

THE VARYING PERSPECTIVES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE SYRIAN REFUGEE
CRISIS IN LEBANON: THE INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THEIR
CURRENT PUBLIC DISCOURSE

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: The Varying Perspectives of Stakeholders in the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon:
The International Significance of Their Current Public Discourse

This thesis project focused on exploring protracted impediments among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and examined the varying perspectives among stakeholders in the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, looking at the international significance of their current public discourse and its consequent implications. This project was conducted with the purpose of contributing to the existing literature, but most importantly, it was conducted with the hopes of contributing to the stabilization phase being carried out by several organizational partnerships on the ground by providing relevant information focused on sustainability, capacity building and nonsectarian approaches. Notably, this project hopes to expose impediments in overlooked unofficial settlements in the Tamnine el Fawka Area, settlement #53415-01-007 and settlement #53415-01-011 in the Beqaa Valley Province, Lebanon. The information collected in this project was obtained through interviews, focus groups and an extensive observation process for four months throughout Lebanese territory. Funded by the UO Sandra Morgen Fellowship.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I discuss the varying perspectives of stakeholders in the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon and the international significance of their current public discourse. In order to investigate this information, I travelled to Lebanon for 3 months, and I was able to visit a significant part of the Lebanese territories. My methodology for this research project included interviews, and an exhaustive process of observation. I chose a comprehensive diverse sample for my interviews that allowed me to triangulate the different perspectives found during the study. I decided to study the livelihoods of Syrian refugees and the role of stakeholders for my deep connection and interests in the Levant, and my interest to contribute to more dignified lives for disadvantaged communities. Growing up in Venezuela, a great receiver of migrants from the Middle East, helped me developed a connection resulting from relations with friends, family and neighbors of that origin, being the largest of Lebanese descent. An advantage of conducting fieldwork in Lebanon was that it was a very familiar country, where social dynamics, customs and lifestyles felt identical to those in Venezuela. In addition, for this project I also decided to take into consideration the role of Lebanese citizens, since they are part of the society currently hosting most Syrian refugees per capita, and it is important to acknowledge both groups in order to obtain a clear picture of the forces at work, by observing not only refugee camps, but Lebanese host communities as well. In addition, contributing to the refugees' wellbeing in the country can be facilitated by knowing the perspectives among Lebanese, and this is the reason that their perception cannot be excluded. As well, I explore and analyze the varying perspectives of

stakeholders, INGOs, NGOs, and the government, in order to understand the implications behind the international significance of their public discourse. I chose to discuss this matter since the discordance among stakeholders has not been given enough attention in recent literature, and their varying perspectives are having a large impact on creating mistrust among international donors, consequently reducing the funding required to meet several capital objectives to address the challenges of the refugee crisis in Lebanon. This project is targeted at four main stakeholders; INGOs, NGOs, and the government, as well as the international community, which serves as the main funding source to address the crisis. During the past 5 years, the massive influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon has increased dramatically. In February of 2016, Lebanon had 1,055,884 registered Syrian refugees (“UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response,” 2016), and in May of 2015 the Lebanese government ordered the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) to stop the registration of new refugees (Handicap International, 2015). The current refugee crisis in Europe has finally drawn the world’s attention to this pressing social catastrophe. The population in Lebanon is anticipated to surpass the 5.3 million mark in 2030 (DAR - IAURIF, 2005). However, in light of the Syrian refugee crisis, the estimated number of people currently living in Lebanon is about 5.9 million, a rapid population increase 15 years ahead of the projected date (Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, 2015). This increase in the population places enormous pressure on Lebanon’s infrastructure, security concerns, and its ability to provide services, consequently increasing the tensions between Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015). Despite the growing tensions and aggressive rhetoric, solidarity between the two societies has been remarkable. Today, we find prolonged

challenges among Syrians and Lebanese (as a result of a protracted crisis that has displaced millions). A significant amount of challenges faced by refugees seem to point to the direction of a lack of leadership by government institutions, and limited international aid to cover immediate and overwhelming needs among migrants and affected local communities. Unfortunately, contrasting statements among stakeholders seem to be the norm on the ground, creating confusion and mistrust among the international community. As a result, the most needed funding that Lebanon needs tends to be diverted to other countries with a clear policy and a structural administrative system that aid accountability, and the effective distribution of humanitarian assistance. In this project, I present the literature review relevant to the current crisis of refugees in Lebanon, and I introduce how the current public discourse of stakeholders in Lebanon is affecting the international response to the refugee crisis. I also propose policy recommendations to the government, and general recommendations to INGOs and the

international community. However, I am aware that my recommendations might not be taken into consideration entirely, given Lebanon's political situation and the complex relationship between stakeholders. Though, I emphasize the needs for a stronger coalition among stakeholders, with a more structured system with standard policies to address the current challenges of the refugee crisis, and I call for the international community to take bigger responsibility, not only by providing aid, but also by helping governmental institutions build capacity and promote enhanced governance. This in turn could benefit the refugees, and create a more capable Lebanese state with more sustainable and unified policies that could benefit the Lebanese people as well.

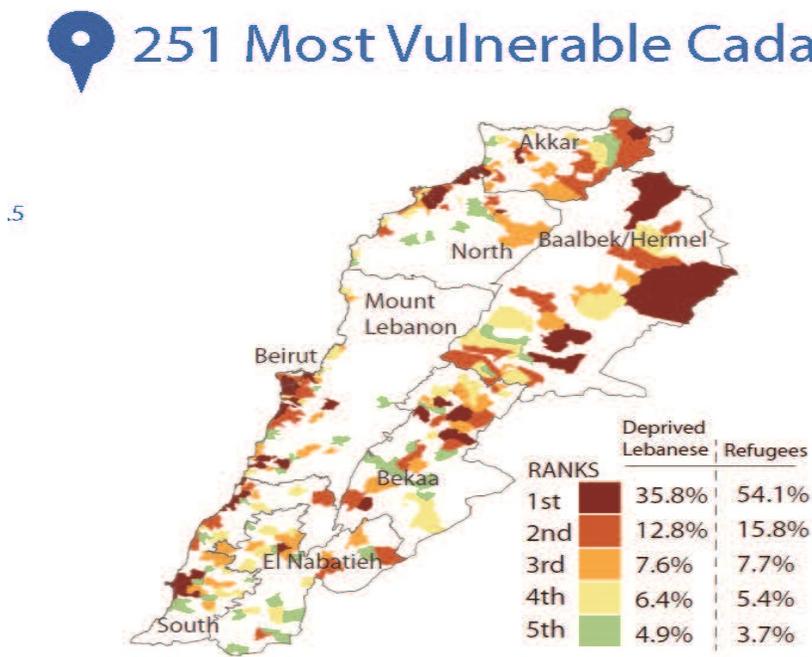


Figure 1. Most Vulnerable Cadastrals, May Statistical Dashboard 2016, UNHCR. This figure show vulnerable locations that were visited during the interview process, such as Beirut, Akkar, and Bekaa.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL HISTORY: LEBANON

Lebanon's complex political history and present day developments pose several challenges to the Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In this chapter, I explore how the contextual complexity of the Lebanese state complicates the Syrian refugee dilemma, and I highlight the most important factors of the Lebanese political and social system that are having an impact on the Syrian refugee crisis in the country. Lebanon, a small country in the Middle East, has a population of about 4.5 million inhabitants, with approximately 2 million refugees including Syrians and Palestinians. Lebanon's capital is Beirut, and its official language is Arabic. It is considered a multiethnic society, mostly comprised by Christians, Sunni and Shia Muslims, and Druze. The Lebanese government is accordingly divided among sectarian lines. Lebanon is part of the fertile land of the Levant, and it has been part of numerous empires through history (including the Ottoman and Roman Empires).



Figure 2. Lebanese Map. A Lebanese political map to highlight its position and proximity to Syria.



SYRIA REFUGEE RESPONSE
LEBANON Syrian Refugees Registered
 30 September 2016

UNHCR Lebanon - Beirut
 Country Office

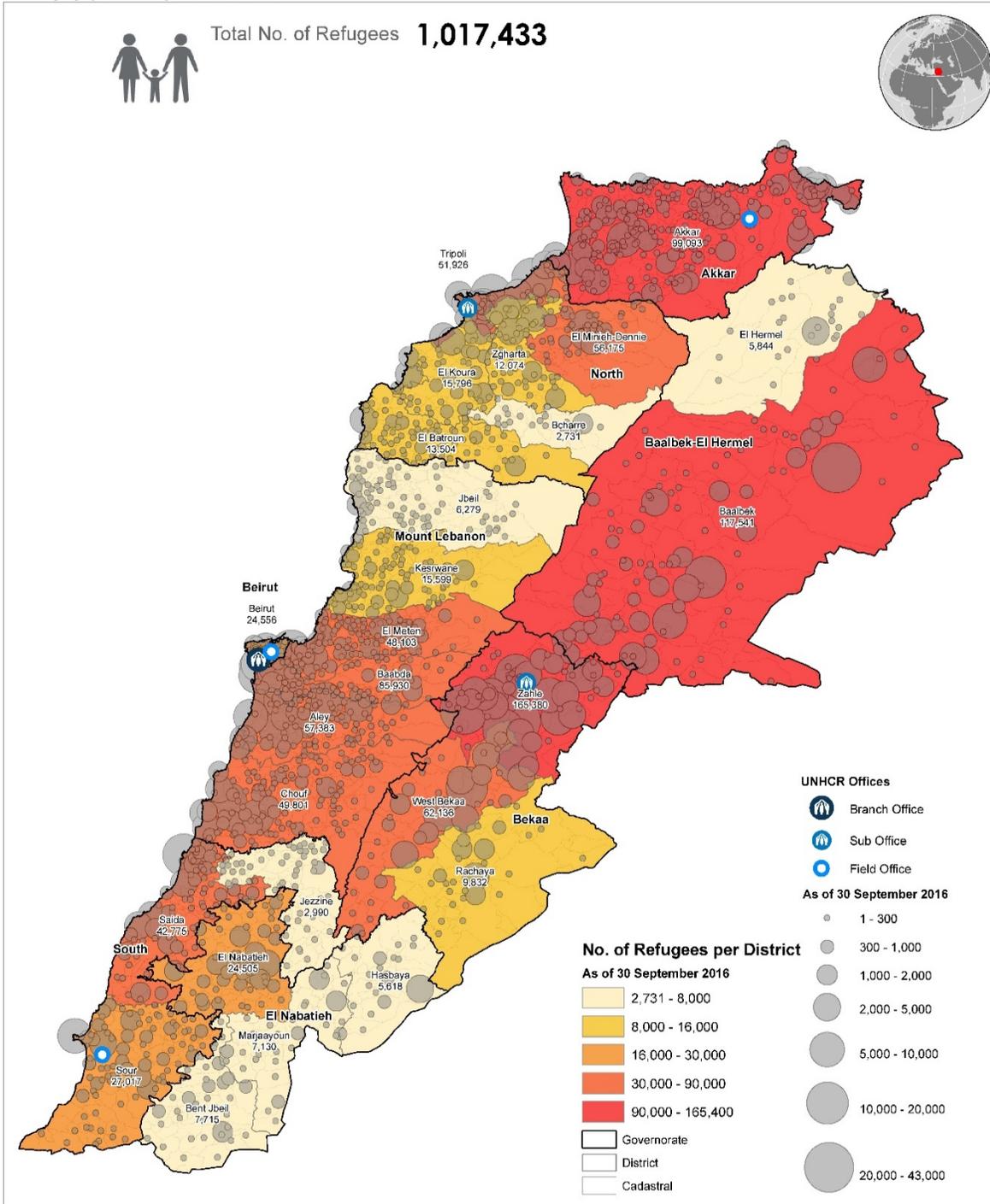


Figure 3. Lebanese Map with Registered Syrian Refugees, September 2016, UNHCR. This map represents the locations with the largest concentration of registered refugees, and it includes some of the places mentioned in this project such as; Bekaa Valley, Tripoli, and Akkar.

Lebanese Confessional System

It is key to explain briefly the confessional system and the Lebanese state, in order to understand the sectarianism and fear among some Lebanese against the majority of Syrian refugees, who tend to be members of Sunni Islam. The confessional system creates the grounds for sectarianism in Lebanon, which in the case of Syrian refugees are seen as threat that could affect the balance among religious groups.

The republic of Lebanon was established in 1943, after gaining its independence from France.¹ The Lebanese system is considered a distinctive democracy in the Middle East, where various religious groups share authority. According to the original constitution, Muslims and Christians were originally represented in different spheres such as the Parliament, Council of Ministers, and all notable military and civilian positions. There is an estimated of 18 religious groups in Lebanon. The largest groups are the Muslims - Sunni, Shia, and Druze², and the Christians Maronites. A census has not been conducted since 1932, when Christians were the majority. There a many political motivations to avoid conducting another census, since it might upset the arrangements in the country, and upset some religious groups.³ The Christian Maronites hold the positions of the President, the Chief of the Army, and the Head of the Central Bank. The Sunni Muslims hold the position of Prime Minister, and Shia Muslims control the Head of the Parliament. This arrangement allows for the establishment of a system of checks and

^{1.} The constitution was implemented in May 1926, since then it has been amended to adjust to contemporary developments, and the changes were responsible for the birth of Lebanon's second republic in 1989.

^{2.} Druze are considered Muslims. However, many do not believe this, while others believe this only as an act of self-preservation.

^{3.} *The Economist* (2016). Current voter registration list published by the Ministry of Interior, and later removed, showed that Maronite Catholics, once the largest group, now make up only 21%. Shias, now lead with 29%, followed closely by the Sunnis, who make up 28%.

balances. An agreement between the different parties is required to implement any decision or decree.

For several decades Lebanon has been a refuge for religious and ethnic minorities, but the exact share among the different groups is unknown (Crow, 1962, p.490). The sectarian organization in Lebanon is also present outside non-governmental spheres, such as educational and social organizations. These institutions reinforce the sectarian division through different languages of instruction, materials and religious teachings.

The Ta'if agreement was put in place to end the shattering Lebanese Civil War 1975-1990. The agreement focused on identity, sovereignty, and internal reforms. The Ta'if treaty was crucial in defining Lebanon's Arab identity by yielding more power to Muslim Arabs (Knio, 2005, pp.227-228).⁴ Demands for reform of the sectarian system were met with the ruling elite's campaign to reinforce their sectarian structure. The influx of Palestinian refugees during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict affected the already fragile sectarian balance and the crisis imploded into the Lebanese Civil War. The Ta'if accord was a Saudi-brokered deal that with the help of Syrian influence, put an end to the civil war.⁵ The accord was vital to end the civil war, but it failed in its goal of creating a stable second republic. The second republic was no more than a "sectarian, and therefore a discriminatory regime" (Ofeish, 1999, p.97).

⁴ Most Lebanese accepted the agreement, however; most Christians considered the agreement as favorable to Syria's influence in the balance of power, and for the continuation of Hezbollah's operations in the country.

⁵ Three causes were included in the Ta'if accord as responsible of the Lebanese civil war, first the conflict of national identity, second the growing socioeconomic divide with unequal share of resources, and third the sectarian and discriminatory system. The Ta'if accord stated that the elimination of sectarianism was a national goal that must be attained through a specific plan.

