



Since 1991

SURVIVING BEYOND SYRIA

Ground realities
for refugees from
Syria and their host
communities in Lebanon



INTRODUCTION 5

PART ONE 6

THE SITUATION FOR REFUGEES FROM SYRIA IN LEBANON: CONSIDERABLE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

1.1 PROTECTION	6
1.2 ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HOUSING	9
1.3 LIVELIHOODS	10
1.4 ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE	11
1.5 PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT	12
1.6 ACCESS TO EDUCATION	12
1.7 COPING MECHANISMS	13

PART TWO 14

LEBANON AND THE CRISIS: THE DIFFICULTIES OF IMPLEMENTING AN INCLUSIVE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

2.1 THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON VULNERABLE HOST COMMUNITIES	14
2.2 THE DIFFICULTIES OF IMPLEMENTING AN INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE	17

PROSPECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 18



SECOURS ISLAMIQUE FRANCE IN LEBANON

Secours Islamique France (SIF) has been operating in Lebanon since December 2011 and provides emergency humanitarian assistance to all people affected by the Syrian crisis, regardless of origin, culture, belief, or political affiliation. SIF has projects in Lebanon on the rehabilitation of community housing and the distribution of food kits and emergency kits in the regions of Mount Lebanon, Bekaa and South Lebanon. 86,000 refugees from Syria and vulnerable Lebanese people have benefited from our projects at the time of writing (June 2014). Our principal partners in Lebanon are the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development's Crisis Centre (CDC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), the Lebanon INGO Humanitarian Forum (LIHF), Care Lebanon, and the Islamic Welfare Association (ISWA).

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in March 2011, more than 140,000 people have lost their lives. In Syria, 9.3 million people are in need of emergency humanitarian assistance. 6.5 million people have been internally displaced. The Syrian crisis has rapidly expanded with the flight of more than 2.8 million people towards neighbouring countries. Refugees from Syria now constitute the largest refugee population in the world¹.

IN LEBANON, ONE PERSON IN FOUR IS A REFUGEE FROM SYRIA

With more than one million refugees registered or awaiting registration, Lebanon is the country which hosts the most refugees from Syria. One person in four is now a refugee from Syria, in a country comprised of just over 4 million Lebanese and 450,000 Palestinian refugees². Humanitarian needs are enormous and certain categories of refugees are particularly vulnerable, notably refugees who are not registered with UNHCR (including newcomers), refugees whose status is illegal in Lebanon, Palestinian refugees from Syria (estimated at 53,000 people), and also refugees registered with UNHCR who are not covered by the targeted assistance and whose living conditions are extremely precarious³. At the household level, the most vulnerable are single women with or without children, elderly people, and people with disabilities (the physically disabled, injured people, and people with chronic diseases).

This report draws on the expertise of our team who work closely with refugees from Syria and vulnerable host communities in Lebanon, and on a series of interviews with experts and key actors in this crisis. We met with representatives of Lebanese civil society organisations, local authorities, United Nations agencies, and international NGOs. We also conducted focus group discussions and individual interviews with Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees from Syria, and vulnerable Lebanese in Saida in southern Lebanon, El Fekeha in the Bekaa Valley, Aley in the



Mount Lebanon region, and in the Palestinian camp of Sabra and Shatila in Beirut.

The first part of this report details the current state of humanitarian needs in the areas of protection, housing, food security and nutrition, access to water and sanitation, employment, education, health, and psychosocial support, and describes the adaptation mechanisms adopted by refugees to deal with the crisis. The second part analyses the impact of hosting refugees coming en masse from Syria on the Lebanese national systems: what is the impact on social cohesion and access to basic social services for host communities? Is the humanitarian response sufficient to meet the challenges posed? The third part focuses on future prospects and our recommendations to sustainably improve the living conditions for both refugees from Syria and also vulnerable host communities.

1. UN OCHA Syria : <http://syria.unocha.org/> (accessed 20 May 2014).

2. UNRWA : <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon> (accessed 12 June 2014).

3. OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Lebanon (Issue 1), 1 March - 15 April 2014, p.2.

PART ONE

THE SITUATION FOR REFUGEES FROM SYRIA IN LEBANON: CONSIDERABLE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS



1.1 PROTECTION

Security was the main concern for the refugees from Syria that we met. Almost all of them had fled due to violent clashes and bombardments. In some cases, the refugees had witnessed killings. Others state that they left Syria due to political persecution. Our investigation revealed that even though the majority of refugees feel safe in Lebanon, many of them wish to obtain asylum in a more stable country, particularly in Europe.



