis. This is done to better understand the current gaps between principles and practices and in order to provide insights and recommendations for migration governance in the future. Further, this work builds upon a repertoire of knowledge on Syrian refugees in Lebanon, relying on an expansive literature review. Moreover, it continues the work on protection and migration conducted in the Horizon 2020 RESPOND project.

1.1 Protection amidst Multiple Crises

Amidst a global pandemic, an economic crisis, political unrest, and recently the August 4th Beirut Port explosion, the idea of protection is a mere fantasy for most of the people in Lebanon, who feel unsafe even in their homes and work place. Covid-19 has reached peaks in numbers of cases and deaths in early to mid-August, leading the government to issue another 17 day lockdown beginning the 21st of August and a curfew between 6p.m. and 6 a.m. to control the spread of the virus. The spike in cases and deaths occurred just after the Beirut explosion, where attention shifted towards disaster relief. Hospitals were overwhelmed with casualties, experienced a lack of medical supplies and personnel, and many sustained damages to property and loss on personnel. Previously, since mid-March, a series of lockdowns and curfews were put in place till mid-June to control the spread of the virus. The effects of these measures amidst a deteriorating economy were devastating, with many closing shops, experiencing income cuts, or losing their jobs (Inter-Agency Coordination, 2020). The Syrian refugee population has faced several hardships as a result of the pandemic. At least 75% of Syrians are now living below the abject poverty line, and are borrowing to meet their basic needs (Toplian, 2020; UNOCHA, 2020). The outcomes of the pandemic and successive lockdowns also limit income generating ventures, and create food deserts in remote areas that depend on transport, such as rural informal tented settlements (ITSs) that rely on

food aid (Zurayk, 2020). Moreover, around 21 municipalities have imposed curfews on Syrians that don't apply to Lebanese. Some prohibiting their movement completely such as the municipality of Bar Elias in the Bekaa (HRW, 2020b). This reflects inconsistencies in governance at the municipal scale, whereby protection manifests itself differently from one municipality to another. In dense and overcrowded environments, such as collective urban housing and ITS, the threat of spread of Covid-19 is high, especially with inadequate water, hygiene and sanitation systems. UNHCR has recorded 125 Covid-19 cases among Syrian refugees, and its efforts have been centred on three fronts: awareness raising among refugee populations, containing transmission through provision of isolation facilities in overcrowded settings, and treatment and case management through expansion of health centres' capacities (UNHCR, 2020b).

Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the economic and political crises in the country. Lebanon faces massive debt, and the currency has lost 78% of its original value at the time of writing. The recent explosion threatens the economy further, where more than 80,000 people have lost their homes, and damages are estimated at a minimum of 15 billion USD. The threat of Covid-19 is even more pronounced as many are rendered homeless, and the destruction of the port limits basic food supplies, which endangers refugees likely to face more food insecurity (Yassine, 2020). The Government of Lebanon (GoL) has been facing extreme challenges in providing basic services - such as water and electricity - for the majority of its population for years now. In the aftermath of the Beirut disaster, the government resigned due to its failures in preventing the explosion, protecting its people, and responding with a proper relief strategy. The country declared a state of emergency until August 21st. Granting the army heightened power and expanded jurisdiction, it's leading to increased public control, such as the closing of spaces of assembly and setting curfews. This also limits protests and organization against the ruling class that have remobilized recently after the Beirut blast. Demonstrations which initially started in October 2019 as a reaction to a deteriorating economy, mass forest fires striking through the country (that the government was unable to put out, requiring international aid) and a corrupt government and ruling class.

The country is still in a state of mourning after the Beirut explosion. With 200 dead and thousands injured, many have lost hope with extremely low morale. However, communities, NGOs, and institutions are leading humanitarian relief initiatives to make up for the gap in governance and the issuance of a proper relief plan. Besides, refugees and migrant workers have taken part in the relief efforts. These efforts include fund raising initiatives for basic services, cleaning and separating rubble and construction materials, damage and structure safety assessments, offering housing to victims, and rebuilding initiatives. This perhaps sheds light on the sovereignty and strength of the people, offering aid and relief even after experiencing extreme trauma. Nonetheless, the popular idea of Lebanese people's resilience as a sign of strength is now being rejected as a romanticized notion that is only leading people to increased danger.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the recent Beirut Port Explosion, the economic crisis, and political unrest, this work attempts to answer what protection measures are currently in place for Syrian refugees, and changes to those measures amidst the multiple crises Lebanon is facing.

1.2 Methods

Lebanon is currently 15th most densely populated country in the world, and hosts the most refugees per capita (UN-Habitat, 2020; UNHCR. 2020a). Being home to approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees

(LCRP, 2019), and previously to Syrian migrant workers, this study relies and builds upon a large repertoire of knowledge that exists on this subject. The methodology adopted relies on primary sources of data through interviews, but also on secondary sources and possibly 'grey' literature, and attempts to identify and fill the gaps in the current knowledge base on protection.

Since the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic all over the globe, the method of empirical study changed from fieldwork to remote data collection. Acknowledging the particular economic and socio-political crisis in Lebanon and the difficulty in conducting fieldwork due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the AUB team decided in accordance with the coordinating partner of the project, the University of Amsterdam, and the leaders of the WPs: to conduct literature's review, desk and document collection and analysis; to move from face-to-face interviews to remote surveys and conduct the interviews by phone; to combine WP4 and WP6 questionnaires and utilize the same study population for both WP surveys; and to partner with NGO's or institutions that can assist in participant recruitment.

The research targets Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon that are older than 18 years. Due to COVID-19, participant recruitment relies on partnering with an NGO that can aid in the process, and that have previously worked with Syrian refugees in the respective study areas. The NGO collaborating with us in the participant recruitment process is the DRC (Dutch Refugee Council), who is also partner in the project. The DRC has already a well-established network of people residing in the informal settlements who they rely on for their studies. DRC have shared their entry point contacts in each focal point of the study areas, and snowball sampling is used to recruit more participants. The survey sampling size for Lebanon is 50 in-depth interviews that will be conducted over the phone. An equal representation of male and female respondents will be targeted, wherever possible. The surveys mostly ask about migration history, household characteristics, development intervention policies, issues of access and assets (see Annex).

2. Historical Overview

The Syrian crisis, that began in 2011, caused an influx of refugees fleeing into Lebanon, which today hosts the largest number of refugees per capita in the world (UNHCR, 2020a). Nonetheless, Lebanon has repeatedly reiterated that it is not a country of asylum, rather one of transit (Fakhoury, 2017; Lebanon Support, 2020), a stance visible in multiple facets of the governance of Syrian refugees. This is also reflected in the referral to refugees as displaced persons since 2011, and more recently as "temporarily displaced persons," rather than as refugees (LCRP, 2019). This is believed to be a result of the fear that the usage of the term refugee insinuates permanence as it previously has with Palestinian refugees, and that will make the international refugee law applicable (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018). Till today, Lebanon has not ratified the convention relating to the status of refugees, nor its 1967 protocol.