Confessional System and the Cooperation between the Army and Hezbollah

It is important to understand the role of Hezbollah today, as well as in the past, and its relation with the Syrian refugee crisis. Hezbollah surged after Israel incursion into Lebanon, which came as a consequence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization using Lebanese territory to launch attacks against the Israeli state, creating widespread chaos and serving as a strong detonator for the Lebanese Civil War. Today, many fear that Syrian refugees could become a similar case to the Palestinians, creating social and political turmoil, and causing further hostility between Muslims and Christians. As well, Hezbollah, a Shia militia, is one of today's main players in Lebanon and Syria, and the group tends to be afraid of the high number of Sunni Syrian refugees coming into Lebanon, given that some of them might target the armed group and the Shias, and further deteriorate the religious strife between Sunnis and Shias in the country. The confessional system is based on a sectarian system (al-nizam al-taiffya), which is considered by many politicians in Lebanon as the main factor responsible for the conflict before 1990. According to Ofeish (1999):

Sectarianism is not necessarily synonymous with religiosity...One difference is that, while sectarianism may imply some intolerance of them (sectarian) 'others' and encourage feelings of competition with them, religiosity does not necessarily imply intolerance...religiosity may be personal, dormant, and passive ... it is common to find people in Lebanon who have strong sectarian feelings and may exhibit sectarian behavior, but who are secular in terms of their daily conduct and general attitudes. (p.97)

Ofeish (1999) claims that the elite in Lebanon sees sectarianism as a great tool to hold on to power. Therefore, the system is sponsored by elites in order to draw the lines of access to power and control over resources between the different associated participants of society (p.97).

The confessional system originates from its Ottoman past. Later with the creation of a Lebanese Republic, confessionalism and regionalism were taken to a new level. Also, Crow (1962) argues that the negative aspects of the system are always emphasized, while ignoring the accomplishments it has achieved and the fact that, with the removal of the system, political problems would not disappear (p.499). In this regard, the Lebanese Army consists of the integration of all religious groups. Lebanese feel that the Army represents the whole idea behind Lebanon itself, one that symbolizes the country and represents the unity of the Lebanese nation.

Hezbollah (Party of God) has overwhelming support among the Lebanese population – including the Christians – for ousting Israeli forces in May 2000. Gaub (2007) notes that it is claimed by many that Hezbollah is allowed to operate simply because the Lebanese Army is not strong enough to do its job). However, the overwhelming majority of Sunni Muslims in Lebanon rejects Hezbollah incursion into Lebanese politics and play as a member of the nation-state. Also, before Hezbollah surged, Lebanon was the official headquarters of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), an armed player that used Lebanon as their base in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this sense, Israel incursion into Lebanon comes as a response to the conflict with the PLO. The PLO hosted itself in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, which are considered almost autonomous areas where the Lebanese government has little authority. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are victims of sectarian discrimination, based on the rationalization that integrating them into the Lebanese society would make them lose the right of return to a future Palestinian state. More likely, their inclusion might have upset even more the sectarian balance in the country (since most Palestinian refugees are Sunni

Muslims), and their presence has already caused political and social turmoil between Muslims and Christians. Palestinian refugees tend to be blamed for Lebanon's Civil War, and they have been object of intolerance for the past 60 years. Today, the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is seen by many as a crisis that has many similarities to the Palestinian refugee crisis, and many fear that the presence of Syrian refugees (majority who are Sunni Muslims) might upset again the sectarian balance, and bring about another civil war between all the different religious groups.

Present-day Challenges of the Lebanese State: Weaknesses yet Strengths

A number of challenges that affect Lebanon today are similar to those that provoked the civil war of the 1975-1990. Socio-economic inequality is growing. The massive influx of Syrian refugees resembles the Palestinian refugee crisis, causing them to be discriminated against, and they are also seen as a threat to the sectarian balance in the Lebanese mosaic. Hezbollah has now increased its political participation, and widen sectarian tensions and its role as a resistance movement.

Politicians in Lebanon have long benefited from conflict and containing crisis after crisis by using these events as scapegoats to hold on to power. Today, it is just the turn of using Syrian refugees as scapegoats for the government's (premeditated) inability to provide for its citizens. I mention 'premeditated' because the government might just be weak for its own citizens, but it remains strong and proactive about keeping in place the interests of the ruling elites together with the banking and real estate sector, and those who benefit from the particular weakness of the state apparatus. The government prefers to avoid rebellion by any means, rather than address and propose solutions to the root

causes of the problem. The administration remains hesitant to change the current status quo while the bases of the state keep deteriorating.⁶ Furthermore, the declining quality of public services in Lebanon is increasing. Free enterprise and economic fulfillment are mostly available to the few and well-connected elite. The status quo remains deep-rooted, unchallenged, and unaccountable. The postponement of a rational solution will only result in a ‘the breaking-point, and radical change to become the only answer.’⁷ However, this stagnant political situation might play in favor of Lebanon in sight of today’s volatile political environment in the Middle East. Nowadays, Lebanon gives the impression that its political paralysis has been put aside, and the leaders are now taking back control of the government. The ‘political paralysis’ in Lebanon implies a lack of will from stakeholders to propose any comprehensive measure to address the Syrian refugee crisis, besides the current policies of containment. This paralysis poses and perpetuates the stagnant condition into which most refugees have fallen, creating a legal limbo and a lack of alternatives to find solutions to their crisis. In addition, the same paralysis affects the allocation of aid from International Organizations by indicating a lack of leadership, accountability and willingness among the ruling elites to make a way for solutions.

Lebanon remains highly at risk to fall prey to the Syrian conflict, and politicians have used the conflict as a scapegoat to justify the problems at home, “Syrian refugees frequently take the blame for everything wrong within Lebanon, from economic hardship to failing basic services and growing insecurity - a trump card the political class plays at

^{6.} Regional turmoil has put Lebanon under enormous stress. Though it has become integral to Syria’s conflict and is bound to suffer from growing Sunni-Shia polarization, it has so far avoided a much-predicted meltdown.

^{7.} A shaky security framework, paralyzed political system, wobbly economy, crumbling infrastructure and the state’s waning ability to perform essential duties add explosive ingredients to an already unstable mix.

every opportunity instead of agreeing on a policy to address the challenge” (Intl Crisis Grp, 2015, p.10).⁸

The complexities of interests from Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the clash between the Sunni and the Shia major powers about which direction should Lebanon go have long fueled the political paralysis, making it difficult for Lebanon to address several challenges, including the Syrian refugee crisis. On one side, the Saudi state together with Hariri, the banking sector, Qatar, Turkey and the anti-Syrian March 14th coalition, in opposition to the Iranian state together with Hezbollah and the March 8th coalition, rarely agree on a common ground and a way forward for Lebanon, which also has a large impact on proposing solutions to the refugee crisis.

According to Maalouf (2015), considering the sectarian divisions among authorities, a viable solution would be for the Prime Minister to establish a crisis group that includes representatives of civil society organizations, political forces and other unbiased and active-experts. This option would allow for a rapid and effective action, allowing the (solution) participation and inclusion of more responsibly proactive parties (Al Monitor, 2015). This alternative could also be used to create a proactive working table of partnerships to address the refugee crisis.

Lebanon’s political system is one of the main responsible for the stagnant situation where many refugees find themselves nowadays. Its inability to provide for its own citizens offers a clear picture of their lack of will to provide for others. The

⁸ Lebanon, today as in the past, is vulnerable to the regional tug of war. Rebel infiltration and an influx of refugees from Syria echo the pre-civil war context, when conflicting Lebanese stances toward Palestinian refugees and fighters paralyzed the political machinery and fueled grievances and polarization. Against this backdrop, it is unclear how and for how long the country can resist the stresses emanating from its neighbor’s conflict.

Lebanese state could simply not be interested in satisfying the needs of its citizens, but rather is interested in satisfying those of the ruling elite. The paralysis of the government obstructs prosperous social development, and the recent trash crisis in Lebanon is the latest addition to the list of political dysfunction that affects every aspect of Lebanese society. Lebanese have no other option but to joke about their government, considering it unable to do anything for them. Despite Lebanon being the envy of many countries in the region -substantial sources of water, natural beauty and free enterprise- the population has lowered its expectation from the government, while living with several struggles and challenges that are not being solved (NY Times). The long-standing crisis has put many Lebanese through tests, while strengthening their already outstanding pliability.

Patronage, corruption, good contacts and personal networks have become the norm in the Lebanese society, where bribes flourish in this informal-type-of-government. Lebanese have become used to illegal practices, violence, and they have responded by working around complications that result from the current system (Intl Crisis Grp, 2015l, pp. 11-12).⁹ It is important to highlight the protracted challenges being faced by the Lebanese people as a result of a lack of leadership from their own government, in order to obtain a clear understanding of the scope of the challenges being faced by many Syrian refugees in Lebanon, which are usually amplified. Lebanese people have it hard enough, for Syrian refugees, it has become a cycle of issues that are intensified by not having a clear legal status.

⁹ Many Lebanese feel helpless and take part in – and become part of – this corrupt and ineffective system. “Where is the state?” they say. But its absence is also the result of our own actions. We have lost all sense of common good. Selfishness and petty interests shape our mentality. This goes from how we park our cars to how we “elect” the political class.

There is a significant layer of issues in Lebanon, and all these circumstances would be critical enough in ordinary times. However, regional developments in Syria and the threat of ISIS have put Lebanon under significant pressure, and have placed the country at risk to become more destabilized. In addition, Lebanon faces the burden of millions of Syrian refugees, with an already burdened infrastructure and basic services for a country of roughly 5 million inhabitants, plus 1-2 million refugees (mainly Syrians and Palestinians). Indeed, the refugee problem takes precedence over the trash crisis; it involves experiences and difficulties from humans and sets the stage for the resurgence of an ethnic conflict among Lebanese and Syrians that could lead to an augmented and widespread Syrian-Lebanese civil confrontation. In the next sections, I will be exploring the dilemma of Syrian refugees, ethnic strife and the stakeholders' implications within the Lebanese context of complex history and politics. As well, I will be exploring the international significance of these stakeholders' public discourse, and how it affects the perception of the crisis, and the livelihoods of Syrian refugees and Lebanese communities.

CHAPTER III

BACKGROUND

In the following section, I will address the complexities behind Lebanon's history and politics in regard to refugees and refugee camps. In addition, I will expand in my literature review the relationship between Education, the Lebanese Labor Market and Refugees' Legal Status to highlight the domino effect that one of these could be having over the other. All these characteristics might be linked enough to create a chain reaction or accumulative effects over the livelihoods of Syrian refugees, and the housing and non-encampment policy, which is entirely carved by all the factors in the literature review. The Syrian crisis has no precedent (with any other refugee crisis, and) with only the refugee crisis of World War II coming close. After Syria, the burden of the Syrian War has been the heaviest on Lebanon, a country with a crumbling governance system and now hosting the largest refugee population per capita in the world (UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response, 2016). The Lebanese government opened its borders to allow in refugees from Syria, who were at first welcomed by Lebanese nationals and asked nothing in return. As the crisis worsened, the high number of refugees became a massive burden on the Lebanese system, including security, shelter, education, economics, social, political, and others. The political resistance against refugee camps and solutions that look 'permanent' shake the influence and crisis response capacity of International Organizations and governmental institutions. This places Lebanon in a case of contextual complexity with multifaceted challenges that affect the development and adaptation of Syrian refugees in the country (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015).

Also, a number of factors that affect Lebanon today are similar to those that provoked the Lebanese Civil War of the 1975-1990, as previous refugee camps in Lebanon have had a disastrous and influential history on that war. The massive influx of Syrian refugees resembles the Palestinian refugees, who were blamed for Lebanon's Civil War. Just as the Palestinians were considered upsetting to Lebanese political dynamics, Syrian refugees are also seen as a threat to the Lebanese state. Palestinian refugee camps today are perceived as an extra-territorial entity, where insecurity, radicalization and armed groups flourish. This experience heavily influences the Lebanese perspective on the Syrian refugee crisis (Dionigi, 2016, p. 22; Ibrahim, 2008, pp. 83-88).

These factors would be complicated enough in ordinary times; however, the conflict in Syria rendered this time a critical period for Lebanon, where the lack of political consensus has left the refugee crisis unmanaged for several months. Current policies on Syrian refugees are restrictive and the Lebanese perception of and response to refugees is a reflection of political and social tensions that have been exacerbated by the Syrian crisis (Dionigi, 2016, p. 22). According to International Crisis Group (2015):

Lebanon, today as in the past, is vulnerable to the regional tug of war. Rebel infiltration and an influx of refugees from Syria echo the pre-civil war context, when conflicting Lebanese stances toward Palestinian refugees and fighters paralysed the political machinery and fuelled grievances and polarisation. Against this backdrop, it is unclear how and for how long the country can resist the stresses emanating from its neighbour's conflict. (p.5)

The emergence of settlements all across Lebanon, and the inability of the international community to introduce effective rational solutions in Syria threaten to make this a protracted crisis that may remain in Lebanon for many years to come (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, pp.15-17).

In addition, it is essential to understand the political economy of Lebanon and how it affects refugee's policies and the country's discourse in front of a large influx of low skilled migrants. As stated before, Lebanon's government is on a weak position to deal with its own citizens, left alone the refugees. Known cases of corruption, kinship and nepotism among the political elite in Lebanon, fuel the already dysfunctional governmental structure. In consequence, the country is left with an endless political class that has little desire to propose any changes that would make life better for Lebanese, and propose proactive solutions for refugees, as long as they can remain in control of the political and economic machine. Yet, the influence of the political economy and the ruling elite take a very particular path when dealing with Syrian refugees. Issues of corruption, lack of good governance, lack of leadership, and weak institutions are widely known by the international community, which have a negative impact on the flow of foreign aid directed to the Syrian refugee crisis, making it very hard for local and international organizations to accomplish several fundraising goals. These challenges hinder many organizations from conducting their work, and fulfilling international aid projects, an issue in which I expand in my DISCUSSION chapter. Also, the political economy of Lebanon provides an explanation for the political class' discourse in front of the refugee crisis. Briefly, Lebanon has always been dependent on a large low skilled labor class, and the current influx of refugee provides a further supply to this practice. Several refugees work illegally in the informal economy, which leads to exploitation, and low wages. As well, low wages only benefit the elite; therefore, there are very little incentives to propose policies that could improve the living conditions of refugees. This layer of challenges protract the crisis and the impediments of many refugees, which

might resonate with many of the Syrian refugees' fear of becoming a similar case to the Palestinians, who's challenges became a latent 50 year old catastrophe.

CHAPTER IV

LITERATURE REVIEW

When dealing with refugees, some countries decide to implement the necessary policies that adapt to their specific context, both political and socioeconomic. In addition, refugees might pose challenges of security, threats of terrorism, labor force surplus, integration disputes and unrest; however, these will depend on the particular location where they are being resettled or waiting to be resettled, as it is the case for many refugees in Lebanon. Certainly, refugee camps are repeatedly seen as incubators of social unrest, violence, and terrorism. It is argued that this is exacerbated by the bureaucracy of security controls, impeding the creation of social enterprise and dynamism. When numerous parties are involved in the management of a camp, tensions are expected to arise between relief agencies, the host government, and the refugees. It is important to point out that security should not be bestowed; rather, the engineering should focus on balancing security needs with those needs of the refugees, while protecting and preserving their customs (Beehner, 2015, pp. 157-XII).

The challenges that Syrian refugees pose to Lebanon, and how they are being dealt with; have some similarities to other cases presented in this literature review. Many of the similarities include that Syrian refugees are seen a threat to the stability and security of Lebanon, given their possible connection with radical groups. Also, many Syrian refugees are considered as a threat to the social fabric of Lebanon, and as a potential risk of fueling another civil war in the country.