« We are afraid that the war will catch up with us here in Lebanon. Our bags are packed; we are ready to leave at any moment if the security situation deteriorates. We would like to get asylum in a safe country in Europe. »

Nour, 41 years old, Saida



© SIF

Many also say that eventually they wish to return to Syria, if the situation permits. Others, traumatised by the atrocities that they witnessed or worried about potential political reprisals, contemplate never returning to Syria.

Whatever the outcome of the conflict, a large number of the refugees are likely to remain in Lebanon in so far as they are not confident of attaining a higher level of security in Syria. It is unlikely that refugees from Syria, regardless of their origins, will be able to acquire the Lebanese nationality as policy makers wish to maintain a balance between the various religious communities in Lebanon⁴.

The absence of formal refugee camps in Lebanon makes it extremely difficult for humanitarian actors to identify refugees, in order to offer them protection and support. Newcomers in Lebanon lack information about the various assistance measures they could benefit from, such as distributions of food and emergency kits. Many refugees who have been in Lebanon for more than a month are still not registered with one of the four main UNHCR centers (Beirut, Tripoli, Zahle, and Tyr). They therefore cannot benefit from the range of assistance provided to refugees in the areas of health, education, protection, and distribution of food and non-food items.

4. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are also deprived of access to the Lebanese nationality.



© SFL

There are numerous reasons why these refugees do not register with UNCHR. Some fear that their personal information will be transmitted to the Syrian authorities or that they will not be allowed to return in Syria due to their status. Others are unable to register because the offices are too far away and transport costs are high. Transport from Akkar or Wadi Jaled to the centre of Tripoli can cost up to USD \$60. Finally, 38% of the unregistered refugees claim they are not registered for fear of being arrested at checkpoints, in particular on the roads to the centres of Zahle and Tripoli⁵.

Refugees whose status is illegal in Lebanon are especially vulnerable⁶. In particular, parents struggle to register the births of their children, lacking identity documents and valid residence permits⁷. 29% of all refugees have entered Lebanon illegally even though they possess Syrian identity papers, either because they were afraid of being stopped at an official border crossing or because they needed to rapidly flee from violence, and 4% of refugees have entered illegally because they didn't have Syrian identity papers. Although the majority (66%) of the refugees from Syria entered Lebanon legally by presenting identity papers⁸ (passport or Syrian identity card) at one of the few official border crossings on the Lebanese-Syrian border, many became illegal because they were not able to renew their residence permit after one year.

The high costs associated with the regularisation or renewal of residence permits prevents refugees from accessing legal status, and therefore, protection. Refugees who enter the territory illegally must pay a fine of USD \$63 per person (over 15 years old)⁹ to regularise their administrative situation in Lebanon, while refugees from Syria who enter Lebanon legally are obliged to renew their visa after one year in the Lebanese territory by paying an annual fee of USD \$200 per person (over 15 years old). However, many refugees are unable to pay this fee and accordingly find themselves de facto illegal. Increasingly, refugees return to Syria to re-enter Lebanon and try to get a new visa for free for one year, despite the insecurity and the risk of not being able to cross the border again.

Moreover, some refugees report cases of favouritism towards certain political affiliations or refugee origins in the allocation of residence permits. The situation of Palestinian refugees from Syria is particularly worrying. Palestinians are increasingly turned away at the official border crossings on the Lebanese-Syrian border because of their origin. Furthermore, new restrictions came into force in May 2014 prohibiting Palestinian refugees from Syria from renewing their residence permits at the end of one year, even if they have the necessary identity documents and the means to pay the USD \$200 renewal fee. As a matter of fact, all Palestinian refugees from Syria

5. Norwegian Refugee Council, *The Consequences of Limited Legal Status for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, April 2014, p.20.

6. Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees.