Open door policy - emergency phase

The GoL adopted a laissez-faire attitude during the period of 2011 till 2015 regarding Syrians fleeing their homes, also referred to as an open door policy, or *policy of no policy* (Fawaz et al., 2018). Prior the Syrian crisis, Lebanon and Syria signed a treaty of cooperation in 1991, allowing free movement of people, goods, and freedom of work and residence for nationals in both countries (Lebanon Support, 2016). In 2003, and in light of the Iraqi refugee crisis, Lebanon and UNHCR signed a MoU that permitted UNHCR to register and resettle refugees over a period of one year; however, registration wasn't obligatory for every refugee entering the country (ibid.). With the onset of the Syrian conflict in 2011, an

“open door” policy remained in operation to respond to the emergency phase. Therefore, Syrians admitted into Lebanon held the status of “displaced persons” rather than refugees (Fawaz et al., 2018). During this phase, UNHCR was the primary body in charge of refugee admission, reception, and registration. In 2013, once refugee numbers became alarming hitting the 1 million mark in 2014 (Fawaz et al., 2018), the governmental interference increased in the attempts to downsize the number of Syrian refugees, and boost formality, control, and monitoring mechanisms of admission, registration, and residency renewal.

Closed door policy – joint UNHCR and GoL governance phase

In October 2014, the Council of Ministers adopted the first comprehensive policy on Syrian displacement to decrease the number of refugees in the country. The General Security Office (GSO) was in charge of implementing this policy by limiting refugee influx from Syria across the Lebanese border, encouraging refugees to return to Syria, and formalizing, increasing control and monitoring of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (Janmyr, 2016). During this period, the LCRP (Lebanese Crisis Response Plan) was initiated, in aims of ensuring humanitarian assistance and protection while benefiting Lebanon and helping to stabilize its economy. In January 2015, decisions on the “Policy Paper on Syrian Displacement” came into effect, and in May of the same year UNHCR effectively stopped registering Syrians entering the country as refugees (Fawaz et al., 2018). These actions marked a moment of increased Syrian refugees governance by Lebanese state. Many evictions took place throughout Lebanese territory, and registered Syrian refugee numbers in the country have officially diminished. Yet, many speculate that this does not reflect the situation on the ground. Since 2015, Syrians entering Lebanon are “recorded” rather than “registered,” and today refugees are referred to as “temporary displaced persons” (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018). In 2017, refugees could obtain a residency permit as long as they hadn’t secured a sponsor, and in 2018 the State Council issued a statement annulling the 2014 decision taken by General Security on entry and residency regulations. The following year saw a more aggressive policy towards illegality, and, since the majority of refugees didn’t have the necessary permits, many were deported following the Higher Defence Council’s decision to forcibly deport all Syrians who have illegally entered the country after 24 April, 2019 (Chehayeb & Sewell, 2019).

Today, the idea of refugees’ return to a ‘safe’ Syria is at the forefront of refugee discussions and government plans. Moreover, the GoL has approved an official plan that has not been put into effect amidst the current Covid-19 pandemic and travel restrictions. With the recent depreciation of the value of the Lebanese currency, the aid from UNHCR that is usually given in dollars is now being given in Lebanese Pounds at the official conversion rate. It’s highly likely that refugees cannot pay their annual \$200 registration fee, increasing the pressure on their livelihoods and fear of deportation, not just eviction.

3. Legal Protection

The legal framework of protection in Lebanon is upheld by the Lebanese constitution, international treatise, immigration legislation, and policies and decrees that ensure access to asylum, temporary protection, and prohibit refoulement (Lebanon Support, 2018). In fact, Lebanon is bound by the Convention Against Torture (CAT), and its optional protocol of 2008, which upholds the principles of non-refoulement (Lebanon Support, 2020). Lebanon has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the status of Refugees nor its 1967 protocol, and the protection mechanisms for refugees remain weak.

3.1 Legal Protection Framework: Evolution of Laws and Regulations

A. Constitutional Provisions

Lebanon is bound by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights that grants the right to asylum for any person fearing persecution, and is an active and founding member of the United Nations Organization, abiding by its covenants (Lebanon Support, 2020). However, a comprehensive domestic legal framework to guide authorities working for refugees is lacking, and there is no legal distinction between refugees and other types of migrants (Akram et al., 2015).

B. Domestic Legislation

1. Law Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Exit from the Country, 1962

Refugees and all foreigners in Lebanon fall under the law regulating the entry, stay and exit from Lebanon passed in 1962. The article 26 of the law states that "any foreign national who is the subject of a prosecution or a conviction by an authority that is not Lebanese for a political crime or whose life or freedom is threatened, also for political reasons, may request political asylum in Lebanon." Furthermore, article 31 states that "when a political refugee is deported from Lebanon, he or she will not be returned to a country in which "his or her life or freedom is threatened"(Janmyr, 2016). Lastly, article 17 states that 'a foreign national shall be deported from Lebanon if the presence of that foreign national is considered to be a threat to public security' (Lebanon Support, 2018). It's clear that refugees receive little protection from the law in case they lack necessary documentation, or seemingly pose a threat towards public security.

C. Lebanon-Syria Treaty of Cooperation, 1991

In 1991, Lebanon and Syria signed a treaty of cooperation, allowing free movement of people, goods, and freedom of work and residence for nationals in both countries (Lebanon Support, 2016). By the early 2000s, Syrian workers constituted 20-40% of the Lebanese work force (ibid.). Prior to the Syrian conflict and refugee crisis, Syrian workers were governed by bilateral agreements in accordance with the Lebanese labour law [decree no. 17561], which dictated that foreign workers had to attain a work permit within 10 days of entry, and this would provide them access to social security, minimum wage, and security protections (Bou Khater, 2017).

D. UNHCR-GoL Memorandum of Understanding, 2003

Due to the lack of a national refugee law, refugees entering Lebanon had the option of registering as refugees as facilitated by the MoU between UNHCR and GoL signed in 2003, which provides the mechanism for the "issuing of temporary residence permits to asylum seekers" (Lebanon Support, 2016). However, this MoU reiterated Lebanon as a country of transit rather than one of asylum (Fakhoury, 2017; Lebanon Support, 2020), and permitted UNHCR to resettle refugees over a period of one year (Lebanon Support, 2016). It's important to note that registration wasn't mandatory, and many speculate that the official number of refugees given by UNHCR and GoL estimates is hardly reflective of reality.

E. Policy paper on Syrian displacement by the Council of Ministers, 2014

The policy paper on Syrian displacement by the Council of Ministers in 2014, that came into effect in May of the following year, aimed to decrease the number of refugees in the country. The General Security

Office (GSO) was in charge of implementing this policy by limiting refugee influx from Syria across the Lebanese border, encouraging refugees to return to Syria, and formalizing, increasing control and monitoring of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (Janmyr, 2016). As such, in 2015, the government of Lebanon effectively suspended the registration of Syrians with UNHCR, and all Syrians that entered Lebanon between January and May 2015 were de-registered. Registration is still halted till today with the exception of a few special cases.

In 2014, the Ministry of Labor limited the professional sectors accessible to Syrians to those of construction, agriculture, and environment/cleaning (Lebanon Support, 2020). The strategy put in place by policy paper on Syrian displacement by the Council of Ministers has led to increased informalities. In fact, the years 2015 – 2019 saw increased “illegality,” whereby 74% of Syrian asylum seekers were without proper documentation (ibid.).