Nowadays, the lack of domestic legislation that ensures the protection of refugees is the main concern. The debate between the Lebanese government and international

organizations on establishing refugee camps has been characterized by divisions and contrasting approaches (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, p.30). Lebanon, like many other Arab states, is not a signatory of the UNHCR 1951 Refugee Convention (Knudsen, 2009, p.54) therefore, refugees are subject to certain Lebanese jurisdictions. However, Lebanon has ratified many other treaties that outline a variety of rights including primary and secondary education, vocational training, discrimination on the basis of disability; gender, sex, religion, ethnicity, social origin, or other status is prohibited. This is significant because, even though Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, the country “is still bound by customary international law on the treatment of refugees” that were previously mentioned (HRW, 2016, p.80).

In the case of Lebanon, the UNHCR, in their report “Policy on Alternative to Camps,” emphasized integrating the refugees with the Lebanese community to guarantee their development, independence and normality (UNHCR, 2014, p.3). It is mentioned that refugee camps in Lebanon reduce refugees to a “welfare mentality,” affecting their sense of identity and security, and this dependency is a direct consequence of the paternalistic refugee-aid system (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, p.37). This reconfiguration by the UNHCR, in regard to the establishment of refugee camps for Syrian refugees, seems to be related to challenges faced in the contextual complexity of Lebanon that keeps defying the standards of international crisis response.

Despite the limitations being faced by many disadvantaged Lebanese communities, especially in rural areas, their role is significant, and it took precedence as an alternative option for many, after the denial from the Lebanese government to set up official camps. Many Lebanese tend to host Syrian refugees directly in their homes (including strangers);

for example, they might offer a part of the house which is not being used to a refugee family, eliminating the cost of rent. Nevertheless, host communities are seen as vulnerable, and in need of assistance. Most of the help offered by the Lebanese is simply because of their humanitarian sympathy, rather than formal policy (Mackreath, 2014, pp. 19-21). Mackreath (2014) reaffirms that, “the key question to emerge from the role of host communities in Lebanon, then, is whether the current combination of the local, national and international responses to the crisis will inspire long-term capacity building at the local level” (pp.19-21).

Given these factors, I will be discussing specific themes in this literature review in order to highlight the main impediments that Syrian refugees are still facing after six years of fleeing the Syrian Civil War. Several issues are protracted, but in this literature review I decided to focus on the topics that are repeatedly mentioned in the interviews as the most relevant. The lack of solutions signal the overwhelming dimensions of the crisis for a country with limited resources, and the lack of good governance or preparedness that seems to be unable to cope with the rapid and large influx across its border with Syria. The importance and interrelation between the political background of Lebanon; historical experiences with previous refugees, and the constant challenges of refugees in different contexts, including the Lebanese, provide a clear structure and background for this project. All these ideas seem to tie together to explain a complex but also very particular discourse to deal with refugees, that is influenced heavily by its past; its present socioeconomic motivations, and future uncertainties of another civilian conflict.

Adaptation of Refugees into the Local Context

There are broader historical factors that contribute to the mass movement of Syrian refugees to Lebanon, besides the intensity of the conflict. Lebanon and Syria have a historical association, which has resulted in the penetrable characteristics of the border between the two countries. To begin, Lebanon's birth came as result of a partition from 'Greater Syria'. In addition, Syria has had a heavy influence on Lebanon, including a substantial military presence from 1976 to 2005, including the "Pax Syriana" phase that intended to secure influence in the country through diplomacy and military power. Over one million Syrians have had a heavy presence in the Lebanese labor market for decades. Similarities also include sharing the same language, religion, most cultural traditions, and social and family connections across the border. Before the conflict, Lebanon already had the largest number of Syrian immigrants (Dionigi, 2015, pp.30-32). All these factors should make the acclimatization of Syrian refugees into Lebanon easier. However, the historical association between the two countries could also be a double-edged sword. Ghanem (2014) found that as the political situation takes a complex character, hostility between the two communities is expected to rise, and suggests in relation to the Syrian crisis:

The relationship between Syrians and Lebanese cannot simply be summed up by disagreements over jobs opportunities, rising rental prices, and shortages in housing. Historical animosity between both nationalities runs deep and spans decades, especially with regard to the previous Syrian military presence and its continuing political intervention in Lebanon's affairs. The fact that Lebanese are fighting on opposite sides of the conflict in Syria also plays a key role in fueling tensions and triggering violence. (p.19)

Several challenges, including lack of education, problems with refugee camps for refugees and local communities, and the adaptation of refugees take a particular character when it comes to facilitating the access of refugees to the labor market. Several issues may make harder the access to a legal and skilled labor market; however, they seem to be promoting access to low-skilled labor, and adjusting to the labor demands of the host country. In order to understand the contextual complexities of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, I will examine refugee's impediments in refugee camps and the failures of refugee camps to provide decent livelihoods. In following sections, I will explore Labor Force and the Refugees' policies on place in Lebanon; Education; Impediments for Host Communities with Refugee Camps, and How Are Camps Perceived as a Source of Social Unrest.

Impediments for Refugees with Refugee Camps: Failures of Refugee Camps to Provide Decent Livelihoods

Impediments for refugees in refugee camps do not only arise in Lebanon, but it is a tendency that happens repeatedly. Perhaps, it could be argued that these impediments come as a result that refugee camps are sometimes used past that *temporal* stage for which they were initially created. Loveless (2013) states: "There are very few opportunities for employment, so many refugees resort to desperate measures to cover their costs. These include prostitution, early marriage, begging and working for exploitative wage" (pp.66-68).¹⁰ Settlements' services are not any better than outside conditions in providing for the refugees, and many refugees are forced to move to urban

^{10.} In addition, a lot of refugees are forced into black market activities such as selling their organs for monetary compensation.

settings to seek better opportunities (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, pp.42-44).

However, legal status and basic rights are essential when refugees move outside to provide for themselves and their families. The level of abilities offered in camps does not seem to be helping the refugees develop freely outside them. After six years of conflict, we come across a massive wave of refugees from rural and urban origins mainly flowing to the informal labor market, because it is the one with fewer restrictions on employment. Regardless of several academics arguing that refugees could be used as a positive element on the Lebanese economy, adding more vigor and effort to create more jobs, the Lebanese government is not benefiting from the refugee skillsets due to the restrictions on employment against them (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, p. 64). Syrian refugees perceive employment in the urban setting as a way to enhance their adaptation to the city and secure decent livelihoods. In addition, their study found that most Syrian refugees reject the idea of being housed in camps (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, p.65). In these cases, limited skills provided inside settlements along with the restrictions on employment might represent a challenge to securing good employment in the preferred urban setting. The exploitation of refugees and the appearance of illegal jobs is common (Baghdadi and Banat, 2014, p.105). According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2016) “refugees are coping by reducing expenditures on food, borrowing money, withdrawing children from school, and relying on their children to earn income for basic need” (p. 21).

Several refugees find themselves trapped in this long list of challenges, and camps are usually not the place to promote social mobility. Refugees are not given enough flexibility in camps; although their self-will to improve should be embraced, it is instead strictly regulated. Beehner (2015) suggests that the social engineering aspects of

future refugee camps should be improved like the Za'atari camp in Jordan - where stakeholders saw the importance of flexibility and adaptability (pp. 157-XII). In addition, the lack of quality education is a major factor that affects the ability of camps to promote socioeconomic flexibility for refugees, on which I would be expanding briefly in the following section.

Labor Force and Refugees' Policies

I present a comparison of the policies of Lebanon and Jordan in order to understand the arguments behind the motivations by these two countries to apply policies on refugees. In the particular case of Lebanon, the policy of non-encampment followed by the Lebanese government has certain 'out of sight purposes'. The non-encampment serves the Lebanese's labor market goals, since the Lebanese economy requires a large number of low-wage Syrian workers. There are historical experiences, security and budgetary motivations for Lebanese policies on refugees. Jordan has used encampment to raise the profile of Syrian refugee camps, and increase the funds it receives (Turner, 2015, p.387). On the other hand, Lebanon's approach is in favor of the interests of the economic elite, while in Jordan it serves the regime's rural supporters that struggle to cope with the influx of Syrian refugees due to higher unemployment levels.

The encampment of refugees in Jordan is also beneficial to the humanitarian organizations running refugee camps, since it improves administrative efficiency, and by having refugees perceptible and contained, it aids to attract donations and funds (Turner, 2015, p. 388). In addition, according to Turner (2015), "Syrians in Lebanon, regardless of when they entered the country, could now simultaneously be thought of as refugees and

members of the informal labor force” (p. 398). The policies of non-encampment is a method through which the state creates the required scenario for the exploitation of the labor force. At the end, the state obtains an increased labor supply, low wages, and a foreign labor force which is used to drop the quality of economic conditions for non-nationals and nationals alike (p. 399).

Certainly, the use of refugees by state actors such as Jordan and Lebanon differ significantly from each other; however, these two have in common that providing quality education and social flexibility is not a priority, rather it is considered a luxury by many refugees. In this sense, I elaborate on the challenges of education among refugees in the following section.

Education

It might seem obvious that without education, refugees might lose the chance to acquire their full potential as citizens and other benefits such as productive employment (Charles and Denman, 2013, pp. 96-111). However, education is not embraced in unofficial settlements, although it is something that could help normalize the life of children who have been victims of countless traumas. Children need to recover the sense of stability, security and normality, and a higher emphasis on education would allow them to begin the healing process. The younger generations are the ones who are going to be responsible for rebuilding their lives and their country; therefore, their emotional and physical preparation is highly important (Charles and Denman, 2013, pp. 96-111). On this sense, the Lebanese government has been taking measures in order to enroll Syrians in formal education, and they publicly recognize that all children should have the right to

an education (p.23).^{11,12} For example, in Turkey, Syrian teachers have been allowed to work as public school teachers in order to reach more students; however, Lebanon does not consider this a possible solution to their overwhelmed public education system (p.57).

Impediments of a lack of quality education for refugees are substantial, as education is one element that could help refugees adapt better to the local context by promoting social mobility and an enhanced engagement with their surroundings. In addition, education could provide a way to acclimatize better and become part of the socioeconomic dynamics of the host country in a legal way; however, it appears that the story has taken a different path for many.

Impediments for Host Communities with Refugee Camps

Several host communities face impediments as consequence of incoming refugees. For example, the extended presence of Colombian refugees in Venezuela was always considered a security threat by many locals in light of the connections that these refugees could have had with radical groups and drug trafficking schemes. In a similar case, mistrust of local Venezuelans against recent Cuban refugees increased dramatically in past years as Cuba's proxy war in the country reached palpable levels. Several times, those concerns are entirely valid and connected with the reality, but is not always the case. In Lebanon, despite the initial warm welcome by host families to Syrian refugees, after four years into the conflict, most Lebanese worry about the security threat from refugees, and usually this concern takes precedence over the initial humanitarian nature

^{11.} The Education system in Lebanon has struggled to keep pace with the growing number of Syrian refugees in the country.

^{12.} By the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, there were 495,910 registered Syrians aged 3-18, far more than the 294,494 Lebanese children enrolled in public schools that year.

of the response (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, p.59). In addition, the creation of parallel systems of education, financial assistance, healthcare, and other basic needs by international agencies creates resentment among the poor local population toward both the refugees and the international aid system. In Lebanon, this mistrust of refugees by the local population has led the government to practice exclusionary policies (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, p.39). According to Turner (2015), “Inter-communal tensions have been fueled by rising prices, the increasingly sectarian nature of the Syrian conflict, sectarian clashes within Lebanon, the aid distribution to Syrians in close proximity to poverty-stricken Lebanese communities, and competition for jobs and falling wage rates (ILO, 2014a; International Crisis Group (ICG), 2013; Naufal, 2012; WB, 2013)” (p.390). Lebanese and Syrians agree that tensions are rising between the two communities, which creates violence and friction in some areas. In Naba’a, a suburb mostly comprised of Shia Muslim and Christian Armenians, but also including other faiths, Lebanese fear for their safety and the safety of their families, which in consequence reduces empathy for the Syrian presence. Discontent is growing between the populations, and Syrians are becoming more fearful of further coercive measures (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, pp.60-61)

Impediments of refugee camps for the local population result in the aggravation of challenges by the already disadvantaged communities of refugees, since the host communities’ impediments and burdens tend to take precedence over the dire critical and humanitarian needs of refugees. As a result, the discontent among locals against refugees is just another factor that adds up to the long list of challenges faced by war refugees. In the following section, I present how camps are perceived as a source of social unrest.

How Are Camps Perceived as a Source of Social Unrest?

Certainly, refugee camps are repeatedly seen as incubators of social unrest, violence, and terrorism. It is suggested that this is exacerbated by the bureaucracy of security controls, impeding the creation of social enterprise and dynamism. In a particular case, the fear behind establishing camps and the main reason for the reluctance of the Lebanese government to create these settlements is their experience with Palestinian refugee camps. The Lebanese government is afraid the camps will become similar centers of “radicalization and militarization” (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, p.46). The contextual complexity of refugee camps in Lebanon stems from their traumatic experience, which is reflected in their responses to this crisis. The Palestinian experience has become the “scarecrow” behind the complexity of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, p. 46). The Lebanese government’s refusal to the encampment of Syrian refugees relates to the permanence of Palestinian refugee camps. Turner (2015) notes that Hanafi and Long (2010) stated, “ The 1969 Cairo Accord granted Palestinian camps administrative autonomy and permitted Palestinian factions to launch attacks on Israel from Lebanon” (p.390). In addition, as Turner (2015) notes, Hanafi and Long (2010) stated, “The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was able to build many independent institution within Lebanon, and refugee camps, controlled and governed by armed factions, were at the heart of Palestinians’ projects of nation-building and armed struggle” (p.390). Also, Turner (2015) notes that Knudsen (2009) adds that despite that the Lebanese government repealed the Cairo Accord in 1987, these camps remain an autonomous political center of Palestinian factions and armed groups (p.390).

The conception of considering refugee camps as centers of social unrest is a trend that does not only happen in Lebanon, as it is the case of refugee camps in East Africa, considered centers of terrorism and radicalization for militant groups. In addition, recent unrest among Ivorian refugees on a refugee camp in Italy have proved that these centers have been able to maintain its bad reputation. As well, refugee camps are not only seen as incubators of social unrest and radicalization, but also, they could pose several challenges to host communities that could increase tensions between the refugees and the local population. In this matter, I briefly explain how the creation of parallel systems for camps creates resentment among the local population by overlooking their own impediments, intensified by an unexpected influx of refugees that apply pressure on already weak infrastructure and the socioeconomic apparatus.

Further, I will be exploring some of these issues as they relate specifically to Lebanon and the dilemma of Syrian refugees. It was essential to present how the factors mentioned above serve as a solid base to understand the issues and arguments raised in the presentation and analysis of my data. All these themes presented are issues that seem to be persistent in most refugee camps and local communities around the world; however, these issues take a particular character in Lebanon. Its historical experiences with refugees and contextual sociopolitical forces at work transform the panorama and present many trials that defy qualified approaches by stakeholders in refugee's crisis. In my methodology chapter, I present the empirical methods of data collection that were necessary to capture several of the varying perspectives in a complex topic of increasing international significance.