7. Norwegian Refugee Council, *Legal Assistance - Update on Birth Registration for Refugees from Syria*, January 2014.

8. Norwegian Refugee Council, *The Consequences of Limited Legal Status for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, April 2014, pp.11-12.

9. *Ibid*, p.7.

are destined to become illegal in Lebanon. This illegality forces them to restrict their movement and increasingly prevents them from accessing the support provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Several reports reveal that refugees who have entered Lebanon illegally or whose residence permits have expired, have been arrested, held in detention, and sometimes even deported back to Syria¹⁰. The proliferation of official and unofficial checkpoints inside Lebanon increases anxiety for refugees: they do not dare to travel to register themselves with UNHCR and access essential services, such as healthcare, or to find work. The border area of Qalamoun and north Bekaa is so insecure that humanitarian access is constantly threatened. Refugees struggle to leave the towns of Wadi Khaled, Tripoli, Aarsal, and Baalbek because of the growing instability and the checkpoints surrounding the areas.

.....

« I arrived legally in Lebanon a year and a half ago. I was recently arrested and imprisoned for four days because my residence permit had expired. I had to pay almost USD \$650 to get out of jail and USD \$200 to renew my residence permit. I have no more savings and my family is in debt. »

Ali, 29 years old, Saïda

Finally, Lebanese returnees from Syria are also vulnerable because they cannot claim refugee status with UNHCR even though they arrive in similar conditions to the refugees from Syria. Since they cannot benefit from UNHCR's assistance, they fall under the responsibility of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The majority of these returnees are located in the Bekaa Valley and in northern Lebanon and struggle to reintegrate with the Lebanese population¹¹.

1.2 ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HOUSING



Unlike in Jordan or Turkey, there are no formal refugee camps in Lebanon designed to accommodate refugees from Syria. Finding housing is one of the main concerns for refugees on arrival. According to a recent UNHCR survey, 57% of refugees live in houses or apartments that they share with other refugee families, often in highly precarious conditions¹². Others take shelter in abandoned buildings, collective shelters, informal camps, unused garages, containers, cellars, small shops, construction sites, old factories, or even in chicken coops.

According to the UNHCR, 81% of refugees from Syria pay rent¹³. The average rent paid by refugees was USD \$250 per month in 2013 and due to the increasing demand, some rents now reach nearly USD \$600 per month for families living in collective shelters. Moreover, the rent readjustment and liberalisation law of 1 April 2014 gives permission to owners to significantly increase the rent on their properties¹⁴. More than three years since the start of the crisis, savings which

10. Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/05/lebanon-palestinians-barred-sent-syria> (accessed 12 June 2014).

11. OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Lebanon (Issue 1), 1 March - 15 April 2014, p.3.

12. UNHCR, Shelter Survey, March 2014.

13. UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 2013, p.6.

14. Muriel Rozelier, 'Liban : Décryptage de la loi de libéralisation des loyers anciens', L'Orient Le Jour, 8 May 2014 :

<http://www.lorientlejour.com/article/866183/liban-decryptage-de-la-loi-de-liberalisation-des-loyers-anciens.html> (accessed 12 June 2014).

have been used primarily to pay rents are drying up, leaving refugees with few resources to feed themselves or satisfy other basic needs. Increasing evictions further destabilise the already fragile situation of refugees from Syria in Lebanon.

.....

« Once we have paid our rent of USD \$250 each month, we have nothing left to buy food. »

Hani, 38 years old, Aley, living in a container with his wife and five children



© SIF

Inadequate housing for refugees also leads to problems of access to water and proper toilets. 28% of refugees report that they have insufficient access to water to cover their essential needs. One third of households use a common pit as a toilet and 10% of refugees share a single toilet with at least 15 people¹⁵. Local authorities are not able to cope with the problems of waste management. This lack of hygiene generates significant health risks. In particular, cases of scabies have been reported.

1.3 LIVELIHOODS

Almost half of the refugees from Syria are not able to find work. Professional positions are not easily accessible to Syrian refugees, even if they are legally resident in Lebanon. Furthermore, illegal refugees and Palestinian refugees from Syria are not authorised to work. Many are forced into the precarious informal employment sector, often working under difficult conditions and for lower wages.