F. The aftermath

In March 2017, the General Security Office (GSO) published a decision by the Government to waive the overstay and residency renewal fees for Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR prior to 1 January 2015, who had not renewed their residency based on tourism, sponsorship, property owner or tenancy in 2015 or 2016. However, in 2018, the Decision 421/2017 by the State Council and Lebanon’s High Administrative Court nullified the 2015 decision by General Security that amended conditions of entry and residence of Syrian refugees. As such, it removed power from GSO to carry out such amendments. Further, in its attempts to follow through the plan to reduce the number of Syrians in Lebanon, in 2018 and 2019 the MoL initiated a series of crackdowns on the informal labour market, targeting workers with inadequate documentation and shop owners, further exacerbating living conditions of Syrian refugees. Moreover, GSO’s policies have permitted the actions of temporary arrest, arbitrary detention, and deportation (CLDH, 2016).

3.2 Legal Status

It’s important to point out that the term refugee is a politically loaded term in Lebanon, whereby the only ‘official’ refugees are the Palestinians (Janmyr, 2018). The avoidance of the GoL in using the term refugees is a fear of the possible permanency of refugees on Lebanese territory, whereby the international refugee law would apply (ibid.). The more laissez-faire approach to the Syrian crisis and the influx of refugees into Lebanon, marked by the years 2011-2014, transitioned to a model of tighter control and joint partnership between the GoL and the UNHCR. In 2014, the GoL (Government of Lebanon) initiated a joint plan with UN titled The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). The increased role the GoL took is clear in the LCRP, where “The Government of Lebanon [...] refers to individuals who fled from Syria into its territory after March 2011 as temporarily displaced individuals, and reserves its sovereign right to determine their status according to Lebanese laws and regulations” (LCRP, 2019, p.4). As such, the following categories are attributed to displaced Syrians in the LCRP:

1. Persons displaced from Syria: which can, depending on context, include Palestinian refugees from Syria as well as registered and unregistered Syrian nationals);
2. Displaced Syrians: referring to Syrian nationals, including those born in Lebanon to displaced Syrian parents
3. Persons *registered as refugees* by UNHCR
4. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, referring to 180,000 refugees living in 12 camps and 156 gatherings.

5. Palestinian refugees from Syria, referring to 28,800 refugees across Lebanon.

The avoidance of utilizing the term refugees has been met with opposition from UNHCR, who argue that such a term would actually garner more funds from international donors. In fact, Janmyr (2018) expresses the need for recognition of a person as a refugee, not only for increased monetary and humanitarian aid but also for the necessary protection and status recognition.

Admission, (De) Registration, and Renewal

The increased restrictions resulting from the 2014 policy paper on Syrian displacement that was effective as of May of the following year has had several consequences on the legal status of refugees. It first initiated a de-registration wave for any Syrian that had entered the country between January and May 2015 (Fawaz et al., 2018). Previously, by June 2014, the Lebanese government invoked article 1(C) of the 1951 Convention (that it has not signed) to justify the need to de-register refugees on the basis of their commutes to Syria - arguing that they shouldn't be considered as fleeing danger or persecution, as part of their increased monitoring and control initiative at the border by the GSO (Janmyr, 2018).

Admission for Syrian nationals is accessible via visa categories including, sponsorship, tourism, business and transit. Syrian refugees must provide supporting documentation and any requirements specified by the visa type (LCRP, 2019). However, seeking refuge in Lebanon is not among the valid reasons for entry, other than in 'exceptional circumstances' approved by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Syrians fleeing persecution, conflict, and violence in Syria must fall within the exceptional humanitarian criteria to be admitted (ibid.). Such criteria may be a scheduled doctor's appointment of critical patients; a scheduled appointment at a foreign country's embassy, or documentation showing the presence of a Lebanese spouse or a mother residing in Lebanon.

Registered Syrian refugees receive a UNHCR registration certificate, which is valid for two years since its issuance and entitles refugees to international protection and humanitarian assistance. However, it hasn't traditionally deliberated formal status recognized by the Lebanese government, nor has it exempted refugees from penalties associated with irregular entry or a lack of residency in Lebanon. Registered refugees receive aid from UNHCR, ranging from 13.50 to 27 USD per month (depending on assessed situation) and are requested to sign a pledge to not work, since they receive aid by UNHCR (Lebanon Support, 2016). Syrians registered as refugees must have valid documents from Syria, and can apply for residency for 6 months and renew it for another 6 months free of charge. However, after 1 year, they are required to pay 200\$ for each household member above 15 years old. Newborn babies born in Lebanon to Syrian parents who are already registered with UNHCR are qualified for registration.

According to UNHCR, by mid 2016, 1 in 2 refugees were not able to renew their residency permit, and were living outside the law (Mencutek, 2017). In reality, the Gol's actions proved to only change the label given to displaced Syrians, by increasing economic migrants and decreasing registered refugees (Janmyr, 2018). Moreover, these restrictions have in fact resulted in more Syrians working without official contracts, making possible increasingly clientilistic networks and practices of bribery and corruption (Lebanon Support, 2015; Mencutek, 2017).

In 2017, the General Security Office (GSO) issued a circular to waive overstay and residency renewal fees of Syrian refugees registered before January 1, 2015 (Fawaz et al., 2018). However, many refugees are not able to pay 200 USD to renew their residency. According to VasyR (2018) around 74% of refugees aged 15 and above are still without valid residency. Further, although registration applies to new-borns, around

2/3 of the babies born to Syrian parents since 2011 are without birth certificates. In 2016, UNHCR along with the Ministry of Interior started to provide legal assistance leading to a 15% increase among refugees to receive birth certificates from mukhtars (village leaders) and around 20% increase in parents filling applications with the Nofous (local registry office).

3.3 Covid-19 and Economic Crisis Impact on Legal Protection

Lockdown, Social distancing, and Hygiene measures are the most widely used expedients adopted by countries all over the world to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Across the globe, similar public health measures have profound implications for the livelihoods of millions of people, especially for vulnerable and displacement-affected populations. Lebanon's situation is compounded because of the layering of the pandemic onto the on-going economic crisis, and the political instability experienced throughout 2019 and 2020 (Durable Solutions Platform et al., 2020).

In mid-March, the Lebanese Government imposed a lockdown in a bid to combat and prevent the pandemic in the country. The related restrictions on movement and social distancing measures have severely impacted the already vulnerable condition of Syrian refugees, disrupting their livelihoods and access to support. The shortcomings of social distancing orders and lockdown are evident in most of the vulnerable districts in Lebanon where communities feel their lives have been upended with little protection or access to support. Counselling and Legal Assistance programme are now implemented over the phone for all but urgent protection cases (LPC, 2020). Refugees are surviving day to day while living in dense and overcrowded neighbourhoods, and sharing access to basic services like water, sanitation and electricity. Syrian's most common concerns are economic with the vast majority of them having lost jobs and daily income and the inability to meet the monthly rent. Claims are high for what humanitarian assistance there is, with food, cash and the distribution of hygiene items as a priority (SI, 2020).