CHAPTER V

METHODOLOGY

Field research for this thesis project was conducted from June to September of 2016. I conducted interviews with refugees and their families, and obtained information on their most common impediments, including other information they thought was relevant for my project. I also conducted interviews with engaged Lebanese citizens, and some members of the Lebanese-Venezuelan community in Lebanon. Some of the interviewees from the group ‘refugees’ were contacted through personal networking, and some others were identified through local NGOs. All the interviewees from the groups “Lebanese citizens” and “Lebanese-Venezuelans” were identified through my own personal network of acquaintances and through connections with members of the committee of this thesis project. As well, I conducted interviews with local and international humanitarian organizations, and government advisers for parliamentary development. Also, I engaged in an exhaustive process of observation of the livelihoods of Syrian refugees, INGOs and NGOs engagement in the crisis, sectarian tensions, opportunities of access to stakeholders, censorship and self-censorship, political rhetoric, and the perception of the crisis among the population.

The interviews were semi-structured, and I strived to maintain diversity – gender, ethnicity, and background- in the sample. I was able to engage with my subjects in English and also in Arabic, in light of my previous training in Urban Arabic at the Saifi Institute for Arabic Language. The only exception were Lebanese-Venezuelans, whom I engaged with in Spanish. The interviews maintained the same structure with enough similarity to allow me to triangulate the samples’ responses later, and be able to observe

the qualitative consistency. To guarantee the confidentiality and privacy of my subjects, I provided anonymity during the analysis and synthesis of data. I used pseudonyms or members of a group (refugees, Lebanese citizens, Lebanese-Venezuelans, NGOs and INGOs) for publication and presentations.

Interviewees	Class	Gender	Age
Group interview in the settlement of Tamnine el Fawka	Low high levels of poverty	Mixed	Varied. Mostly mid-age 28-35 years old.
NGO and INGO representatives	Middle to Upper Middle Class	Mixed	Mostly mid-age 28-35 years old but also 40-45 years old.
Refugees outside settlements	Low	Male only	Young age from 20 to 28 years old.
Lebanese Interviewees	Low, Upper Middle Class to High	Mixed	Varied
Lebanese-Venezuelans	Upper Middle Class to High	Mixed	Young age from 21-24 years old

Table 1. General composition of my interviewees.

Purposive sampling had the most relevance in the selection of my sample, specifically heterogeneous sampling; this method allowed me to use my knowledge to select subjects. The heterogeneous technique allowed me to capture a comprehensive perspective of the issue, and have a variety of perspectives. In addition, it provided me

with better insights into the crisis by looking at it from different angles (Berg, 2007, pp. 44-45). I used snowball sampling to locate subjects through my acquaintances in Lebanon of Lebanese-Venezuelan background, through connections of members of this thesis committee, and through personal networking in my Arabic language training. Lee (1993) suggests that snowball sampling is good for researchers interested in studying sensitive topics, or difficult to reach populations (quoted from Berg, 2007, p.44).

According to the International Labour Organization, the maximum variation sample, also called a maximum diversity sample or heterogeneous sample, aims to select a sample that is more representative than a random sample. This technique does not focus on selecting samples randomly; instead, it focuses on choosing a diverse sample. The main purpose of this technique is to be comprehensive, and triangulate the different perspectives found during the study (Elder, 2009, p. 7).

Interviews took place in Beirut, Tripoli, Bekaa Valley and Mount Lebanon. I spent multiple days travelling to these locations, and I decided to focus on two isolated settlements in the Beqaa Valley that did not seem to receive much public attention. My other interviews were among refugees who lived outside settlements, in rural and urban areas. My interviewees originated mainly from Aleppo, Raqqa, Homs, and Damascus.

I informed all the interviewees of the purpose of this research, and of my intentions of publishing it in articles, thesis report and presentations through the Public Impact Fellowship by the University of Oregon. Also, I informed all the interviewees that they were not obligated to participate in this research, it was completely voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any time without any consequence. I explained I did not

provide humanitarian services or I was not connected to any NGO, INGO, government entity and political party. However, I explained that bringing some issues and concerns to light might facilitate the work that stakeholders are carrying on the field, and it might collaborate with the discourse of stabilizing the crisis in Lebanon. I conducted an oral consent for each interview. Participants did not receive any material compensation for speaking with me.

I did not conduct any other kind of investigation of quantitative characteristics, however; my findings and conclusions are based on extensive interviews of a minimum duration of 45:00 minutes supplemented by my comprehensive observation and analysis of the situation. I met with representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Nabad for Development, Human Rights Watch, Search for Common Ground, Parliamentary Advisors of Development, and other representatives of Foreign Diplomatic Missions located in Beirut that were engaged with the refugee crisis. I have withheld to identify other organizations in order to avoid putting at risk current projects of humanitarian operations. Also, I have withheld identification of other parties that requested anonymity.

In this research, the word “refugee” refers to anybody over the age of 18, of Syrian origin currently residing in Lebanon who identifies as a refugee. In addition, the word “Lebanese citizen” refers to anybody holding Lebanese citizenship and who is a current resident of Lebanon at the time of this research. The word “Lebanese-Venezuelan” refers to anybody that is a member of the Lebanese diaspora in Venezuela or a mix between Venezuelan-Lebanese origins who hold Venezuelan citizenship and Lebanese citizenship/residence permit, that due to the current situation in the Latin

American country have decided to find new horizons in Lebanon. I strived to use the word “informal settlements” during my research to clarify that these are not a governmental plan, or in any way an official response to the crisis.

CHAPTER VI

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Syrian Refugees: Education, Legal Status, and Labor Force

In this section, I prioritize the issues that were emphasized by my interviewees as the most important. At first sight, when entering the field, it is possible to see a scarce but not absent presence of refugees begging in front of traffic lights and around areas such as Hamra, Achrafieh and Saifi. This includes small children approximately 5-8 years old selling gum, flowers, or water bottles. I was constantly advised by locals to not contribute anything to the “beggars” (as they mentioned) since they were probably victims of exploitation by a local mafia. When I arrived on June 21, 2016 a curfew was put in place recently that prohibited Syrians to be out after 8 P.M. for alleged security reasons. In addition, I encountered a lot of self-censorship and fear among Syrians (mostly those who were in a clandestine situation) to give interviews, as they were afraid that their private information would be published. In other cases, I encountered that some refugees were surprised that I wanted to interview them, while stating, “Why me, my life is shit, all I have done all my life is work and work.” The mistrust from the refugees was completely normal and expected, and in light of rising tensions, several Lebanese were also scared to conduct interviews. Thankfully, having and establishing contacts on the ground were the best ways to obtain interviews, and use a snowball sampling. The country itself seemed to run relatively okay without a president, and I was told by a friend that they do not need one, and it is even in the constitution, “That the country should keep running, even with the absence of a president.”

On the other hand, in many of the Christian areas of Beirut, such as Gemmayze, the heavy rhetoric and xenophobia against Syrian refugees is a rising concern. I witnessed racist and bigoted comments, and in the worst cases, some of the residents of these areas engaged in verbal aggression against Syrian refugees, telling them to go back and how they would never feel pity for them. It is important to point out that Gemmayze is a predominantly Christian area of Beirut, where French and Phoenician identities are emphasized heavily over the Arab identity. I would sometimes find myself in awkward situations while looking for traditional Arabic dishes, to only be told that they only had French patisserie. I found sectarianism very present in many areas of Beirut, for example, in Gemmayze many residents love to emphasize their religious inclination with an immense gold cross on their chest.

During my interviews in Achrafieh, I was amazed by the aggressive rhetoric of a resident that I happened to come across, she was completely angry and one of the things she stated during the interview was: “ I like that Syrians work, but they work in the trash.” I kept listening to her, and she started calling refugees thugs, big thieves that steal everything. According to her, refugees were getting paid less and consuming more, and they were also affecting the economy in Lebanon and damaging public services such as electricity and water. The lady never elaborated on her argument and neither did she provide evidence, just a heavy discriminatory rhetoric. After her statement and desire to “kill them all since they stole all Lebanon,” I decided to thank her for her time and disposition, and proceeded to leave.

The situation on the ground was not the safest; however, the heavy military presence of the Lebanese army gave the impression of safety, and that they were doing

their best. During my first week of fieldwork, some of my recently-met colleagues from other universities doing similar research received a notification from their schools to return and abandon the field in light of the increasing and known threat by Daesh to engage in attacks where foreigners tended to commute (Gemmayze, Mar Makheil, others).

During my time in the field, Daesh carried out an attack against the Christian village of AlQaa, in the Beqaa Valley which is the eastern province of Lebanon that borders with Syria. After these attacks, security and checkpoints were tightened around the country, and the overwhelming risk of a bigger scale attack was always haunting. I conducted most of my research in the Beqaa Valley, with the help of a local NGO. The majority of the people in the area were extremely helpful, and willing to stop their activities to assist one.

Most of my interviewees were from the settlements around the Beqaa Valley in the eastern border with Syria; Mount Lebanon; the city of Beirut; Akkar and Tripoli in Northern Lebanon; and Tyre (Sour) on Southern Lebanon. Perhaps the city where I felt more tension was Tripoli, and the one with less tension seemed to be Tyre (Sour) in Southern Lebanon. I found access to all these places to be relatively easy. However, I was impressed by the stigma placed on Southern Lebanon by many Beirutis, who perhaps have only been there once or twice. Southern Lebanon, an area mainly controlled by Hezbollah, was very well maintained (at least at first sight), peaceful and with people enjoying their meals in restaurants, souks, or relaxing at the beach. It was also highly secured; therefore, the general feeling of safety in Southern Lebanon was palpable, in contrast with Tripoli.

In the unofficial settlements that I visited, in the area of Tamnine el Fawka, I was surprised by the welcoming of the people, despite not having much, they go out of their way to make you feel greeted and welcomed. Even when I was on-route to the Beqaa, everybody was willing to help and provide me with assistance to get to my destination. I was always asked for my nationality, after them noticing my accent in my broken Arabic; however, my nationality was perhaps one of my best tools while trying to make connections, since it was something that was always received with a smile and a sense of kindness by Syrian refugees and Lebanese. I believe the historical ties, friendship and the reciprocal movement of people between these lands and Venezuela was the biggest factor that allowed me to make meaningful connections. In addition, I blended pretty well, which was great at the time of travelling two or three hours from Beirut using public transportation to my destinations. Indeed, I take pride on finding my way around every time with broken Arabic and Google Maps.

I constantly made trips to the area of Tamnine El Fawka, since I established a good relationship with one of the Syrians that was living in that settlement. He welcomed me to his house, and introduced me to his whole family. I was told to be the first foreigner to visit and wonder about them and the settlement, a statement that surprised me. I was told that, since it was a Sunni camp in a Shia area under Hezbollah control, that they were not receiving much attention from the International Community, especially in contrast with areas such as Aarsal in Northern Lebanon. During my trips to this settlement, I received a massive amount of help from the local NGOs. In this settlement, I was told several times that the biggest impediment was to find clean water, in addition to the recent curfew that deterred most of the inhabitants of the settlement to move freely. Also,

UNHCR apparently does provide help with the materials for the tents; however, the residents do not receive any type of allowance or monetary help from the organization. The material and conditions of the tents were dreadful, and indeed not conditioned for the hot summers or chilly winters of Lebanon. I was told by many residents of this settlement that most people and staff from UNHCR that deals with this specific camp are somehow disconnected from the local population, and that the mistreatment to the vulnerable refugees is denigrating. Many refugees mentioned how they see a relationship of colonial style, since several staff members from the UNHCR working with this camp come from a French background. Many of them were accused of acting arrogantly, and as extremely paternalistic against the refugees of this settlement.

The challenges faced by many Syrian refugees in Lebanon are indeed protracted impediments that deter this group of displaced persons from having a more dignified livelihood. In addition, a weak nation-state framework prevents the creation of any significant policy that could improve the current status of Syrian refugees. The current discourse of official governmental actors seems stagnated, and a lack of leadership and planning on this issue might be the reasoning for this procrastination. However, it is important to mention that Lebanon's resources and infrastructure were already going over capacity before Syrians refugees came, which exacerbated most of the already existing problems.

Some of the most common impediments mentioned by refugees included: working permits and legal status, immediate needs (water and food), access to basic services (potable water, transportation, etc), forced marriage, education, discrimination

and adaptation, hospitality, their current economic challenges, and a decreasing freedom of movement.

In the interviews conducted, the need for major aid was mentioned (water and food), and how this makes the work of the international community a bit harder, since they are currently focusing more on development, rather than humanitarian aid. The difficult conditions, requirements and limitations to obtain work and temporary residency permits were impediments emphasized by all interviewees. First, to obtain a temporary residency card is extremely tough, and for those that obtain it, the renewal process is incredibly difficult. To obtain a temporary residency permit, each individual needs a Lebanese sponsor, which costs around 300\$. Therefore, imagine a family of 5 members trying to obtain sponsorship, when refugees make at the most \$500 per month. In addition, some Lebanese have decided to ask for more money, to benefit out of the suffering and desperation of many refugees. In most cases, my interviewees compared this system of 'sponsorship' to the Kafala sponsorship program system in the Gulf States, which creates an underground business for people to engage in exploitation of refugees. Without a residency permit, refugees might be detained at official army checkpoints. In addition, nowadays, basically nobody obtains a work permit, most foreigners and development practitioners of European background come to Lebanon and work illegally for 3 months, leave and come back, and this becomes a cycle. Most foreigners use 'learning Arabic' as an excuse to get through immigration. Recently, several organizations have decided to get rid of foreign workers in light of less funding coming from aid.

Before my field research took place, and during the trip, I made several assumptions of the topic. While I was working on my proposal, I assumed that social cohesion between Lebanese and Syrian was easier than what it actually looks and feels like in the field. The reality is that, this concept of social cohesion between these two groups is very challenging, in particular with older generations. However, according to my field research indicated, it is sustainable and possible with younger generations, as they tend to see each other with better eyes. In addition, I made the assumption of Daesh (formerly ISIS) having a bigger role and posing a bigger and constant threat to the country as the media tends to show; however, their presence and actual menace has been reduced considerably that nobody seems to be worried much about them. I also had the assumption of Hezbollah as being a party of mercenaries; however, on the field it was more than an armed group. After encountering them and being in their territory, I came out with the view that they were actually more a political/militant group/party that provided several social services to numerous Lebanese, and the neighborhoods and areas under their control were most of the time well taken care of. In addition, I learned their fighting focuses more on an existential battle for the Shias, for the Lebanese state, and for them both as a political party and as a religious group in Lebanon.

Several refugees mentioned the negative attitude adopted by staff members of international organizations. This issue was not found in my literature review; however, I did not find it surprising, since most INGOs in Lebanon (were) mostly comprised of foreigners with little understanding of the population at risk. However, recent changes in the Lebanese policies now require these organizations to hire a least an 80% Lebanese staff. However, one my interviewees from Tammine el Fawka mentioned that staff from

INGOs, making particular reference to UNHCR, do not seem to be connected enough with Syrians, and the services they provided are of low quality. The interviewee mentions that the previous French colonial rule, and the fact that several staff members of this INGO are French, who behave as being ‘superior’ than the refugees, proves that many might still see Lebanese and Syrians as their subordinates. As a result, refugees complain and do notice how these past and current power-roles might play on the ground.