Due to these difficulties in accessing employment, 30% of the refugees from Syria depend entirely on humanitarian assistance to survive and 70% of refugees suffer problems of food insecurity. The proportion of families facing food insecurity is particularly elevated amongst newcomers¹⁶. Testimonies we collected seemed to indicate that the distribution of food coupons has led to a rise in the price of food, further weakening food security for the most vulnerable refugees.

Furthermore, refugees do not have sufficient financial resources to maintain a balanced diet. Iron and Vitamin A deficiencies are common.

.....

« If I am paid USD \$20 for a day of 10 hours work, I'm very lucky. It's rare to find work for two consecutive days. »

Issam, 32 years old, Saida, daily construction worker

15. UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 2013, p.6.

16. Ibid, p.7.

1.4 ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Newcomers have difficulties accessing health services due to lack of information. Access is further complicated by the difficulties refugees encounter in moving around freely and at low cost. More effective means of communication to inform refugees (hotlines, SMS etc) and mobile health units are gradually being put in place to access the most vulnerable people.

REFUGEES WITH CHRONIC DISEASES DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO ADEQUATE CARE

The high cost of consultations and medical treatments is probably the greatest barrier in access to health care. On average, refugees spend USD \$70 each month on health costs. The Ministry of Health and the local authorities no longer have the means to ensure free access to health care for all refugees and priority is given to Lebanese citizens. Refugees who are not registered with the UNHCR are generally obliged to cover all their healthcare costs, while registered refugees can benefit from secondary and tertiary health care subsidized at 75%, but frequently do not have enough money to pay the remaining 25% of fees.

« My brother suffers from kidney failure and must undergo dialysis eight times a month. The Zahle hospital is far away and we must pay USD \$250 in transport fees each month to take him there. »

Faez, 38 years old, Aley

According to Handicap International, 13% of the refugees from Syria in Lebanon suffer from chronic diseases¹⁷. As they are not covered by UNHCR, almost all people suffering from diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, serious respiratory infections, cancer, kidney failure or other chronic diseases are left without appropriate care.

« People who suffer from diabetes or cancer are abandoned by the international community. The municipality of Aley does not have the means to cover the costs of medical treatment. People with cancer have no choice but to wait to die. Many diabetics suffer from gangrene because they cannot afford to pay for their insulin shots. We have had to amputate the hands and feet of about 15 people. »

Rami, 48 years old, Aley Committee

Disabled or injured people have significant difficulties in obtaining care adapted to their specific needs. One of 30 refugees from Syria suffers from an injury related to the Syrian conflict. 55% of them struggle to complete their daily tasks¹⁸.

« My three children are disabled. I left Syria on foot and I walked for five days with two children in my arms and the third on my back. In Syria, they received appropriate care but here we are on our own. »

Sara, 42 years old,
Shatila Palestinian camp (Beirut)

17. Handicap International, Help Age International, Hidden Victims of the Syrian crisis: disabled, injured and older refugees, 2014, p.3.

18. Ibid, p.3.

1.5 PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT



© SIF

The stress suffered as a result of the violence and bombardments in Syria is particularly noticeable amongst newcomers and especially children. Many of them are scared by noises while others wet the bed at night despite being past the age where this should be a problem. Sometimes they act out their fears by drawings scenes depicting bombardments or killings. Furthermore, 65% of elderly people show signs of psychological distress¹⁹.

As the crisis sets in for the long term and the prospects of returning to Syria shrink, refugees suffer from anxiety related to everyday difficulties in meeting the basic needs of their family. The inability of men and women to fulfill their traditional roles within the family generates feelings of helplessness, which can lead to separation or divorce or translate into violence within the family²⁰. The lack of privacy in overcrowded housing also has negative consequences for people's sense of dignity and their relationships.

1.6 ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Syrian children have the right to attend Lebanese public schools and Palestinian children from Syria can attend classes in UNRWA schools. Despite this right, more than half of refugee children of school age do not go to school and are deprived of their education²¹. This is due to several factors:

- In 59% of cases, children are not able to go to school because their parents cannot afford to cover the costs of tuition and transportation²²;
- In 18% of cases, children do not go to school because the schools do not have the capacity to take in the influx of students²³. Informal schools made up of Syrian teachers are developing across the country in order to avoid interruptions to learning;
- In 3% of cases, children do not attend school because they perform a revenue-generating activity for their family²⁴.