The lockdown has been imposed already five consecutive times due to the spike of the Coronavirus cases, and additionally once in August. At the National level, a curfew was put in place till Mid-June, between 7pm and 5am, but several municipalities have implemented more restrictive timing to Syrians limiting their possibility of shopping or buying medicines. In fact, since the 2014 policy adopted by GoL, approximately 45 municipalities in Lebanon imposed a curfew for Syrian refugees and restricting freedom of movement. This was in violation of bilateral treatise with Syria and articles of international treaties it's bound to by placing these restrictions (Saadi, 2014).

In certain areas, the limitation has also been imposed on humanitarian aid workers impeding their ability to reach and help the vulnerable population. These measures have severely impacted Syrian livelihoods. The immediate effects are: an increase in the numbers of illegal people; loss of work opportunities and related loss of income-generation. Further, to limit the outbreak of COVID—19, the General Security Office has halted the processing of residency and work permit applications (DRC et al., 2020). Moreover, the 200 USD fee for residency renewal is extremely difficult to pay for most refugees, considering the rate of devaluation of the currency with respect to the dollar. In fact, to cope with the economic crisis and Covid-19 restrictions, expenditures on legal documentation were reportedly less by 45% among registered refugees (UNHCR, 2020a). Syrians lacking legal documentation experienced restrictions on movement, compounding hardships in attaining work and changing their status of illegality (ibid.).

Threats of Eviction and Deportation in relation to Unemployment

The rise in the politization of the refugee question and community tensions also greatly affected refugees' protection, including increased collective evictions. Syrians' access to the Lebanese territory continues to be limited by strictly identified visa and residency categories, with the registration of refugees still suspended. Following governmental decisions, displaced Syrians and Palestinian refugees from Syria – men, women and children – found to have entered Lebanon irregularly after 24 April 2019 have been subject to deportation and handed over to the Syrian immigration authorities (Chehayeb & Sewell, 2019).

Due to the hardships post Covid-19 and amidst the economic crisis to secure a job, almost 90% Syrian refugees and 70% Lebanese have either lost their income generating possibilities or had their salaries cut (Inter-Agency Coordination, 2020). 40% of Syrian refugees changed their housing due to an inability to meet rent, while 25% faced evictions (ibid.). To overcome the economic hardship resulting from the lockdown and the Lebanese economic crisis, Syrian respondents will have to increase their debt and debt-bonded labour (94%), reduce the quantity and quality of meals (65%) and move to a more affordable house or shelter (17%) (SEED et al. 2020).

To pay for basic needs , more refugees need to borrow money. UNHCR estimated that at least three quarters of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are currently living below the abject poverty line (Toplian, 2020). Funding gaps come with increasing needs; for example, an additional 51% of Syrian refugees are now estimated to fall below the survival and minimum expenditure basket (SMEB) levels due to both inflation and loss of income shocks. This results in an estimated gap of 503,000 vulnerable refugees currently unassisted by the LCRP (UNOCHA, 2020).

	Population (#)	Data source	Registered Refugees (#)	Data Source	Poverty Rate (%)	Data Source	Illegal Satus (%)	Data Source
Displaced Syrians in Lebanon ¹	1.5 million	LCRP (2019)	914,648	UNHCR (2020a)	> 75%	UNOCHA (2020)	74% aged >15 are illegal	VASyR (2018)
Total Lebanese population	5.742 million	LCRP (2020) ²	-	-	> 55%	ESCWA (2020)	-	-

Table 1. Compilation of statistics showing population data, socio-economic status, legal status of Syrian refugees and Lebanon in general where it applies.

1. This includes registered and un-registered refugees

2. LCRP population Package_2020, Available at: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/htj0iign0031xq4/AAcLIWhcrgQm325DeFGA8PZ9a/9.%20Data%20-%20Population%20Package?dl=0&preview=1-2020_LCRP_Population_Package_191028_sourcesUpdated.xlsx

4. Medical Protection and Living Conditions

The arrival of Syrians to Lebanon has constituted a challenge to the health system in Lebanon. UNHCR has adopted a public health response to provide access to essential health services for Syrians. Health care services to Syrians such as vaccines, medications for chronic diseases, and mental health services are provided free of charge through primary health care centers (PHC) and mobile health clinics that are managed by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), UNHCR, WHO, and other non-governmental organizations (Fouad et al., 2016). Estimated levels of poverty among Syrian refugees have risen; the number of refugees living below extreme poverty has risen from 55% of the country's pre-crisis population to an estimated three quarters of the country's refugee population.

The current PHC network at the MoPH is widely distributed across the country, with 235 PHC centers and some 800 dispensaries. It is estimated to serve some 1,000,000 vulnerable Lebanese and non-Lebanese, including Syrian refugees.

Use of primary health care services:

UNHCR supports the Ministry of public health in their effort to strengthen their health system and reinforce response capacity. Registered and non-registered Syrian refugees have access to primary health care services. Basic health services include general medical consultations for acute and chronic diseases, maternal and child health, mental health, reproductive and antenatal/postnatal and contraception as well as family planning service are available at subsidized fees. Moreover, routine vaccinations, medications for acute and chronic diseases and reproductive health commodities are provided free of charge.

Access to primary health services:

In areas where access to primary health care is hindered due to expensive transportation or lack of legal status, mobile health clinics (MHC) through NGO's are available to provide free consultations and medications, and refer patients to primary health care centres. Syrians who are registered with UNHCR have access to essential health services in these PHC with a very minimal fee such as 3,000LL for consultations. Access to secondary and tertiary care must be made through the primary health care centres in coordination with UNHCR. 75% of the treatment costs are covered by UNHCR while the individual must cover the remaining 25% unless they meet vulnerability criteria such as being victims of gender-based violence, whereby 100% of costs are covered. Syrians who are not registered with UNHCR have access to some subsidized health services such as vaccination for children, however, some PHC might ask for equal contribution of health care treatments similar to Lebanese patients (UNHCR, 2017).

-Vaccination: As part of the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) of the World Health Organization, vaccinations are available through mobile medical units, measles, mumps, rubella and polio vaccines are provided for all children under 18 entering Lebanon.

-Malnutrition: screening services for the management of moderate and severe malnutrition (without complications) among children under 5 and pregnant women. The provision of micronutrient supplements has been also integrated at the level of Ministry of public health's primary health care centers.

-Infant and young child feeding (IFYC): the ministry of public health along with its partners have established a 3 to 5 years policy to improve infant feeding practices.

-Sexual and reproductive health: antenatal care, delivery, and postnatal planning services are available for the refugees.

-Mental health: in 2014 the ministry of public health launched the national mental health program to reform the mental health service in Lebanon. Several local and international agencies provide psychosocial support that range from case management to (including survivors of sexual and gender based violence) to a more specialized care such as psychotherapy and psychiatry free of charge.

4.1 Covid-19's Impact on Medical Protection

Use of PHCs during the Covid-19 pandemic:

With the emergence of Covid-19, primary health care centres function as the primary access purpose for patient treatment and triage within the overwhelming majority of cases for these vulnerable groups that can't afford non-public medical consultation. PHCs are used as a "tier 1"

response, as most of these centres do not have the human resources to handle all Covid-19 cases. Vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees with chronic medical conditions and patients are given continued access to basic PHC medications. Continuity of protection services for vulnerable children, acute medical conditions, maternal and infant health services, as well as mental health services are obtainable at the PHCs (UNOCHA, 2020).