It is possible that many refugees perceive this issue with a notion of post-colonialism/neo-colonialism, with several paternalistic and bad treatment characteristics of INGO’s staff towards refugees. Truly, this suggestion goes against their public discourse and how it does play into our perception of their role in the crisis. In addition, there are varying perspectives among stakeholders, with different public discourses, which in turn shapes the international perception of their actions on the ground. I elaborate more on this idea at the end of this analysis.

Some of the most common impediments I found are consistent with the impediments presented in my literature review, from uncovered basic needs, difficulty obtaining work and residency permits, discrimination and harassment, lack of freedom of movement, to access to an education with no real value in the job market. Other challenges that I found in the field were a result of recent measures implemented by Lebanese authorities, such as the curfew. “Refugees are often victims of detention, repatriation and restrictions on their freedom of movement” (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, p.39), which agrees with my findings on recent curfews and policies that limit the refugees’ freedom of movement. Surely, several policies of the Lebanese authorities aggravate the impediments that many low skilled Syrians might face in Lebanon, and the

current state of deadlock on the Syrian refugees' legal status makes the crisis unsustainable. It seems that the government is pursuing this policy of deadlock to motivate refugees to find risky ways to relocate to another country, or promote their return to Syria; their undocumented status does not allow them to have access to legal ways of relocation. This also is consistent with the arguments presented in by UN HABITAT and AUB (2015), that coercive methods are used to hinder social integration and encourage the return of these refugees to Syria (p.39). In addition, in agreement with Human Rights Watch (2016), "it is a cycle of impediments, and the majority of them are the direct consequence of the inability to obtain these permits" (p.42), I believe every challenge has its roots on the inability of refugees to normalize their legal status.

Education

My interviewees spend most of our interview time discussing their impediments to access education, and its future implications, not only for Syria, but for Lebanon as well. A Syrian refugee, stated that surely education is good, but the problem is about what people 'could do' with that education. People are not given certificates for the education being provided in settlements, and, therefore, it has no value in the real world. The Lebanese government does not provide a certificate even if the refugees have access to public schools. The same interviewee mentioned that these educational programs were being carried out just because it was good for the displaced population to keep their minds running. However, this education cannot be taken anywhere, refugees cannot become hired; therefore there is no real benefit. I found that refugees do have access to public schools, but they cannot come in the morning since Lebanese students are there, resulting in the creation of a second shift for Syrian students. Syrian students come and

leave at night, creating problems with transportation and freedom of movement (especially after the imposed curfews). In addition, it was mentioned that the Lebanese curriculum presents a considerable challenge for many refugees, since it is taught in French and English, in contrast to the Syrian curriculum which is only in Arabic. Therefore, if an individual is a Syrian student, and he/she has been taught in Syria for 3-4 years and then suddenly they are forced to leave, and start learning something in a language they are not fully familiar with, then that creates major problems. Certainly, Syrians have access to public schools, but now the following question would be, what kind of access? They might have access, but that access is useless if Syrians cannot understand what they are being taught. Additionally, teachers are not being paid enough, and this becomes a cycle of never-ending problems.

Another Syrian refugee mentioned that education was very important. The first three years, his children registered in Lebanese private schools for 2-3 years, but at the end, they discovered that they would not obtain a certificate, “so it was a big shock for them.” The interviewee believes that “a certificate will help refugees settle better, and at the end it will be beneficial for Lebanese society.” In addition, for him, “Syrians are good, the society is a good society. I know a lot of people have misconceptions, but for me the most important thing is the education for children. Because if the children do not have education, what will they do in the future?”

Several of my interviewees were highly educated individuals, some studying engineering or pharmacology back in Syria. In Lebanon, they have no other option than to work for low skilled jobs and settle for hard labor. In these cases, they might work from 9:00am to 12:00am and make only \$500 a month. \$500 in Lebanon could be

washed away easily just by paying a monthly rent in an overpriced and undersupplied apartment in Hamra or Achrafieh. However, a lot of Syrian refugees have decided to take action and help their fellow citizens, and serve as volunteers in NGOs to help and contribute to the cause.

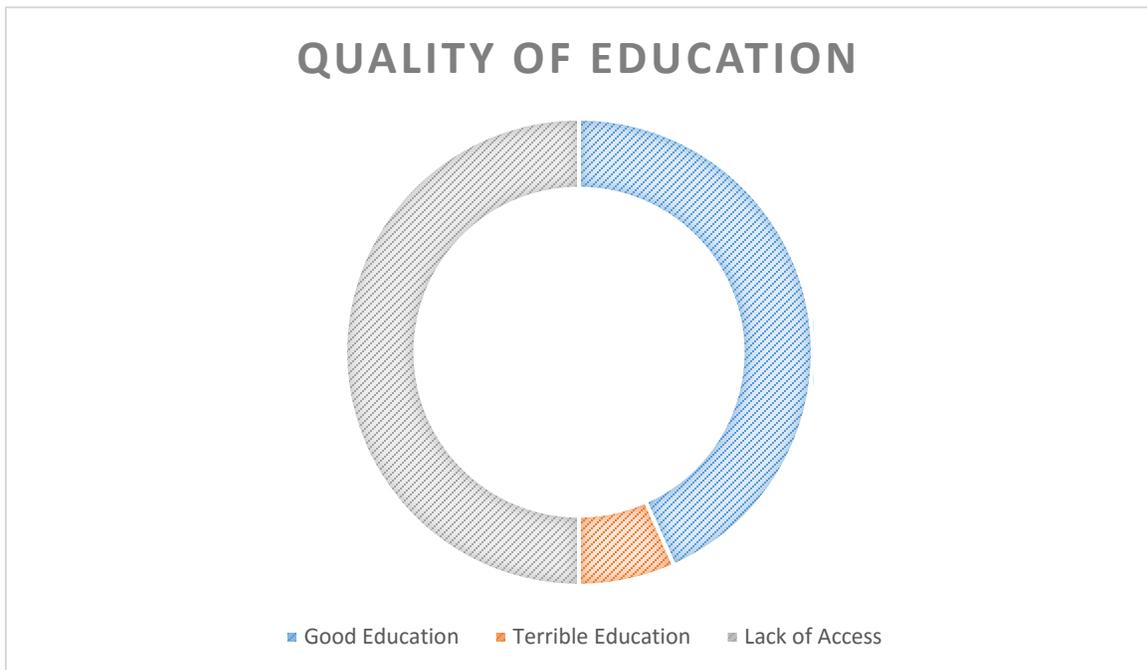


Figure 4. Twelve interviewees agreed that education was probably good, but access to it was limited and without no real value. Three interviewees said the quality of education is terrible.

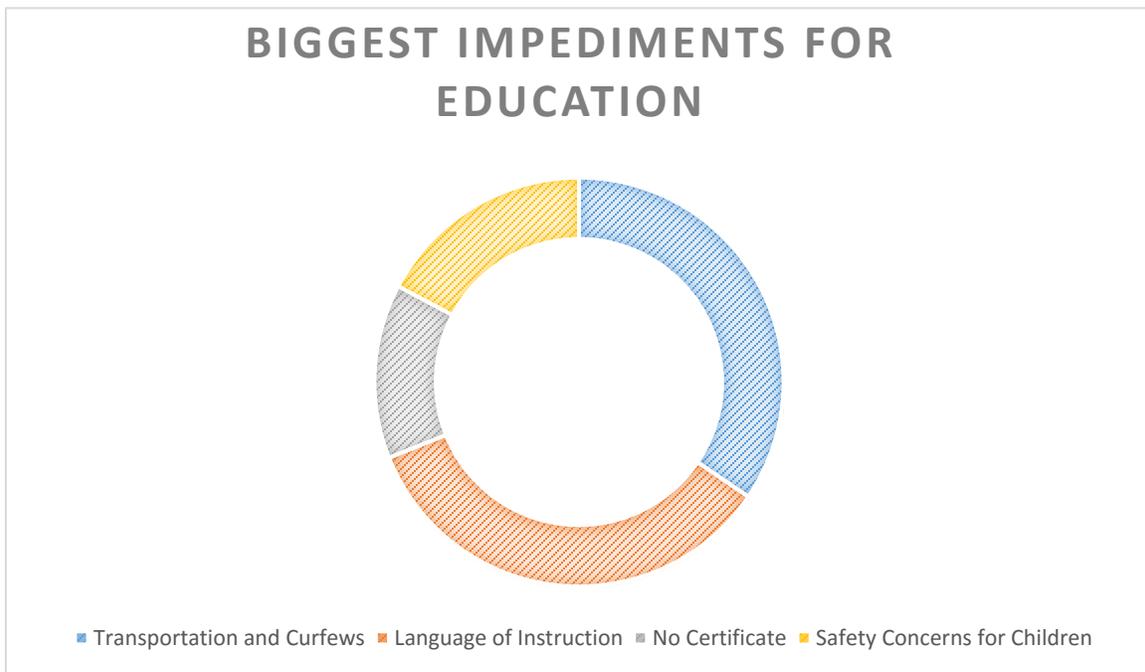


Figure 5. Among twelve interviews, the most prevalent issues were Language of Instruction, Transportation and Curfews, in addition to Safety Concerns and No Certificate.

There is a variety of obstacles that limit the type of access that refugees have to education in Lebanon. From the language of instruction, lack of quality education, the cost of transportation, the safety of children returning from schools after dark, to lack of support for refugee children (Human Rights Watch, 2016, p.29).

I believe education is extremely important so that new generations of Syrian children are not left behind and do not become a lost generation, and have the opportunity to rebuild their country in the future. Also, I believe insufficient international aid by international organizations to help Lebanon cope with the new necessities affects the type of access that Syrian refugees have to education. In addition, the lack of compliance by Lebanese schools, and the lack of leadership by Lebanese authorities to enforce their current policies on education leaves many refugees without the opportunity to obtain

access to more dignified lives. Perhaps, the creation of a vocational certificate program such as carpentry, plumber, electricity and other hard-skills could help refugees find more accessible work post-study. According to one of the interviewees “The quality of education is terrible, and paying for transportation is a struggle.” Some mentioned that for them there is no way to cope with all these challenges, just prayer.

Legal Status

One of my interviewees mentioned that child marriage has become the norm among poor families of incoming Syrian refugees, who decide to marry their daughters to Lebanese men in order to help the family and normalize their legal status. Normally the girls are as young as 13 or 14. In addition, discrimination and tensions between Syrians and Lebanese are rising. Currently, recent curfews after 8pm forbids Syrians’ freedom of movement. One of my interviewees of Syrian and Armenian background stated “If they (Syrians) are walking on the street, they might get beaten up, humiliated, and IF you have documentation (legal status), you will only get beaten. If you do not, you will get beaten and taken to jail.” If refugees are registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Lebanese state has no right to deport them; but if they are not registered, then refugees would normally get deported and sent back to the war. It was mentioned by the same interviewee, that after the Daesh attack on the AlQaa village, it was automatically blamed on Syrians, and “they (Lebanese) always blame the weaker link.” In addition, he mentioned that a lot of issues now in Lebanon are being blamed on Syrians, even issues that existed before (labor, deteriorating basic services). According to him, for refugees there is not a specific way of coping with this crisis; they only pray that they will never get stopped at a checkpoint.

The Syrian refugees' unclear status as migrants makes it very difficult for anybody to help and provide assistance. One of my Syrian interviewees, stated "The problem is that, if they are given status as refugees then there would be obligations from part of the Lebanese government, and that government is not even able to provide for its own citizens." For organizations to be able to help a migrant fully, my interviewee mentioned that they need to be given some type of status. But, he believes that it will never happen in Lebanon, since they do not want the same that happened with the Palestinians in the past. According to the same interviewee:

No way, the history has a huge role on the perception and response. This is why when you mention integration there is fear, and when you mention settlements, there is fear. Also, the presence of Syrians in Lebanon, the way Syrians treated Lebanese, the way Syrians were imposing certain things in Lebanon, there are a lot of bloody memories from that.

According to the same interviewee, the result today is a bitter position from the Lebanese towards Syrian refugees. A lot of Lebanese are actually happy about the Syrian war, and many believe that Syrians deserve it. It is harsh, but it is the memories and the history of Syria's previous intervention in Lebanon.

Also, in the next interview with a refugee from Tripoli, in Northern Lebanon, believes that discrimination is heavy, but he mentioned:

People as refugee, they have to show a good image about themselves in this new society. When you do that, you can adapt to the new conditions. But at first, initially, you will suffer from discrimination. You have to be smart enough to deal with this problem, to find solutions, to find a job and acclimatize to this new society. You have to have determination, it is very important.

Another interviewee in Northern Lebanon, a refugee from Akkar, mentioned how he had applied for resettlement in a different country two times with the UNHCR, but it

has not worked out for him. This type of story was challenging to hear, as I was unable to help in significant way. I was asked many times for help to leave Lebanon, and get to Canada or the US legally. Sometimes, I would do my best to provide some assistance and guidance, but more realistically, could only provide empathy.

Initially, most refugees thought that the crisis would only be for a short period of time. That perception among refugees of the crisis has been changed over the past six years. A refugee mentioned how he wanted the crisis to be done, but this will not happen fast and that, especially now, a lot of people started living in different places. He stated that in Lebanon, many people want to go back because nobody feels comfortable there, most of them do not have any papers and they are not welcomed. In other countries such as Turkey, people are good over there, everything is provided for them, and it is easier for refugees to obtain legal documentation; therefore, they feel better. In Jordan as well, Syrians are more comfortable than in Lebanon. My interviewee, a refugee stated “ I want the war to stop, for people to start thinking and planning about going back, and the rebuilding process, which might take 10-15 years for things to start rolling. It is hard to predict how long it is going to be.” The social infrastructure and the economy are damaged, on top of the trauma that needs to be addressed. In another interview, a refugee in the Beqaa Valley described his perception as “nothing is clear, destruction, darkness.”

During another interview, I was told this crisis will take a long time to resolve. In addition, according to this interviewee, “Syrians must accept the variety in their society and live with each other, and come together to finish the crisis. Otherwise, everything will keep escalating and it will never end. I hope other countries can help Syrians solve this crisis, in any way.”

Lastly, in another interview in the Beqaa Valley, a refugee mentioned that the treatment of some Lebanese against them is bad, and discrimination is rising. In addition, job opportunities are precarious, especially for Syrians with university degrees. The quality of education is terrible, and paying for transportation is a struggle. My interviewee states, “Without education you get criminals, terrorist. Syrians cannot do anything, we are powerless. ” The interviewee was afraid their situation could become the same as the Palestinians. As well, he was afraid that if he returns to Syria, he will not be able to work. Finally, my interviewee emphasized that most international NGOs were not connected enough with Syrian refugees. He stressed the fact that the treatment and services they received from these INGOs were bad.



Figure 6. For eleven interviewees the main concern is their legal status, such as work permits and residence permits. Only two responded ‘less concerned’. The inability of most refugees to solve their legal status hampers them from registering in schools, attaining legal employment, freedom of movement, and securing decent livelihoods.



Figure 7. Implications of a *legal limbo* for Refugees

Labor Force

I have briefly discussed how the presence of refugees in Lebanon might lead to some dividends and benefit the economy and society of Lebanon.