Furthermore, curriculums differ greatly between the two countries. Syrian children who are used to taking courses in Arabic in Syria have difficulties following classes in Lebanese schools where subjects are usually taught in English or French. To cope with the difficulties generated by the differences in the education programs between Syria and Lebanon, the government has implemented a system in many schools where the morning hours are reserved for Lebanese children and afternoons for Syrian children.

19. Ibid, p.3.

20. Oxfam, ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality, *Shifting Sands: Changing gender roles among refugees in Lebanon*, 2013, p.4.

21. Ibid, p.7.

22. Ibid, p.7.

23. Ibid, p.7.

24. Ibid, p.18.

1.7 COPING MECHANISMS

Faced with difficulties on a daily basis of meeting their basic needs, refugees have adopted coping strategies. Humanitarian actors refer to these as ‘negative coping mechanisms’ because in addition to representing a short-term solution, these mechanisms are not viable solutions for guaranteeing long-term wellbeing and tend to increase people’s anxiety levels.

75% OF HOUSEHOLDS ARE IN DEBT

One of the most commonly used negative coping strategies is reliance on debt. 75% of households are in debt, with the average household debt at USD \$600. Loans are usually provided by friends or family members in order to buy food (81%), pay rent (52%), and cover health costs (25%)²⁵. It is also common for refugees to buy their groceries on credit from shopkeepers or to pay their rent late.

Other strategies are to spend the entirety of savings, sell possessions (houses, jewellery etc), or resell items distributed by humanitarian actors (mattresses, clothing etc) which tends to place further strain on households.

Faced with rising food prices, the majority of refugees are forced to reduce their number of daily meals, as well as the amount of food eaten at each meal. 49% of adults reduce their own consumption so that they can give more food to their children²⁶. Similarly, rising rent prices force refugee families to live in substandard housing or share cramped living quarters with other families.

Informal employment, child labour, early marriage, and prostitution are other coping strategies which expose the most vulnerable people to even greater risks of exploitation.



© SIF

25. UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, 2013, p.7.

26. *Ibid*, p.26.

PART TWO

LEBANON AND THE CRISIS: THE DIFFICULTIES OF IMPLEMENTING AN INCLUSIVE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE



2.1 THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON VULNERABLE HOST COMMUNITIES

The impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon's stability is unquestionable. The conflict in Syria has revived tensions between different political and religious communities and places a significant security risk on residents, especially in the north and in the Bekaa. Instability in the country has had negative consequences for tourism, which has suffered since the beginning of the crisis, even though it is a key sector of the country's economy.

The wounds of the thirty year civil war and the Syrian occupation of Lebanon are not yet completely healed and exacerbate social tensions. Some Lebanese feel that the influx of refugees has been accompanied by increased crime (begging, theft, murders etc). Increasingly, municipalities put unlawful curfews in place against the refugees from Syria. Refugees say they are regularly subject to discrimination and 10% of refugee households claim to have experienced harassment, especially from their neighbours, landlords, or local communities²⁷.

27. Ibid, p.7.



© SIF

The massive influx of refugees from Syria has led to a 25% population increase in Lebanon. Pressure on basic social services such as health, education, electricity, water, and even waste management is growing considerably.

In some municipalities, such as Aarsal, the number of refugees now exceeds the number of Lebanese inhabitants, representing a 100% increase on the demand for public infrastructure²⁸.

.....
« *There are more than 1,680 families in our small municipality. Despite the solidarity between Lebanese and Syrians, we do not have the means to meet all the needs in relation to food, health, housing, and jobs. This is a poor area and we need the support of the international community.* »

Jassem, 54 years old, El Fekeha municipality

28. OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Lebanon (Issue 1), 1 March – 15 April 2014, p.2.



© SIF

The most vulnerable Lebanese are directly affected by the price rise in basic commodities and rents, the inevitable consequence of the increase in consumption and housing demand. Though it is common for several refugee families from Syria to live together in the same house to share the rent, this is not the case for host communities who are struggling to get their food supplies and cope with increasing rent prices.