Access to health care services during Covid-19 pandemic:

Theoretically, Syrian refugees have access to free or subsidized health services, however with the structural constraints such as their freedom of movement and recent economic crisis, it's challenging for them to access healthcare. Many humanitarian actors are concerned in primary healthcare for Syrian refugees, whereas hospitalisation is predicated on a cost-sharing model (UNOCHA, 2020). Syrian refugees pay the primary \$100 of the hospital bill and, above that amount, the UNHCR covers 75% of the value up to a \$15,000 maximum (Syria Direct, 2020). However in many cases, refugees, including children, elderly, and immuno-compromised individuals, have comparatively limited access to extended medical help, clean water, and safe and nutritious food, resulting in a chronically stressed population that is prone to various communicable and non-communicable diseases (Kassem, 2020). In an NRC phone survey, the vast majority of respondents reported having access to a PHC. The main barriers mentioned accessing health centres were financial, with 50% unable to pay medical and 48% unable to pay transport fees (NRC, 2020). Generally, the service was reported to be average or good, but there were some fears of not being treated for being Syrian, of the PHC being too crowded, and of stigmatization for living in unhygienic ITs (ibid.).

Prevention, Containment, and Treatment :

UNHCR subsidizes the costs of basic medical care for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Testing and treatment for Covid-19 are currently free at the Rafik Hariri University Hospital (RHUH) in Beirut following a screening by the Health Ministry's hotline (Human Rights Watch, 2020b). UNHCR's efforts are nonetheless concentrated in ITs, which only represent 22% of the Syrian refugee population. UNHCR is working with the concerned authorities, WHO and other organizations on contingency plans and has ventured up measures and guiding material for self-isolation and containment for any case that is recognized inside the refugee community. UNHCR is also establishing dedicated isolation shelters within the areas where tented settlements are, and at the level of municipalities when needed. In addition, alongside humanitarian partnerships, UNHCR supervises these facilities and provides the required personal protective equipment (PPEs) for caretakers and frontline staff. All persons in need, regardless of nationality or status, can actually use these facilities. In addition, UNHCR is mobilizing and preparing refugee volunteers and its staff on Covid-19, as well as medical background refugees to bolster the communities. Kits which include soap, bleach, sanitizer, and Hygiene materials, are also distributed to all refugees who live overcrowded settings across Lebanon (UNHCR, 2020c).

COVID-19 cases among refugees:

In July 2020, UNHCR announced 125 Covid-19 cases among Syrian refugees in Lebanon (UNHCR, 2020d). Despite the fact that refugees are disallowed from accessing health care at governmental hospitals in Lebanon, an agreement took place between UNHCR with Beirut's Rafik Hariri University Hospital (RHUH) to treat Covid-19 cases among refugees (Yassine, 2020). UNHCR (2020d) reported that six medical clinics are presently accessible to treat such cases. Yet, the port blast has put an overwhelming weight on Lebanon's delicate health care system, as three medical clinics were damaged during the August 4 explosion in Beirut (Yassine, 2020). Additionally, RHUH was at that point at greatest capacity limit and extra facilities might be required as the number of Covid-19 cases ascends among displaced people and the more extensive population (ibid.). With more than 80,000 Lebanese rendered homeless and

enormous protests in progress, the threat of Covid-19 cases spreading are higher. To attempt to contain the infection once more, a 17 days lockdown was announced to start on August 21st.

Self-isolation: 70% of households interviewed by Solidarités International reported that they would not be able to effectively self-isolate. When asked for the primary reason why they could not, 88% of households stated that their tent does not have the space to isolate a single person from other household members. 8% reported that the primary barrier to self-isolation would be that they must work to have an income, while a further 5% reported that household duties would prevent self-isolation (SI, 2020).

The majority of Syrians in Lebanon are facing challenges to follow risk reduction practices such as cleaning and disinfection. 50% of the Syrians interviewed by SEED in Tripoli practice regular hand washing while only 39% of the interviewees of the LPC survey stressed personal hygiene and hand washing with 26% focused more on the sanitation and sterilization of the spaces. The results of the poll show that Syrians' main concerns and priorities are on hygiene items (detergents, bleach..) and protective elements such as masks and plastic gloves. However, they require financial assistance and water availability, mainly in the areas where water trucking is the only water resource (LPC, 2020). Indeed, water resources in Lebanon are scarce in terms of both quality and quantity. Under the pressure of the Syrians influx in an overstretched situation, communities have thus become more dependent on alternative sources such as water delivery by truck, which in turn has created an unregulated parallel water supply market, further weakening the formal water providers (OXFAM, 2017).

Mental health: The pandemic and the lockdown are having critical consequences on vulnerable people's mental health and psychosocial well-being. Based on SEED report, around 80% of respondents declared that the household's adults are experiencing an increase in stress and anxiety, fear, and sadness. More than 50% highlighted an increased feeling of loneliness and hopelessness. Furthermore, 84% of respondents declared that the household's children feel increasingly sad due to the current situation. 28% of children have an increased feeling of stress and anxiety, and 16% are experiencing fear. (SEED et al. 2020).

4.2 Shelter, Safety, and Livelihood

Around 20% of Syrian refugees live in informal tented settlements (camp-like settings in mainly rural areas), whereas the majority of the remaining 80% live in vulnerable urban, and some rural settings across Lebanon. While the LCRP actors focus on those residing in informal tented settlements, the majority of refugees residing in vulnerable and densely populated urban areas are often not sufficiently targeted (UN-Habitat, 2020).

Community-level shelter protection: an increase in discrimination has been identified. Compared to January – September 2019, beneficiaries' access to safe spaces has decreased on average by 34% in the last quarter of 2019. Factors that can explain this situation include roadblocks, intermittent closure of services, self and imposed restriction of movements, fear of arrests and harassments, and the shift of priorities more towards survival due to the deteriorating economic situation (Inter-Agency Coordination, 2020).

Informal Tented Settlements level: At the household level, 90% of respondents declared that the pandemic and the lockdown had affected relations between the household's members (both positive and negative). Of them, 100% agreed that the current situation is exacerbating tensions within the household.

In addition, 12% disclosed an increase in intimate partner violence, 29% an increase in violence towards children and 8% a rise in neglect of children (SEED et al. 2020).

On the other hand, Syrians who live in informal settlements lack access to basic WASH services. Moreover, the tents are not well equipped for adverse weather conditions (UNHCR, 2016). For Syrians who are living in residential buildings, 45% of these buildings are below the humanitarian standards, and the same applies for those who are living in non-residential buildings such as garages and factories. Water and sanitation services are highly needed in non-residential buildings (Fouad et al., 2016). Refugees receive only 7 to 9 gallons of water a day; falling short of the recommended 26 gallons a day by the World Health Organization. In fact, overcrowding and inadequate hygiene in camps complicate physical distancing, exposing refugees to major health risks (Action Against Hunger, 2020).