Several Syrian refugees mentioned how the refugees in general are very beneficial to the Lebanese economy, since a lot of Syrians came to Lebanon with capital to spend. They rented houses, and invested in the Lebanese economy. The NGOs or INGOs pay for supplies to Lebanese contractors and companies. These organizations rent buildings, cars, and other appliances from the Lebanese market. In addition, UNHCR helps fund and invest in Lebanon’s public schools and hospitals. UNHCR also provides many registered

refugees with a “blue card,” some type of allowance, which contains money to buy food from Lebanese suppliers and farmers. Most of the refugee interviewees agreed that the Syrian presence in Lebanon definitively leads to some dividends for the country. One stated:

It definitely will and it has, and that is something not many people like to acknowledge. When talking about the different components of the Syrian society, many of them came to Lebanon with a lot of money, other Syrians payed a huge amount of money as rent and hotel reservation. They are absolutely contributing to the economy, ESPECIALLY with the millions of dollars of aid coming into this country, millions of dollars which are being paid to Lebanese in salaries working for all these NGOs and INGOs, and particularly now that these organizations have to have at least 80% of Lebanese employees and only 20% foreigners. Millions of dollars go to basic suppliers that provide for these organizations. I do not understand why people keep complaining, it is a small country with limited resources indeed, and it is difficult for a country of 4 million to host almost 2 million refugees, but there have been several benefits for Lebanon, and there have been many problems as well.

In addition, the same interviewee tackled the issue of government leadership, since many Lebanese complain about Syrians taking their jobs. However, according to him, if the state really desired Lebanese to obtain jobs and get paid, then the state should enforce their law accordingly on Lebanese employers who are hiring Syrians for lower wages. He believes this issue needs to be regulated, and Syrians should be able to work as foreigners, with legal documentation. But considering the inaptitude from the current administration, organizations and local NGOs have had to take the lead, since every problem seems to go back to the government. Whenever organizations have to fill the gap of the Lebanese government, then that is worrisome. According to the same interviewee “in the government there is no vision, no leadership, and politicians always divert to refugees. Of course there are damages to the services and infrastructure for the amount of

people coming in, but at the same time there is a lot of money coming in to maintain all these services.”

During my interviews, when addressing the question on the capacity of Lebanon to absorb and provide employment to new incoming migrants, most of my interviewees were not entirely sure. However, one my interviewees believes that there is a lot of entrepreneurial work happening, which is good for everyone. Not only construction, but other helpful initiatives such as communal kitchens and other projects. On the other hand, one of my interviewees from Tripoli believes that the Lebanese labor market is not able to do this, and he recommended that Lebanon needs help from the international community in accomplishing this task. “There is 2 million refugees, so almost half of the Lebanese people. They have to be smart to deal with it. Lebanon might need foreign aid to deal with this problem.”

According to the majority of my interviews, Syrians are surely beneficial to the Lebanese economy since they came with capital, they rent houses, and keep investing in the Lebanese economy. There is also a massive amount of aid coming into the country to respond to the crisis, and most international organizations use Lebanese contractors and supplies for their projects. As well, most international organizations also invest in Lebanese infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals, which, in the end, benefits both refugees and Lebanese. Interviewees suggest that the presence of Syrian refugees could lead to some dividends and benefit the Lebanese economy and society, and Lebanon is counting on the development industry to achieve this. My findings have several parallels with those of UN HABITAT and AUB (2015), that notes that the influx of Syrian labor force could benefit the country’s productive power that would further economic

development, and it would improve social cohesion between host communities and refugees. Also, the same study suggests that Syrians prefer to be part of urban settings, and they believe that their beneficial economical input should be acknowledged since they are contributing to the development of the country (pp.64-65).

The presence of refugees has certainly provided Lebanon with great amounts of international aid and assistance, and it has given a bit of a boost to its economy. A 2.4% GDP increase in Lebanon, where 1.6% comes from humanitarian aid (International Monetary Fund, 2015, P.6 and UNDP-UNHRC, 2015).¹³ There are several development and entrepreneurial projects being developed because of the refugee crisis, and most of these projects are benefiting Lebanese people as well. Many Lebanese tend to blame Syrians and use them as scapegoats; however, I believe the government has fallen short in taking a greater position of leadership in dealing with the crisis, and certain organizations have to fill the gap. Many of the inactions resulting from the lack of leadership by the government result in many challenges and issues being officially unattended, resulting in a protracted long list of matters that all seem to go back to the state. The majority of the economic elite capitalizes on low-wage Syrian labor, and the policies of the state have been planned accordingly. However, these measures have taken a toll on the less privileged nationals and Syrian refugees. As mentioned previously by Turner (2015), “Syrians in Lebanon, regardless of when they entered the country, could now simultaneously be thought of as refugees and members of the informal labor force”

¹³. As for the broader macroeconomic impact of the crisis, a recent UNDP study estimated the multiplier associated with humanitarian aid at around 1.6. Thus, while the (net) impact of the crisis has clearly been negative, aid inflows in 2014 added 1.3 percent to overall GDP growth.

(p. 398). In addition, the policies of non-encampment is a method through which the state creates the required scenario for the exploitation of the labor force (p.399).

One of the interviewees states, “In the government there is no vision, no leadership, and politicians always divert to refugees. Of course there are damages to the services and infrastructure for the amount of people coming in, but at the same time there is a lot of money coming in to maintain all these services.” If the Lebanese government directed its efforts to work with organizations in addressing many of the issues of the crisis, and decided to take a bigger role, then the possibilities of social and economic development for Lebanese and refugees could be substantial. I believe if the new Lebanese leadership of Michel Aoun decides to take a new approach on this issue, then the prospects of sustainable development for Lebanon would look brighter. As long as there is aid coming in, the government could find a way to allocate this aid accordingly and offer the Lebanese people a way to build capacity while helping refugees.

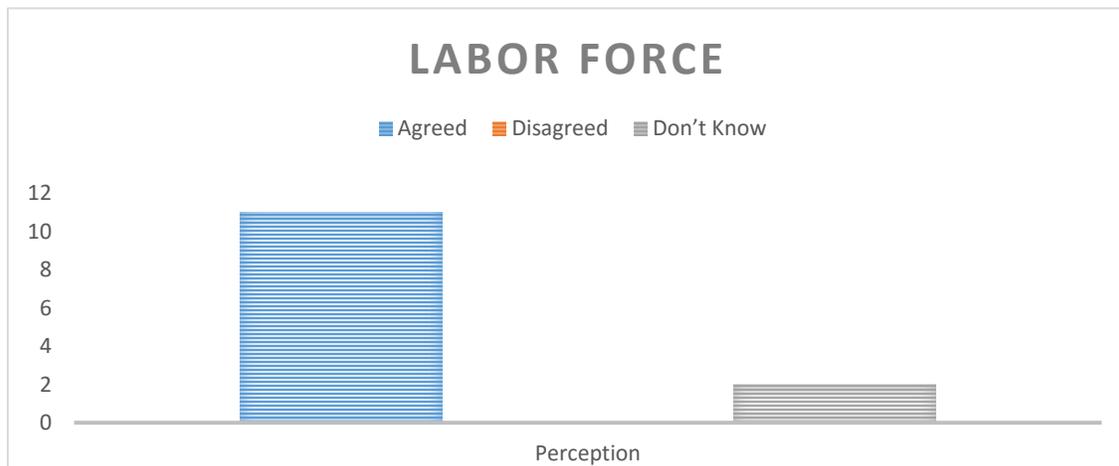


Figure 8. For eleven Syrian refugees, they all agreed that the temporal presence has and will lead to some dividends and benefits to the economy and society of Lebanon. One answered ‘don’t know’.

Lebanese Citizens Perception Overview

During the second phase of my interviewing process, I interviewed Lebanese citizens, including Lebanese-Venezuelans. Many Lebanese had similar perspectives on the crisis. One of my interviewees, a student at the American University of Beirut of Lebanese-Venezuelan ancestry, believed that everybody was being affected by the refugee crisis, no matter their nationality. However, for my interviewee, being part of the elite group at AUB; the crisis affected him less. My interviewee emphasized that people from small towns are the most affected, increasing rent prices and inflation are major concerns due to higher levels of consumerism and demand. The competition for jobs has increased, except in medicine and academia, which are jobs that refugees have no access to.

My interviewee stated (translated from Spanish), “In such a small country like Lebanon, and with so many issues, the best is to avoid racism and discrimination. Zero discrimination against Syrians, and whenever it is possible to help, do help. Personally, my interests are centered in Venezuela and not in Lebanon, but as a resident of Lebanon I see myself obliged to do something.” My interviewee suggested how because of this crisis, the Lebanese are becoming more and more divided, since the demographics are changing significantly. “You have the Catholics and Shia who are against having so many Sunnis in Lebanon for example. Second, the radical change in demographics creates more tension and discrimination because of the considerable number of refugees that Lebanon is currently hosting.” My interviewee also mentioned how in the Issam Fares Institute of the American University of Beirut several investigations are being

carried out, and it has been found that in the poorest areas of Lebanon, resentment against Syrians is higher. This resentment is the consequence of Syrians receiving monetary aid, in contrast to poor Lebanese who do not receive any type of assistance. Several Lebanese have even tried to make others believe they are Syrians, in order to escape to Europe and obtain some kind of benefit out of the situation.

My interviewee reminded me how, in 1948, there was the Palestinian refugee crisis, and how it was a very similar situation, and how the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1990 is actually attributed to the presence of Palestinians refugees by many Lebanese. He said, there are armed conflicts in Aarsal and Akkar, in Northern Lebanon, precisely due to the high number of refugees in these areas. Indeed, the presence of Syrian refugees can bring dividends to Lebanon, but only if the government works toward that goal. However, today, according to my interviewee, many Lebanese people wonder, “if Lebanon would not have done it, then who else? (The act of receiving refugees freely without almost any kind of control), because Jordan closed its borders, Turkey closed its borders, and Lebanon is the only one that still accepts refugees despite being such a small country. If the government sets up a specific strategy in order for the refugee crisis to produce some dividends for Lebanon, then of course it is possible for Lebanon to receive some type of benefits. There are many ways to generate profits, such as the 2.4% GDP increase in Lebanon, where 1.6% comes from humanitarian aid (International Monetary Fund, 2015, P.6 and UNDP-UNHRC, 2015). My interviewee gave Jordan as an example, a country with a clear strategy in front of the crisis, where the state is generating about 600\$ per refugee; however, their system of encampment is completely different from that of “free” movement in Lebanon. According to my interviewee, recent studies have found

that even Syria is generating profits out of all the humanitarian aid and all the resources that come from INGOs, and other organizations that have to deal with the Syrian government.

But despite the fact that it is possible to generate profits, my interviewee mentioned that the Lebanese labor market is in no way able to absorb incoming migrants. He mentioned how many of his friends graduate and decide to leave for the Gulf Countries, because there are not enough opportunities in Lebanon. Indeed salaries are too low compared to the monthly average expenses in Lebanon. The minimum monthly salary is \$500, and a room in Hamra (west Beirut) can cost up to \$800 a month. The Lebanese economy does not have the capacity to provide jobs for its own citizens, leaving zero chances for refugees. The economy is damaged, but if the current administration decides to direct all the profit to create more jobs and opportunities, then the economy could have a slight chance of improving. My interviewee stressed the lack of leadership as one the biggest issues in Lebanon, and how it fails to deal with every societal or economic issue.

In addition, my interviewee believes that the Lebanese context is very complex if you compare it with other countries. He believes that every government and nation-state must protect itself in order to find balance and protect its fellow citizens. He believes that the Lebanese government has been proactive in prioritizing its citizens, including AUB, where the number of Syrians who can receive employment is limited, in light of government regulations. Indeed, the Lebanese context makes everything harder for refugees, and the same happened to the Palestinians without legal documentation or the right to own property. But that is the Lebanese system, and it is a system with little hopes

of changing significantly. Another interviewee was a Lebanese NGO worker, from Mount Lebanon, who works with the Lebanese Red Cross and Search for Common Ground. In this case, my interviewee mentioned that the crisis does not really affect him, though, he is trying his best to improve the refugees' livelihoods and help them generally. He believes that after five years, the Lebanese government needs to come with a solid and clear solution to avoid the Syrian refugees' dilemma becoming more like the Palestinian crisis. However, unlike Palestinians, Syrians still have hope to return home. According to my interviewee, the administration in Lebanon is just postponing any reform on refugees as far possible until the situation improves in Syria, so the refugees can just go back.

My interviewee from AUB considers that the education provided in settlements is negative in a certain way since they do not receive any certificate that provides affidavit of that education that could improve their social mobility. However, my interviewee mentioned how vocational education (carpentry, mechanics, builder, plumber, etc.) is positive even though it does not provide a certificate, because people are being taught real-life skills that are useful in the labor market.

My interviewee also mentioned how the education provided in settlements is definitely not enough for children. He believes that Syrian children should have more opportunities in this matter, and they should be able to obtain certificates just as the Lebanese do.

There are broader historical factors that contribute to the mass movement of Syrian refugees to Lebanon, in addition to the intensity of the conflict. Lebanon and Syria

have a historical association, which has resulted in the penetrable characteristics of the border between the two countries (Dionigi, 2016, pp.30-32). Indeed, the connection between the two countries goes beyond that of the current conflict. It was not very difficult to find the same argument on the ground, Mr. Jean Nicolas Bauze from UNCHR agrees:

When it comes to civilians, there has always been a lot of interaction between both Lebanese and Syrians. They were the same country, and there has always been a lot of contact of nomadic people moving back and forth, including intermarriages between Syrians and Lebanese. The border between the two countries is not as strict, when the crisis started in March 2011, several Lebanese people really welcomed Syrian refugees. During the 2006 war, a number of Lebanese took refuge in Syria, and it has been a tradition of people taking refuge in one side or the other. When the crisis started, the Lebanese knew who was coming, so they accepted them like family and accepted them at home. When the crisis started and unfold in Syria and more refugees started coming, the hosting capacity of the Lebanese population started to diminish. Still, it is easy to find a lot of generosity today from the Lebanese people. Lebanese are totally aware that people are fleeing a conflict, they have no choice, they are here because it is the only way of being safe, and Lebanese are aware of this. But it is also a part of being welcoming.

I believe that this might be one of the reasons why many Syrian refugees choose Lebanon, instead of any other neighboring countries such as Jordan or Turkey, or simply because it is easier to get into Lebanon. The current perception among Lebanese varies depending on their religious group and other affiliations. Heavy rhetoric against refugees is very common in Christian areas. The story changes as you move to Muslim areas. During my interviews, I found that because of this crisis, the Lebanese are becoming more and more divided, since the demographics are changing significantly. According to Mr. Bauze, for the most part, most Lebanese are aware of the severity of the conflict, and despite the heavy rhetoric some tend to use, some are still willing to help and provide assistance. However, tensions and sectarianism are at very-high levels, which could be

dangerous for the future of Lebanon. The role that the Lebanese community is playing is significant, but now certainly the concerns of terrorism and Daesh are taking precedence over the humanitarian character of the crisis. The political stalemate had many on edge, wondering ‘what was going to happen next;’ however, the majority of the people I met were unpreoccupied and often wondering “The government, who needs them? We are so used to doing everything by ourselves.” This is one of the coping and resilient strategies that many Lebanese have applied.

The perception among Lebanese changes depending on the area. In Shia areas, people are mostly against and terrified of refugees, in Christian areas, they are a bit afraid; but in Sunni areas, they are not so afraid. This comes due to the fact that the majority of the refugees are members of the Sunni community, changing the demographics rapidly and making other communities feel threatened. Many see this influx as a wave against the sectarian balance among religious communities that exists in the country.