Moreover, the arrival of a cheaper workforce from Syria has increased competition in the labour market and pushed wages down, particularly with respect to low-skilled jobs such as daily construction workers. Competition for poorly remunerated informal jobs is particularly fierce between recently arrived illegal refugees from Syria and Palestinian refugees who have been in Lebanon for a long time and who do not have the right to work. Small businesses run illegally by Syrian refugees also provoke anger amongst Lebanese traders who are obliged to pay local taxes.

**28% OF LEBANESE LIVE
BELOW THE POVERTY LINE**

.....
« In the past, my son was earning USD \$20 a day working on the construction sites. Now, with the arrival of the refugees from Syria, he earns less than USD \$10 a day. »

Selma, 62 years old, Aley

The Lebanese feel that their quality of life has deteriorated since the beginning of the crisis. Their needs are substantial and are barely covered. 28% of them live below the poverty line, on less than USD \$4 a day. Humanitarian assistance directed towards refugees from Syria tends to crystallise resentment amongst Lebanese people who feel ignored by the international community²⁹. Development projects involving host communities are gradually being implemented to improve the living conditions of all people affected by the Syrian crisis in Lebanon and to promote social cohesion.

.....
« My daughter is a nurse. She can only find work for 2 days a week since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. »

Leila, 57 years old, Aley

29. Ibid, p.2.

2.2 DIFFICULTIES OF IMPLEMENTING AN INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

As the humanitarian needs continue to grow, the international community's response is often criticised. The Regional Response Plan to the Syrian refugee crisis (RRP6) for 2014 had only received 35% of the total necessary funds in June 2014 and many programs had to be removed due to budgetary restrictions on the part of major donors³⁰. Under the previous Regional Response Plan to the Syrian refugee crisis (RRP5), the majority of funding was allocated to a handful of humanitarian actors³¹.

ONLY 1/3 OF THE REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE HAD BEEN FUNDED IN JUNE 2014

Moreover, coordination between humanitarian actors is difficult. Many needs assessments have been conducted but the different methodologies and indicators employed failed to give a comprehensive and multi-sector vision of humanitarian needs and deficiencies. Thus, the current Regional Response Plan to the Syrian refugee crisis (RRP6) fails to identify the priority sectors, regions, and populations. Much information is still missing concerning the needs of unregistered refugees, Palestinian refugees from Syria, Lebanese returnees from Syria and vulnerable host communities³². The proliferation of assessments generates a feeling of frustration amongst refugees who feel that aid is failing to materialise.

Faced with an increasing number of refugees and a decrease in institutional funding, UNHCR started to target its assistance towards the most vulnerable in autumn of 2013. NGOs are concerned that this targeted assistance was done without adequate communication with refugees to explain the meaning of this change to them and without giving them the time to prepare for the end of assistance.

Humanitarian actors want better consultation and coordination to define transparent and standardised vulnerability criteria which would allow aid to be targeted towards the most vulnerable. They also want improved information to be made available to refugees in order to make them aware of their rights. Many refugees indicated to us that they did not understand the value of registering with UNHCR, since many people were struck off the distribution lists for food aid from the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR in November 2013. Yet, even if they cannot receive aid, directed towards the most vulnerable as far as food and emergency kits are concerned, registration with UNHCR does give access to other forms of assistance (legal, health, and education).

Finally, Lebanon and other neighbouring countries (Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt) cannot continue to bear the weight of the Syrian refugee crisis alone. States that have ratified the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees have an international obligation to share the responsibility of hosting refugees³³.

UNHCR has asked the international community to host 30,000 particularly vulnerable refugees by the end of 2014 and 100,000 refugees between now and 2015/2016. In February 2014, approximately twenty countries, mainly European, responded to this call by committing to take in more than 18,800 refugees from Syria. France, for its part, has promised resettlement of only 500 refugees from Syria³⁴.

.....
« All the aid goes to Aarsal but us, in El Fekeha, we have nothing. The NGOs come to do their assessments but they never come back to bring us aid. »

Rawan, 43 years old, El Fekeha

30. UNHCR, Syria Regional Response Plan 2014: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#> (consulted 11 June 2014).

31. UNHCR, Syria Regional Response Plan – RRPS (all agencies) Funding status as of end of December 2013: <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2014-01-08RRP5fundingtrackingallagencies.pdf> (consulted 11 June 2014).