Livelihood: Livelihood refers to “how people access and mobilize resources enabling them to increase their economic security, thereby reducing the vulnerability created and exacerbated by conflict, and how they pursue goals necessary for survival and possible return” (Jacobsen, 2002; Amirthalingam & Laksham, 2009). Syrian refugees in Lebanon face an on-going deterioration in their socio-economic conditions. The country’s desperate economic crisis is exacerbating their unsustainable living. Refugees used to rely on social capital, resources that are embedded in social networks, to manage their experience of protracted displacement. The availability of a group network allows Syrians in Lebanon to reduce the cost of rent finding more affordable accommodation, or to improve their livelihoods by looking after each other’s children, thus allowing parents to work (Uzelac et al., 2018). Furthermore, the social network decries the vulnerability of the individual strengthening his/her position towards exploitative or unreliable employers or landlords.

The COVID—19 and related lockdown measures disrupted the social network of Syrian communities generating unbearable difficulties for them to navigate and manage their livelihoods. Social distancing orders are disrupting and cutting down the bonding and bridging, key components for the effective use of social capital, making individuals and families more vulnerable. Social gathering between households in ITS have been reduced.

Syrians ability to generate an income had been negatively affected by the pandemic with 74% of those interviews by SI saying that they have lost income and therefore, their ability to pay monthly rent (SI, 2020). The COVID—19- induced surge in unemployment has already led at least 21 Lebanese municipalities to introduce discriminatory restrictions against Syrian refugees that do not apply to Lebanese residents – ostentatiously to fight the Coronavirus (Human Right Watch, 2020).

Social Tension: Discrimination, stigmatization and Syrians being subject to bullying are increasing tensions between host and hosted communities since March 2020. 22% of the respondents feel there is a change in the relations between locals and Syrians (DRC, 2020). Since refugees are perceived as a threat to the community’s health, the curfew imposed at the National level has being extended to constrain and limit Syrians mobility outside the ITSs. At least 18 municipalities in the Bekaa valley – where nearly a third of all Syrian refugees in Lebanon live – have mandated restrictions other than curfews that only target the refugee population. In Bar Elias, for example, refugees must appoint someone to procure and provide for the basic needs of their informal tented settlement and coordinate such movements with the municipality (Human Rights Watch, 2020b). Restrictions on access to villages and towns, financial penalties for not wearing masks or gloves, and confiscation of vehicles to limit movement options are some of the additional measures imposed on Syrians’ community (DRC et al, 2020).

At the community-level, 64% of the respondents reported discrimination in access to services, resources and opportunities. An increase in exacerbated challenges with local authorities such as harassment and arbitrary arrest and detention was recounted by 42% of the interviewees as well as land/house eviction voiced by 30% are major protection concerns resulting from the pandemic and the lockdown (SEED et al. 2020).

	Income Cuts (%)	Lost Jobs (%)	Evictions between Jan-July 2020	At risk from Eviction	Data Source	Covid-19 Cases ³	Covid-19 Deaths
Displaced Syrians in Lebanon ¹	24%	64%	4616 people	24,710 people	Inter-Agency Coordination (2020)	125	1
Total Lebanese	31%	39%	-	-	Inter-Agency Coordination (2020)	9,758	107

Table 2. Compilation of statistics showing socio-economic status, evictions and risk of evictions, and covid-19 cases among Syrian refugees and Lebanon in general where it applies.

1. This includes registered and un-registered refugees

3. The number reflects Covid-19 cases recorded in Lebanon until August 21st, 2020. However, the latest report on Covid cases among Syrian refugees was released in July, 2020. Source: UNHCR (2020d).

5. Case Study

The areas under study include informal tented settlements in the municipalities of Bar Elias and Saadnayel in the Bekaa Valley, and a more urban type housing, the Ouzai Building in Saïda. The study sites were selected for an interest to carry out a comparable study between two types of refugee habitation in the country, and to understand protection measures in both locations. Moreover, considering that the principal investigator of the project has knowledge of these areas and has worked alongside the Civic Centre at AUB in these areas, selecting these sites is a matter of continuity of connection that is already in place.



Fig. 1. Bekaa Valley and Saïda.

Fig. 2. Syrians leaving in residential buildings

Fig.3. Zahle and Bekaa Governorates

As part of the GoL’s decision, no formal camps were set up in the country. As such, the areas on which ITs are formed are private lands, and rent is paid to landowners either through a community representative (shawish) or direct agreement with landlords (Sanyal, 2017). This leads to more patron-client relationships that are often less transparent and participatory than traditional humanitarian forms of aid (ibid.). Around 22% of Syrian refugees live in ITs, mostly in semi-rural and rural areas, and the remainder in informal housing often in poor urban neighbourhoods, and some rural, or semi-rural areas (UN-Habitat, 2020). While ITs often receive assistance from humanitarian organizations (that varies from

consistent to fragmented aid) and are supported by LCRP actors, refugees in informal housing fall under the jurisdiction of their respective municipality, are more scattered and harder to locate by humanitarian organizations, therefore are often highly vulnerable (ibid.). In ITSs, 90% of refugees are below the poverty line and had the lowest monthly expenditures, while 60-70% refugees in informal housing (residential and non-residential) are below the poverty line but have higher monthly expenditures (VasYr, 2018). Moreover, refugees' income source in ITSs depends mostly on agriculture, while those in informal housing depend more on construction (ibid.). The average monthly rent in ITSs is \$60, while it ranges from \$150 - \$220 in non-residential and residential informal housing (ibid.).

5.1 The case of Bar Elias and Saadnayel, Zahle

The Bekaa is a governate of Lebanon bound by the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain range to the East and West, respectively. It includes three districts: Rashaya, West Bekaa, and Zahle, its capital. Zahle has a total of 243,000 Syrian refugees as per the LCRP population package data in 2020¹, and 179,000 Lebanese. The land is predominantly agricultural and most ITSs can be found along cultivated fields. Bar Elias hosts around 30,000 Syrian refugees, and Saadnayel 17,000². Both municipalities of Saadnayel and Bar Elias have received aid from international organizations since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011. Since then, much of the refugee population works in agriculture, and have even set up shops to sell their produce (Al Ayoubi, 2018).

Population size & ITSs layout: 20 out of the 90 ITSs in Saadnayel are abandoned, with a population spanning from 2 to 425 inhabitants. In Bar Elias, there are 46 ITSs with three of them deactivated in the past years. The number of tents within the ITSs ranges from three to 146, with a population ranging from 20 to 870 inhabitants. Dependent on the size of the ITSs, the support of humanitarian organizations, and involvement of the municipality, their layout may be more organized and well managed by the community in congruence with aid actors, or more haphazard and spontaneous. Figure 4 shows a typical layout of an established ITS in Bar Elias, and Figure 5 is a satellite image of medium sized ITS's at the periphery of Bar Elias.