Relationship between Syrian Refugees and Lebanese Citizens

Syrian Refugees

Despite several organizations working on social cohesion, the reality on the ground remains severe. I believe the most common response I was receiving when I asked refugees and Lebanese for the possibility of bringing both of them together for cohesive initiatives, was that neither of them were at the same level to make this work. One of my interviewees, a refugee from Raqqa, Syria, who resided in one the unofficial settlements I visited, stated, “It is not a suitable time to ask such questions. You have to

give dignity to Syrians first. It is necessary to put Lebanese and Syrians at the same level before talking about social cohesion.” In his case, as many other Syrians, they did not choose to go to Lebanon, but he mentioned that if he was given the choice to either go to Jordan or Turkey, he would not do it, since he feels more comfortable in Lebanon.

Another interviewee from Akkar, living in Northern Lebanon, looked at me with astonishment when I asked the question about Syrians and Lebanese coming together, and he laughed when I mentioned social cohesion. He believed it is a dream, but he thinks that the most important thing that can create social cohesion between Syrians and Lebanese is education and the option to have them both together in schools. He said, “When you put them together from an early age, they will build friendships and leave prejudices behind. Also, it is important to create projects that bring Lebanese and Syrians together.” He explained to me that this will allow Lebanese children to start building friendships with Syrian children, and they will begin to visit each other, not only the children, but also the parents. When I questioned my interviewee as to why he chose Lebanon, he answered that it was because he has relatives in Akkar. In addition, he mentioned that, “in each society you find good people and bad people, at first, when the number of refugees was low, it was a very good hospitality, but later when very large numbers came, it caused so many problems for them (the Lebanese). Nevertheless, they have also benefitted from this influx, without a doubt, so it is bad and good at the same time. ”

Another interviewee, an INGO worker from Beirut who left Syria in 2012, believes that the most important thing now should be about deescalating the situation, and a lot of the time the approach is basically finding a common interest between both parties

(Syrians and Lebanese). He provides a good example, “In the trash crisis, which affected everyone, many Lebanese and Syrians worked together to recycle and clean the streets. This issue was not about ‘You are Lebanese, and I am Syrian’, but it was about ‘We both live in this neighborhood’ and they all wanted their place clean. Therefore, he suggests that finding the common interest is very important. In addition, he mentioned that it is easier to work with youth, since they have not seen or experienced the Civil War or what Syrians did in Lebanon. For him, it is crucial to change attitudes before changing the way people think. He states:

The attitude here is them (Syrians and Lebanese) not coming together, them not meeting. So, if you (the INGO/NGO), change that attitude by bringing them together, by finding a common interest, where they cannot think about those prejudgments and stereotypes, and just be there and play football together. The main idea is changing attitudes, and then changing behavior and this will later change their mindset.

His story was a bit different than most of my interviewees. He had been in Lebanon in 2013 and 2014. He left in 2014, and he was not able to come back in since the laws changed. Later, he managed to get back to Lebanon, but was deported, then he left to Turkey and then to Armenia, where he was offered a job opportunity to go back to Lebanon. He returned to Lebanon to work with refugees, which he cares about so much. He stresses that he loves the region, and that he considers himself lucky for having dual citizenship (Armenian and Syrian), since if he only had Syrian citizenship, he would not have been able to get back to Lebanon. He believes that in general, empathy is interchangeable: if you are Sunni, people will sympathize with you because of what is happening to Sunnis in Syria, and if you are Shia, people will sympathize because of what rebels/terrorists are doing to you in Syria. It is very complicated, but generally,

Syrians are not welcomed, no matter their religious affiliation. They are not respected. You might be discriminated against even if your Arabic accent is different. He pointed out to me that I should interview more people and get a different perspective, outside of the liberal perspective of NGO workers, which I was lucky to do later during my field research.

Lebanese Citizens

In another interview, a Lebanese NGO worker from Mount Lebanon, believed that it would impossible to find a solution for Syrians to live in Lebanon with Lebanese people:

The Lebanese think that they should have all the rights, and take the first place and opportunity in everything, and that is the same problem with the Palestinians, until now they do not have full rights, they cannot buy a house, they cannot buy anything, they have to put the house at the name of a Lebanese person. I do not think Syrians will stay in Lebanon and be equal and the conflict will be resolved. The solution is when the conflict in Syria resolves, there is NO solution in Lebanon, the solution is in Syria.

My interviewee states that some Lebanese are okay with Syrians and they like them, but some other think that Syrians are a problem, and that they should not be living in Lebanon. According to him, most Lebanese do not like the presence of Syrians, since they are taking jobs and opportunities. And most Lebanese believe that those jobs and opportunities should be for them since it is their country. My interviewee has been working with children for about nine years, and believes that the past year was very tough and probably the most difficult in his life and work with children. He believes that this was probably because he started working with refugee children, who tend to be a bit different, perhaps not very polite and a bit aggressive, and they do not act like children

should act as consequence of the war. He stated that he has been able to see some changes through the work he does. He mentioned that today, the game that children are playing in Syria before coming to Lebanon is that of 'little armies' (Free Syrian Army vs. Government Army), using stones as their weapon to throw against each other. He believes that this is surely the result of war, but that it can be solved. My interviewee has been changing the way this game works, and making children use the stones as wheels instead. It is impossible to change everything directly; there is the need to be very patient with children and work little by little. He thinks there is not a Syrian or a Lebanese way to solve the crisis; he focuses on helping children no matter what, because he has also been through a tough childhood, a reason why he works to improve the lives of these children. My interviewee quoted Ghandi "You can stop racism if you simply do not think about it," referring to the common tagging among residents and social tensions between Syrians and Lebanese.

In another interview, an AUB student of International Studies and Political Science of Lebanese-Venezuelan heritage believes that social cohesion in this case is very difficult. However, he mentioned that the discourse of dialogue has been happening for a while now, though many Lebanese still feel some resentment for the Syrian military presence in Lebanon until 2005. Second, he mentions that the religion of most refugees plays a big role on social cohesion, since Lebanon is a sectarian country, and absorbing this amount of refugees would mean a change in demographics. He believes that Syrians and Lebanese are basically the same people, and they have almost the same culture. The problem is as he sees it due to the power that religion has in the country, and on the history between the two countries. Social cohesion is very difficult, since there are many

divisions and perspectives on the refugee crisis. He stated, “If Lebanon was not stable in 2006, 2007, or 2008, when we did not have any Syrian refugee crisis, imagine how it is now with all these developments.” My interviewee, is a son of immigrants, who emigrated to Venezuela in the massive diaspora that moved to Latin America during the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1990. I tried to draw some parallels between the forced movement of Syrian refugees and Lebanese, as a result of war, and he believes that language was the hardest obstacle for their parents; however, that obstacle is not existent with Syrians in Lebanon. Furthermore, becoming used to the new society is always a challenge, even for himself, whose parents are Lebanese, mentioned that it was hard for him to adapt to Lebanon, and when the resources are not enough it becomes even harder.

Stakeholders:

Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch’s representative believes that social cohesion it is not possible until Lebanese and Syrians are on par.

UNHCR

Mr. Bauze, from UNHCR, states that, people complain a lot about refugees. If you speak to Christians, they are afraid. If you speak to Sunnis, they are bit less afraid, but if you speak to Shias, they are more afraid. In Beirut, they are more afraid, even if they do not see the refugees as much. On the other hand, in the countryside, people said that Syrians have been there for 10 years, but now they just brought their families because of the conflict, so nothing is different since refugees are actually people that they have been working with. There is still a lot of sympathy from Lebanese to Syrians, since

there is a considerable amount of debt being contracted by Syrians from Lebanese who still provide them with monetary loans. There might be some abuse or exploitation, but he suggests that nobody is dying from hunger, additionally, when refugees are evicted or kicked out from their house, in 3 or 4 days they find a new house. Children have also not been abandoned. It is not a great situation, but there is still a lot of welcoming and empathy from Lebanese towards Syrians.

Adviser for Lebanese Parliamentary Development

Mr. Rabih Keys, who lends support to Parliamentary Development in Lebanon, believes that municipalities can play a role in mitigating conflicts by creating mitigation groups between refugees and the host community. The newly elected municipalities have the chance and opportunity to do this. In addition, he added that Lebanese hospitality towards Syrians exists and will remain. He mentioned that significantly, there is no much left to do, and of course, most Lebanese think that Syrians should go back, but there is still conflict in Syria, so it is an idea but it is hard to implement unless there is a safe zone. Until now, that is just a theoretical idea. Mr. Keys finished by stating that the main things are “mitigation and organization.”

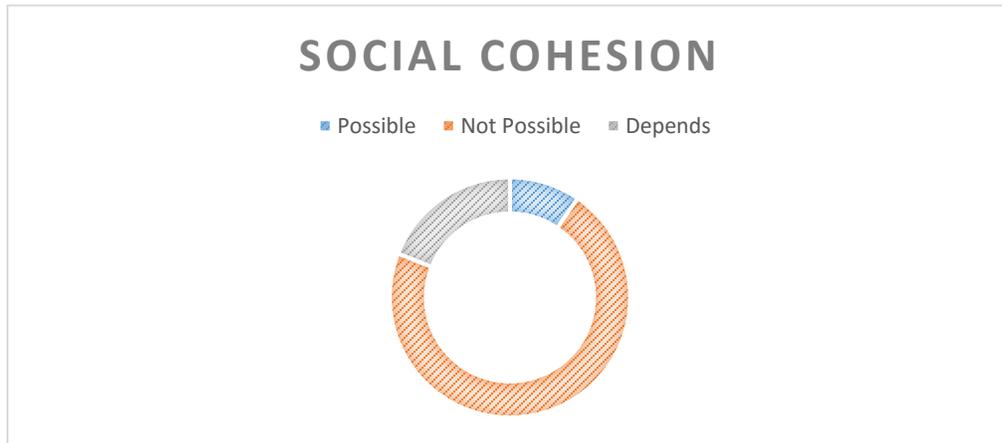


Figure 9. Among all interviewees, sixteen answered that social cohesion was not possible until Lebanese and Syrians were equal. Two main stakeholder believed that it is possible. Four interviewees stated that it was something easier with younger generations, and that it could be done finding a common ground, such as the trash crisis.

Perception and Public Discourse of Stakeholders

Contrasting statements are a significant sign of discord and it is part of the rationale for my research. In this sense, I will present my findings, based on various actors, both local and international. Some of the perspectives and discourses of stakeholders on the refugee crisis have parallels. However, there are also many contrasting statements. Also, there is indeed discordance between the public discourse of international organizations, and what the refugees are receiving, or saying these INGOs actually do. I will present the varying perspectives of the stakeholders in the crisis, their public discourse and the international significance. INGOs and NGOs are key players on the Syrian refugee crisis, as they usually tend to fill the gaps left by the Lebanese government in providing assistance to refugees. Some opinions between INGOs were repetitive. Therefore, in this section, I present findings of the interviews that contributed most to my research and perspectives from UNHCR, Human Rights Watch, Nabad

Association for Development, and a government official who is a member of the Committee of Advisers for Development of the Lebanese Parliament.

UNHCR

Overview

The deputy representative of UNHCR to Lebanon, Mr. Jean-Nicholas Bauze, made several important statements on the crisis, including some background information that plays a key role in today's developments.

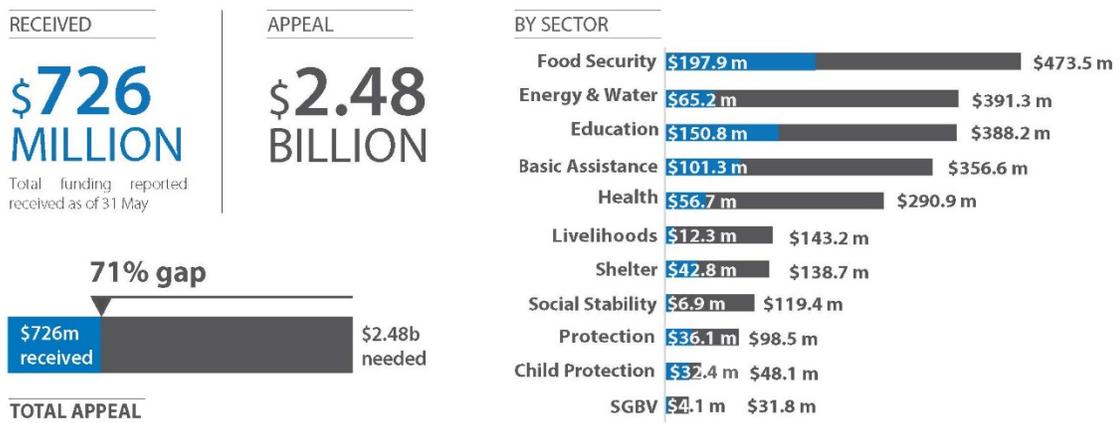
Mr. Bauze stated that there are a lot of immediate needs for the refugees and also for the poor Lebanese. Before the crisis, there already existed some extreme poverty, especially in Northern Lebanon. In light of the conflict in Syria, a lot of communities are not doing well economically, affecting most of the poor Lebanese. Currently, the main humanitarian concern is to respond to those immediate needs of Syrian refugees and poor Lebanese. The stabilization phase is being carried out by UNDP (United Nations Development Program) that has developed a plan to avoid the country from falling apart in light of the changes in demographics with incoming refugees, and especially for what is happening in Syria as an important destabilization factor for Lebanon. However, a bigger concern is now if there are sufficient partners, sufficient funding, and sufficient leadership by the government of Lebanon because development needs the leadership of the state, and in Lebanon that is what needs to be strengthened.

Mr. Bauze also emphasized that integration of refugees in Lebanon is not possible. Lebanon is not a country of integration according to the government. Lebanon can receive refugees, but only temporarily. And this is not only specific for Syrians; it has

been the same for the Palestinians as well. There would never be a policy of integration because it goes against political intentions as well as the Lebanese constitution. However, the presence of Syrian refugees could lead to some dividends and benefit the Lebanese economy and the society, and that is where Lebanon is counting on the development industry.

All the assistance being received by the international community is done through public services, when a school is rebuilt and when medical equipment is provided, then those are used by the Lebanese as well. Therefore, when UNHCR provides monetary assistance for Syrians to buy their food, they buy in Lebanese shops, so the money will go into the Lebanese shopkeeper's pocket, and the shopkeeper will get their product from the Lebanese farmer, and, in the end, the farmer will benefit immensely from the fact that there are more consumers. Everything in Lebanon is locally produced: UNHCR repairs the refugees' tents with Lebanese local products, making the profits go back to the Lebanese people. In addition, every Syrian is renting, at \$200 per month on the average, which also benefits the Lebanese government. Most support is being done through public institutions; therefore, at some point, it will benefit the locals. UNHCR has provided a lot of equipment for postnatal care, which also benefits Lebanese children. Education and public health are the two main sectors that have benefitted from the assistance, and that will benefit not only the Lebanese, but also the refugees (refer to figure 10).

LCRP FUNDING NEEDS



Prepared by the Interagency Information Management Unit- UNHCR | For more information contact InterAgency Coordinators Margunn Indreboe margunn.indreboe@undp.org and Kerstin Karlstrom, karlstro@unhcr.org

Figure 10. Lebanon Crisis Response Partnership Funding Needs, May Statistical Dashboard 2016, UNHCR. This figure is used to portray how funding needs are not being met entirely, and lack of funding is highlighted in this project as one of the consequences of lack of standardized policies among stakeholders, lack of leadership; corruption and lack good governance by the government. In addition, this figure shows how *Education* and *Health* are one of the main sectors receiving assistance, which benefits both Syrians and Lebanese.