32. UNCHR, Multi Sector Needs Assessment, April 2014.

33. Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.fr/AI-en-action/Personnes-deracinees/Refugies-dans-le-monde/Actualites/Que-fait-la-France-pour-les-refugies-syriens-9266> (consulted 23 May 2014).

34. UNHCR, Resettlement, Humanitarian Admission, and Other Forms of Admission for Syrian Refugees 2013/2014 Pledges (February 2014) <http://www.unhcr.org/52d565699.pdf> (consulted 28 May 2014).

PROSPECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



More than three years after the start of the Syrian crisis, the scale of humanitarian needs in Lebanon is considerable. Without formal refugee camps, protection and housing concerns are the most urgent needs for refugees from Syria in Lebanon. Furthermore, refugees face significant difficulties in accessing basic services such as health, education, and even water and sanitation, as well as finding income to enable them to feed themselves and their families.

As the crisis continues, refugees are gradually developing coping mechanisms of their own which tend to have adverse effects on their lives in the long-term. The massive influx of refugees from Syria puts considerable stress on the Lebanese national systems and fuels social tensions with host communities. Overwhelmed public services and infrastructure, increasing rent and food prices, increasing competition on the labour market and decreasing average wages are all factors that tend to have negative consequences on the living conditions of the



© SIF

most vulnerable Lebanese people. In light of the scale of humanitarian needs and the risk of destabilisation in the country, the international community must urgently mobilise humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable and implement development projects which aim to sustainably improve the living conditions for all people affected by the Syrian crisis - refugees from Syria and vulnerable host communities.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need for the international community, including France, to take collective responsibility for welcoming refugees by granting them asylum. Finally, all parties involved in the Syrian crisis must continue to work towards bringing an end to the fighting in Syria and allowing refugees who wish to return to Syria to do so safely.

THE KEY AID ACTORS IN THIS CRISIS MUST COMMIT TO THE FOLLOWING POINTS

GUARANTEE SIGNIFICANT, LONG-TERM, FLEXIBLE, COORDINATED, AND TRANSPARENT FUNDING

- Mobilise additional financial resources to implement the regional response plan to the Syrian refugee crisis (RRP6 - Regional Response Plan - UNHCR).
- Guarantee significant funding for development programmes (Roadmap for Stabilisation - UN Security Council).
- Integrate funding with a long-term strategy to meet the growing humanitarian needs.
- Allocate at least 25% of funds directly to NGOs and civil society to ensure greater aid efficiency.
- Strengthen funding mechanisms for emergency rapid response and ensure funding is flexible and able to be rapidly mobilised and coordinated in order to be allocated to meet the most important needs.
- Develop decentralised cooperation and financial support to Lebanese municipalities that host large numbers of refugees.

ENSURE BETTER PLANNING AND COORDINATION OF THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

- Conduct independent, thorough multi-sector needs assessments, covering all people affected by the Syrian refugee crisis, in order to ensure coherence and harmonisation between sectors.
- Improve the coordination between all humanitarian actors, and particularly with NGOs, by adopting coordinated and standardised vulnerability criteria.
- Provide mechanisms for periodic review of the regional response plan to update priorities and ensure proper coordination with other response plans, including the national response plan to the crisis.

IMPLEMENT HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES THAT ARE SENSITIVE TO SOCIAL COHESION

- Ensure better coordination between emergency, post-emergency, and development projects.
- Include vulnerable host communities in assistance programmes.
- Strongly support local authorities to ensure effective delivery of basic services (waste management, water and sanitation, education, health, energy etc).
- Invest in national development by creating income-generating opportunities for refugees from Syria and vulnerable Lebanese people.
- Adopt a national housing strategy and reduce the risk of evictions for refugees from Syria and vulnerable Lebanese people.

ENSURE RESPECT FOR HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES AND ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

- Defend humanitarian principles by ensuring assistance is delivered to all people affected by the crisis, without distinction as to origins, beliefs, and political affiliations, and independent of all political agendas.