¹ https://www.dropbox.com/sh/htj0ijgn0031xq4/AACLIWhcrgQm325DeFGA8PZ9a/9.%20Data%20-%20Population%20Package?dl=0&preview=1-2020_LCRP_Population_Package_191028_sourcesUpdated.xlsx

² <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/64929>

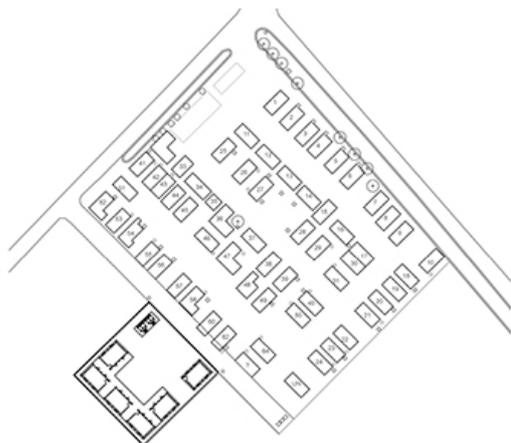


Fig. 4. Typical layout of an established ITS in Bar Elias



Fig. 5. A medium sized ITS in Saadnayel, satellite image

Living conditions: Informal Tented Settlements are often highly dependent on aid from NGOs, and WASH programs to ensure health and well-being of the refugees. However, in Saadnayel, problems with drainage have been occurring especially in the rainy season, where septic tanks overflow and flood the tents. In both Saadnayel and Bar Elias, many tents are abandoned by their owners for improper living conditions, and refugees seek alternatives that can meet their needs (Najjar, 2019). The extreme weather conditions in the Bekaa valley, characterized by very hot summers and cold winters make it harder for refugees to cope, considering that ITSs are regulated to a limited set of construction materials that must be temporary (such as nylon sheets, metal roofing, wooden or metal poles, etc...).



Fig. 6. Living conditions in the ITSs in Bar Elias

Community Spaces: In ITSs, community spaces are informal and are often managed by the refugees themselves. Similar to pocket garden spaces, they can include moveable seating, herbs for food collection, or shading plants for protection from harsh weather. These spaces are often ephemeral, and are rundown with seasonal changes or as a result of neglect.



Fig. 7. Community space appropriation in the ITSs in Bar Elias

Evictions, Community tensions & Labour: Bar Elias has been a recipient of evicted refugees from areas such as its neighbour, Zahle (Al Ayoubi, 2018). Community tensions appeared in Zahle as Syrian numbers increased since the onset of the crisis in 2011, as a result of competition in the labour market and perhaps due to sectarian and religious reasons (ibid.). Refugees are limited to jobs of construction and agriculture, as the case around the country, but are more involved in agriculture, with some setting up shops in Bar Elias to sell produce (ibid.).

Covid-19 Impact: With the onset of COVID-19, conditions have been hard on refugees in ITS. Due to lockdown, restrictions on travel, and social distancing requirements, refugees have not received necessary aid from NGOs, and especially vulnerable populations with health conditions and the need for regular health supplements. In Bar Elias, in addition to lockdown and curfew, the municipality halted refugee movement altogether by making it mandatory for refugees to select someone to secure the basic needs of the ITS and to inform them of their choice (HRW, 2020b).

5.2 The case of the Ouzai building, Saida

The coastal city of Saida is the third largest in Lebanon, and its metropolitan area hosts around 1.25 million inhabitants. In 2012, the Ouzai complex in city of Saida became home to refugees fleeing their homes mostly from the governate of Hama, as well as Idlib, and Deir el Zor (Zaatari, 2015). Syrian refugees have found shelter in what was to be the Imam Ouzai University for Islamic Studies situated at the Northern periphery of city (fig. 8).

Population Size & Layout: The complex includes an unfinished L-shaped building that surrounds a vast courtyard type playground with a mosque nearby (fig. 9). Estimates in 2013 show that the complex hosted 850 Syrian refugees, or approximately 170 families (Wood, 2013). However, the SB overseas organization that has been working in the complex since 2016 estimates that 1500 persons are currently living in the shelter.



Fig. 8. Ouzai complex (red) in Saida. Satellite Image.

Fig. 9. Ouzai complex zoom in with legend, Satellite Image.

Living Conditions: The building is unfinished (fig. 11), therefore the refugee community, with the help of local international aid, have worked to make this unfinished building a liveable space. As such, they have sealed windows with temporary materials, connected electricity to the complex, and created separations between rooms. Each family resides in one room, but crowding has increased over the years. Communal toilets are available for each floor (4 in total), and in 2013, they were rehabilitated by UNHCR and 3 water tanks were installed.

Community Spaces: The settlement has gained the interest of multiple stakeholders as it hosts many refugees in one complex. For instance, the French NGO *Premiere Urgence-Aide Medicale Internationale* has built a playground for the children in the complex (fig. 10). Moreover, the L-shaped building surrounding the courtyard creates a safe place for children to play, while their parents can easily see them and make sure of their safety.



Fig. 10. Playground in the Ouzai complex in Saida.

Fig. 11. Building façade of the Ouzai complex

Image courtesy of the Civic Center at AUB, used with permission

Evictions, Community tensions & Labour: The complex is peculiar as it hosts refugees that share familial and village ties resulting in a communal or somewhat safe atmosphere. Moreover, the community

hasn't faced many tensions with the Saida community, and some shops have began to appear in the ground level of the complex, sustained by the community itself (Zaatari, 2015). In 2015, refugees faced the threat of eviction as the university owners wanted to reclaim their land and restart building (ibid.). However, the evictions didn't follow as the Ministry of Social Affairs intervened and struck a deal with the owner permitting refugees to remain.

Covid-19 Impact: The increased density in living quarters is particularly alarming as COVID-19 pandemic dictates the necessity of social distancing, proper sanitation, and hygiene. In March 2020, UNHCR and Saida Municipality gave out hygiene kits and detergents to people in the Ouzai complex, and PCR tests were carried out as per UNHCR reports³.

6. Conclusion

The status and legal governance framework of Syrian refugees in Lebanon appeared to be the most discussed and recurring issue in the expansive literature review conducted as part of this study. This can be explained by the fact that illegality can be met with some severe penalties, feelings of insecurity, and threats from unknown evictions or crackdowns. It also limits mobility and freedom of individuals, and increases the need for dependencies on communal, formal, or informal aid mechanisms. In fact, Lebanon's iteration that it's not a country of asylum rather one of transit is apparent in their lack of formalization of both refugee status and allocation of official Syrian refugee camps. The Lebanese state's weak governance and sectarian politics of dependence on non-state actors has been contended to reflect their response and polity decisions regarding Syrian displacement (Fakhoury, 2017). This is attributed to the lack of a formal and legal asylum framework, which leads to a governance framework that resorts to its own repertory of political regime to deal with displacement (ibid.).

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated both political unrest and the economic crisis that are further worsened by the recent Beirut port explosion. The explosion, which damaged the trading hub of the country and surrounding neighbourhoods, places Lebanon at a threat from shortages of basic food supplies, increased reliance on external or international aid, and an exponential rise in Covid-19 as many are left homeless, and hospitals are overwhelmed with casualties, having also sustained damages. As more than 55% of the Lebanese population and 75% of Syrian refugees are in poverty, along with a depreciating currency, and a reduction in income or loss of jobs amongst Lebanese and Syrians, the country is in a rough period with many uncertainties towards the future. Continued evictions of Syrians due to inability to meet rent may also lead to increased crowdedness in living quarters, which raises concerns of Covid-19 spread. The newly imposed lockdown may also manifest differently across municipalities in the treatment of Syrian refugees, with some completely limiting their movement and work opportunities. Further, a consequence of limited mobility may be seen in a reduction in food supplies in the country over a longer term, as migrant workers are mostly involved in agricultural and construction sectors (Zurayk, 2020).