- Ensure humanitarian access to the most vulnerable and notably to refugees who are not registered with UNHCR (including newcomers), refugees whose status in Lebanon is illegal, Palestinian refugees from Syria, Palestinians in Lebanon, Lebanese returnees from Syria, people with disabilities, elderly people, and single women with or without children.
- Develop effective information systems to better inform vulnerable people about their rights and the various support services available to them.
- Develop effective communication services to enable refugees to easily contact the various aid organisations.
- Develop mobile humanitarian units to facilitate refugee registration with UNHCR and to guarantee their access to health care and basic necessities.
- Allow all refugees from Syria to access a legal status in Lebanon by eliminating the costs associated with the renewal of residence permits and with the regularisation of status for refugees who entered Lebanon illegally.
- Remove restrictions that prevent Palestinian refugees from Syria from legally entering the Lebanese territory and renewing their residence permits.
- Ensure freedom of movement within Lebanon and ensure refugees live in areas with safe access to essential services.
- Facilitate access of humanitarian staff throughout the country and ensure safe access for humanitarian aid in unstable areas.

ADOPT A COLLECTIVE STRATEGY TO HOST REFUGEES

- Humanitarian actors must oppose the creation of a refugee camp in the buffer zone near the Lebanese-Syrian border.
- Countries that share a border with Syria and the entire international community must keep their borders open and develop resettlement and humanitarian entry programmes.
- The international community, including France, must adopt a collective refugee resettlement strategy in order to host at least 100,000 particularly vulnerable refugees from Syria by 2016.

REFERENCES

Handicap International, Help Age International, Hidden Victims of the Syrian crisis: disabled, injured and older refugees, 2014

Médecins Sans Frontières, Misery Beyond the War Zone: Life for Syrian Refugees and Displaced Populations in Lebanon, 2013

Norwegian Refugee Council, Legal Assistance - Update on Birth Registration for Refugees from Syria, January 2014

Norwegian Refugee Council, The Consequences of Limited Legal Status for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, April 2014

OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Lebanon (Issue 1), 1 March - 15 April 2014

OCHA Syria: <http://syria.unocha.org/>

Oxfam, ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality, Shifting Sands: Changing gender roles among refugees in Lebanon, 2013

UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 2013

UNHCR, Shelter Survey, March 2014

UNHCR, Syria Regional Response Plan 2014: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#>

UNHCR, Syria Regional Response Plan - RRP5 (all agencies) Funding status as of end of December 2013 : <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2014-01-08RRP5fundingtrackingall-agencies.pdf>

UNHCR, Multi Sector Needs Assessment, April 2014

UNHCR, Resettlement, Humanitarian Admission, and Other Forms of Admission for Syrian Refugees 2013/2014 Pledges (February 2014) <http://www.unhcr.org/52d565699.pdf>

UNRWA : <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>

The World Bank: <http://web.worldbank.org/wbsite/external/news/art67528.htm>

Contributors to this report

Author: Michael Siegel

Publication manager: Corinne Bocquet

Editorial committee: Corinne Bocquet, Marwan Guerrib, Myriam Laaroussi, Michael Siegel

Production monitoring: Corinne Bocquet, Namissa Sanfo, Michael Siegel

Design and production: Aziz Assafi

Organisations met during the preparation of this report

Action Contre la Faim (ACF) Spain

Acted

Aley Committee

Care Lebanon

Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA)

El Fekeha Municipality

Islamic Welfare Association (ISWA)

Médecins du Monde (MDM)

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

Popular Aid for Relief and Development (PARAD)

Social, Humanitarian, Economical Intervention for Local Development (SHIELD)

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to meet with us and to share their expertise on the issue of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. We are very grateful to those affected by the crisis, both the refugees from Syria and the host communities, for having shared with us the challenges they face daily and trusting us to bring their voices to Europe. Thank you very much to all the team from Secours Islamique France in Lebanon, and especially to Myriam Laaroussi and Remie Abi-Farrage for their valuable and enthusiastic support for the creation of this report.

Corinne Bocquet and Michael Siegel



Administrative Headquarter : 10, rue Galvani - 91300 Massy (France)
Head office : 58, boulevard Ornano - 93200 Saint-Denis (France)
Telephone : +33 (0) 1 60 14 14 99 / **Fax :** +33 (0) 1 60 14 14 13
www.secours-islamique.org