Many Lebanese are seeking emigration due to the economic crisis, lack of opportunities, good living conditions, and security in the country, which may be mirrored among Syrian refugees. Having not received the necessary protection through the formalization of living spaces (such as camps), and recognition of refugee status, as well as continuing threats of deportation, eviction, Covid-19,

³ <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2020/May-28/506548-pcr-testing-campaign-begins-at-ouzai-syrian-refugee-center.ashx>

maltreatment, and community tensions, prospects for Syrian refugees and their protection in Lebanon are weak. While the work shown here has been a result of an expansive literature review, the situation in the country has not permitted the AUB team to conduct phone interviews for the data collection process as the project has faced many delays, and AUB itself has sustained damages to its facilities and was in a recovery phase. Nonetheless, the work presented here aims to form a solid base in our interrogation of the protection of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

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8. Annex

8.1. WP4 questionnaire

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEWER: [Here introduce the project aims and explain the structure of the survey.]

Hi, my name is _____. Firstly, I would like to thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. In this research project, with funding support from the European Union, the American University of Beirut is aiming to understand people's experiences and thoughts about protection at the various stages of your travel and stay in Lebanon. This interview attempts to gather all the necessary information to better understand the situation and make appropriate recommendations. The results of the research will be shared with policy makers and we do hope it can help to improve the situation for asylum seekers, migrants and local communities.

All information you share with me today is completely confidential and anonymous, and neither your name nor identity will be shared. All Information discussed should be kept confidential and should not be disclosed to anyone. Please refrain from stating any sensitive/illegal information or any information that may identify specific incidents/individuals. You can stop the interview at any time. I want to be clear that this interview is only for research purposes, and nothing that you say will be shared with the authorities. I also am not in a position to help you with the authorities or your situation here. Now that you have been informed of the purpose and nature of the interview, are you willing to participate?

1. QUESTIONNAIRE of ASYLUM SEEKERS

i. Current Conditions (all respondents) [as in WP6]

I would like to know more about yourself and your current situation in this country

1. Please tell me about your life here. What do you like about your life here? What is challenging for you? What do you think would assist you with those challenges?

Probe for

- Family life (children?)
- Housing
- Work or study and conditions – how do you spend your day?
- Community / Personal networks

- Safety and security

II. NEEDS

Special focus on protection needs that relate to children and families, disability, gender and, also, to asylum seekers who live in camps.

-Which were your more basic needs while entering the country? Could you elaborate on how these most basic needs were met and by whom? Which were the needs that you had to meet yourself and how?

-Which were your more basic needs while staying in the country? Could you elaborate on how these most basic needs were met and by whom? Which were the needs that you had to meet yourself and how?

III. PROTECTION IN ENTERING THIS COUNTRY

-Could you describe your experience in entering this country? Did you get help from own migrant networks, local people, volunteers, facilitators, NGOs, police, etc.)?

IV. PROTECTION IN BECOMING AN ASYLUM SEEKER/REFUGEE -ASYLUM PROCESS

- Are you participating in any formal process of registration and/or asylum? If so, can you describe it? Who ask you to do what and when? Are you aware or did you become aware about your rights and obligations as an asylum seeker and how did that happen?

-Did you have enough information (written or oral) on the formal processes in which you participated? Were you aware of important aspects of these processes including their length in time or the options that were available in case of a rejection of the registration application or a decision that was not satisfactory (e.g. the difference between subsidiary status instead of refugee status)?

-Describe your experience of this official process? In the case of registration, were your expectations about the registration process met? How easy was it for you to apply for registration? Describe the officers' behavior? Did they pay attention to your needs or to the needs of other people that you know (in particular, needs in terms of gender, age or illness)? Did you get any support (in terms of legal advice, childcare, etc.)? If so, who provided the support?

-Do you have family members staying in other countries than your home country? If so, have you tried to re-unite with them? If so, did you get assistance with this? What was the outcome?

-What is your official status (e.g. asylum seeker) now? How do you perceive it? Is it a kind of new identity? Are you familiar with the implications that this status has on your life? Does this status make any difference in the new environment that you have currently settled?

V. PROTECTION IN SETTLING IN LOCAL SOCIETY

-Please, describe your current place of residence.

In case you live in a camp, could you describe the process of settling there? Where do you reside (ISO box, tent, other)? How did you get shelter? How do you get food? How do you cope with basic needs in your everyday life? Do you feel secure in this environment? If no, why?

In case you live in an apartment/ house, how did you find it? Do you pay for it yourself or do you receive help with the rent and from whom? With whom do you live? How long have you lived there? What have you done to make this space feel like home, including furnishings and decorations, etc.?

-Describe your experience of settling in the new urban environment. How were you received? What is it like to live in your current neighborhood? Do you have contact with your neighbors? Do you know who lives next to you? Do you feel comfortable walking around in this neighborhood? Do you feel you have opportunities to engage with the wider community? Do you interact with your neighbors? Do you get help from them?

How do you cope with difficulties in adjusting in the new environment?

- What gives you meaning (purpose, goal in life, importance, motivation) in life today and before you came to your new country (for example religion, ideology, or another worldview)? How do close people around you affect your relation to what gives you meaning? Did this change since you left your country?

-Have (or are you) participated (ing) in an “integration program”, and If so, what is your experience of it? Do you think that such programs provide a better framework in dealing with your needs?

VI. PROTECTION IN EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

-Do you work now or have worked earlier in Lebanon? If yes, please describe your job/s and what it is like to work here. How long did it take you to find a job and how did you find it? Have your jobs been compatible with your skills and education? Do you feel comfortable doing these types of work or would you rather do something else?

-Have you experienced obstacles or problems with finding a job or at work? How have you coped with these problems? Have you turned to anyone for help or assistance? If yes, how were you assisted?

-Have you attended any trainings, courses? If yes, please try to detail them (who pays for it? how difficult is it to access these courses? who do you need to speak to? Is it obligatory or optional to attend?)

VII. PROTECTION IN MEDICAL CARE

-Has it happened since your arrival here that you felt pessimistic or depressed or experienced a difficult situation and needed help? If so, what did you do to handle the situation? Who did you turn to for help? Did it help, and if so, in what way?

-What is your experience of seeking and getting professional help regarding a particularly difficult health issue you may have had since arriving here? Did you feel that the medical care you received was satisfactory? Were you familiar with the ways you were treated and, if not, did you get any help by the professionals who offered their assistance?

VIII. PROTECTION IN EXIT

-In case you been issued a return order / decision on deportation, could you do anything to cancel this order / decision? Were you assisted by anyone in executing or cancelling the return order (IOM, NGOs, free legal advice)?

-Did you experience detention (or administrative detention)? For how long? How have you been treated, and by whom? Did you have any information on your legal possibilities and remedies, by whom? Did you have access to a lawyer?

I have asked all of the questions that I wanted to ask you today. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?