I asked Mr. Bauze his position on the Lebanese jurisdiction in contrast with the 1951 convention for refugees. According to him, the 1951 convention is sometimes overestimated, since Lebanon still a signatory of other human rights treaties. Even if Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 convention, it is still bound to all those other human rights treaties, which also apply to refugees. Lebanon is not a party, but it still respects the spirit of the convention, and has repeatedly said it will not turn any Syrian back. Lebanon does not want to keep the refugees, but at least they are not pushing them back. In this case, the international community should unite to guarantee their return in safety and dignity, or resettle them in a different country. Thus, signing the convention will not change anything, since the convention does not state that refugees are entitled to A,B,C,D or certain livelihoods, but they are entitled to protection and they should be

supported to address their needs, but it is not specified how that support should come. In the arena of political rhetoric, the government is always keen to remind everyone that Lebanon is not a part of the 1951 convention, but in fact they still respect most of it.

Labor Force

Mr. Bauze believes that the Lebanese market is able to absorb the influx of refugees, despite the government saying it cannot. Agriculture and construction are sectors in which Syrians have always worked. Today, because of the war, the agriculture sector has been affected due to reduced exports to Syria. In real estate and construction, they still need Syrians workers. On the other hand, Mr. Bauze mentioned that several economists think that Lebanon cannot absorb this influx.

On the topic of education, Mr. Bauze believes that education is provided in schools, and that the government supports refugee access to education in public schools. According to Mr. Bauze, “one of the issues in the Middle East is that the economy is based on the informal economy, and most jobs offered are based on unskilled work. You go to school or you do not go to school, it makes no difference in what you want to become.” He mentioned that literacy and education are still important because it means understanding the basics of living in a society. In light of the lack of certificate being provided to refugees by these schools, the majority of refugees will probably remain in the local economy; therefore, they will not need to show a diploma. Despite the lack of certification, Mr. Bauze states that education allows one to become a citizen and be a part of society, to behave and be a part of the political, economic and social world.

What's Next?

Lastly, Mr. Bauze emphasized the many impediments that many Syrian refugees face that cannot be addressed by NGOs or INGOs, including UNHCR. The need for a policy shift to help people become more self-reliant is necessary, and not dependent on the good will of the international community. UNHCR understands that refugees cannot be integrated to Lebanon, but instead plans to make them self-reliant and less dependent on international assistance. The government is beginning to understand this fact, then after a policy shift, the refugees could benefit the local economy.

Human Rights Watch

Overview

I met with Ahmed Benchamsi, the Human Rights Watch's Communications and Advocacy Director for Middle East and North Africa. Mr. Benchamsi believes that the government has no intention of changing the illegal status of refugees, and today refugees are not able to circulate freely, and they face several other challenges such as the inability of most of them to obtain work and temporary residency permits. According to Mr. Benchamsi (and this is his personal speculation and does not represent the view of HRW), the Lebanese government is afraid that if it facilitates the situation too much for the Syrians, the Palestinians might demand the same rights or more. The government is not interested in keeping the Syrian refugees in Lebanon who are not able to integrate and become part of the society.

In terms of education, Mr. Benchamsi believes that it is beneficial and necessary for Lebanon to educate children so that they can become civilians, plus it is a universal

right. If children are not educated, they will not be able to grow and become full members of civil society. The education provided in settlements is good as a temporary measure only. The quality of this education varies from school to school; therefore, it is impossible to predict and make generalizations. Human Rights Watch recognizes that children need to attend school, and Human Rights Watch advocates and encourages non-formal education.

Labor Force

Mr. Benchamsi, when confronted with the question of the ability of the Lebanese market to absorb the influx of refugees, mentioned that usually jobs taken by refugees are not normally the same jobs taken by Lebanese. There are some fears that refugees might be taking the Lebanese people's jobs and that this in consequence will lead to Lebanese unemployment. However, Lebanese and Syrians rarely compete for the same jobs.

Nabad Association for Development

Overview

I met with representatives of Nabad Association for Development, a local NGO in the Beqaa Valley that provided me with an immense amount of help and assistance. Nabad cares about civil and humanitarian issues, and aims to fill the social, economic, cultural and educational gaps between the various groups of the society, especially among the underprivileged and vulnerable groups which are affected by crises and catastrophes. Nabad, located in Riyaq, is only 25km away from the Syrian border. In Nabad I met with some members of the staff, including Executive Director, Houssein

Shouman, and one of the lawyers of the NGO, Bashar Hamze, who has been working with the refugee crisis for 5 years.

According to Bashar, Lebanon is currently facing economic, social and security problems in light of the massive influx of refugees, plus a disorganized distribution of displaced persons across Lebanon. Most people believed that the crisis was going to be shorter, but currently there are more Syrians and Palestinian refugees than Lebanese. Bashar mentions that, before the crisis, Lebanon was already going through its very own sectarian divides (March 8 vs March 14 coalition). The Syrian war exacerbated divisions in Lebanon, since some Lebanese support the regime, and other are against it. From what I experienced in the field, most of the Lebanese who support the regime belong to Shia Islam, as well as Christians and Druze. Those who are against the regime tend to be Sunni, but it is impossible to fully generalize. According to Bashar, “water in villages, waste management, and electricity are scarcer due to the refugees.” Also, he states that Syrian labor is cheaper, which brings negative consequences to the Lebanese labor market. As well, there are Syrian women being paid to marry, especially in Jounieh and Beirut. This is an issue that I found previously as it is mentioned in a Human Rights Watch’s report (2016), that child marriage has increased dramatically among Syrian girls in Lebanon, “Child marriage is often a coping response to poverty for parents, since married girls move to live with their husbands and in-laws, but in some cases the practice is also driven by parents’ safety concerns for their daughters” (p.70). However, it is important to point out that child marriage was already common in Syria before the crisis (p.71). He emphasizes the fact that a lot of funding from International Organizations went directly to the refugees, even though there were already many issues affecting the

Lebanese people. UN HABITAT and AUB (2015) states that there are indeed serious economic and societal implications of the massive influx of refugees. Lastly, Nabad's lawyer believes that the Syrian crisis will continue much longer and it will affect Lebanon, he mentions the protracted characteristics of the crisis might lead to another civil war in Lebanon, which directly resonates with information presented in this research previously by International Crisis Group (2015), "A number of challenges that affect Lebanon today are similar to those that provoked the civil war of the 1975-1990. (ii) "

He emphasizes the fact that a lot of funding from International Organizations went directly to the refugees, even though there were already many issues affecting the Lebanese people. However, even if the crisis was solved, there would be the need to work on tensions among the different Syrian and Lebanese groups.

The executive director of Nabad believes that the focus on projects of social cohesion should work on economical solutions well, which resonates with information presented previously by UN HABITAT and AUB (2015), that government institutions may need to implement solutions that create a healthy environment in which to formally integrate refugees into the economy, allowing the economy to flourish and benefit both communities. In addition, Nabad's executive director adds that the authorities should start decreasing complex routines such as, challenging procedures with permits and the crossing of borders, which resonates with HRW (2016) standpoint, that the lack of a residency permit deprives many Syrians of education, freedom of movement with a fear of checkpoints, and their ability to conduct many educational and legal processes (p.39).

In addition, Shouman believes that both Syrians and Lebanese should pay the same amount of taxes. In addition, he mentions that initially refugees started to travel out of Lebanon, but increased security measures in Europe and Turkey's instability stopped it. According to Shouman, the crisis has had both positive and negative effects on Lebanon. Lebanon has suffered a lot, increased population rapidly, rent, cost of living, and others. However, there are also more funds coming to municipalities and local governments, and international organizations are working in partnership with smaller local companies because of the refugee crisis.

Houssein mentioned that around the Beqaa Valley, most ITS (unofficial settlements) are not provided with education, and that most families look to Nabad for education. Most refugee families need children from 12 to 18 years old to work and help support the family. Bashar believes that a good way to tackle these issues would be to provide economical support to some families so they can send their children to school, rather than to work. He believes that a focus on education is very important; it could help both Syrians and Lebanese. Finally, Hussein emphasizes that working with civil society is key in this issue to build capacity and sustainability.

Lebanese Parliamentary Adviser for Development

Overview

I interviewed Mr. Rabih Keys, a legal expert who is a member of the Committee of Advisers for Development of the Lebanese Parliament. Rabih was very helpful and he made time out of his busy schedule to welcome me at his office in Beirut. Rabih believes that Lebanese are being affected along many dimensions, mainly economically, but also

in social, political and security dimensions. Despite international assistance to Lebanon, the economy in Lebanon is showing some signs of recess and slowing down to almost 0% growth rate because Syria was the main receiver of Lebanese exportations, and the main consumer of Lebanese goods as well. He stresses the fact that Lebanese people are very hospitable, and they receive everybody. He states that the discourse should focus on:

Mitigating the crisis: international responsibility for the international community to help in these regards, and so far only small pieces or bits have been received to help with the refugee crisis. It is a huge responsibility for a small country with limited resources. Despite many internal problems (sectarian and political), this is just an additional problem that exacerbates all the occurring issues in Lebanon. From the human point of view, it is not possible to say that Lebanese will not receive Syrians.

Mr. Keys mentioned the fact that most Syrians are members of one religious group (Sunnis), and this creates fear among Lebanese communities on the sectarian balance in the country. This balance could be heavily affected by favoring one religious group over another. He believes that people should help Syrians stay in their country to preserve their identity and nationality. Lebanese jurisdiction, constitution and political attitudes are against nationalizing refugees (including Palestinians), and that it tries its best to keep them away. But, he also mentions that most refugees are very well accustomed to Lebanese society. They work together with Lebanese, and they (Syrians and Lebanese) go to the same schools. On the subject of education, Mr. Rabih believes that the Ministry of Education is doing a huge effort; he mentions that public schools are receiving a significant number of students, opening multiple shifts in order to provide good education to all students. However, limited resources sometimes slow down the process, despite the great effort the government is making. He mentioned that Lebanon

should definitely be highlighted as a great host for refugees and as an example for the world, without any political affiliation.

Mr. Rabih added:

This is now a worldwide crisis, it is not only affecting Lebanon, and since the war started, there has not been a day off... the international community should put more pressure on the main actors to solve the crisis. The figures of death and displaced persons keeps growing every day, with nothing significant happening, more than 500,000 people have been killed. Despite the losses on the economy (in Syria), about \$200 billion of dollars in losses, they need about \$100-150 billion for reconstruction, so all this stuff and war what for? The international mechanism to support the refugees does not seem to be very successful, and international organizations, most of their money are waiting for the overhead, so when a couple millions are awarded, the Syrians only end up receiving a couple of hundreds

Finally, one of my colleagues, and who was part of the delegation from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which has allocated millions of aid for the refugee crisis, mentioned that, “The opinion among many diplomatic interns of the Syrian refugee crisis is that Lebanon is unable to come up with an organized plan to receive aid. On the other hand, Jordan and Turkey always come ready with a plan to receive aid from International Organizations or Foreign Missions. Lack of leadership and immense corruption are stopping aid from being donated and properly allocated.”

The majority of stakeholders make contrasting statements from each other about their role in the crisis, as well as their perceptions of the crisis. I found that several refugees have a negative perception of the role of INGOs on the ground. However, it is important to point out the significant role that small and local NGOs and grassroots organizations are playing on the crisis, since every stakeholder and refugees tend to describe their discourse in a positive way. I believe their role is essential in the crisis, and

local NGOs and grassroots organizations such as Nabad for Development play a positive role and they are aware of the local complexities, they also have extensive knowledge of the populations at risk and focus on sustainability and civil society.

The contrasting statements that I found resonate with the position by UN Habitat and AUB (2015) that mentions great examples of contradictory statements, even between government officials, which highlights the tensions and lack of a clear policy (pp. 61-63). I present that INGOs, Government and NGOs have varying perspectives of the refugee crisis, and contrasting statements about each other's work, including the international significance of their current public discourse. In addition, there is discordance between the public discourse of international organizations and the refugees' perception of their work. NGOs and INGOs are key players of the refugee crisis since they tend to fill the gaps left behind by the government, which places most of the responsibility on these organizations.

I present the possibility that the contrasting statements among governmental officials, and among all the different non-governmental stakeholders might come because of the confessional nature of the Lebanese state.

Organizations such as the UNHCR believe that in light of the stabilization phase, there is a concern about receiving the necessary leadership from the government in favor of development, which benefits from government entities as partners, and according to my interviewee, leadership is not a strength in the Lebanese government. . One of the interviewees from the group 'refugees' mentions, "For organizations to be able to help migrants fully, they need to be given some type of status." However, one of the

interviewees from the government's party stated that the Lebanese government is indeed doing its best for a small country with limited resources. In addition, he believes that only bits of aid have been received to help with the refugee crisis, and he adds, "The international mechanism to support the refugees does not seem to be very successful, and international organizations, most of their money are waiting for the overhead, so when a couple millions are awarded, the Syrians only end up receiving a couple of hundreds." The interviewee calls for a greater international responsibility on this issue, since it seems to be falling short in front of greater amount of needs, and I would like to echo his call.

I believe that the inability to obtain any kind of documentation keeps most refugees in the shadows, and the implications of this issue are negative on every rationalization, which results in a never-ending cycle of issues that go back to the same root cause.

It is important to emphasize the remarks of local organizations such as Nabad, since based on my direct experience with them, they are the organizations that are better connected with both Syrians and Lebanese. In addition, they focus on sustainability, and durable solutions that help both populations at risk. I do believe the influx of refugees has had many negative impacts on the lives of villagers and small communities in rural Lebanon; however, as the executive director of Nabad mentioned, there is also more funding and attention coming to rural municipalities in light of the influx. This could have long-term positive impacts for the Lebanese community as their infrastructure is enhanced, and social services are upgraded. Intl Crisis Group (2015) was previously quoted on this research, "Syrian refugees frequently take the blame for everything wrong within Lebanon, from economic hardship to failing basic services and growing insecurity

- a trump card the political class plays at every opportunity instead of agreeing on a policy to address the challenge” (p.10). Certainly, an agreement on a refugee policy would be more viable than the current deadlock and legal limbo for refugees, I surely hope the new political forces in charge of Lebanon are able to commit to the realities of the current events, and bring to the table sustainable solutions.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION

In this section, I intend to highlight the complexities of the Lebanese political context and the management of the refugee crisis by multiple stakeholders, and the impediments that it presents to finding durable solutions for the affected communities. Also, I later present a set of recommendations for all the stakeholders that I interviewed; however, this does not mean that my recommendations will be implemented. On the other hand, the adviser for parliamentary development has manifested his interest in receiving my recommendations, but this does not represent a commitment to follow up with them.

During my field research, I found the discordance among stakeholders alarming, and all the varying perspectives bring substantial challenges to the current interagency partnerships. There are many cooperation arrangements between stakeholders, and that cooperation between stakeholders is essential, but it needs to be consistent, and work towards to, at least, a framework of agreements on the refugee issue. I found many contrasting opinions, and when those contrasting opinions are implemented into ‘on-the-ground discourses and policies,’ it affects and confuses everybody involved in trying to find solutions, and especially the affected parties, Syrian refugees and Lebanese. It also creates confusion and mistrust among the International Community and donors, which in turn reduces the most needed aid that Lebanon requires to meet goals of fundraising necessary to tackle the current challenges of the refugee crisis. The current discourse of INGOs has a massive international significance since the work they are currently doing is

impressive, and it is admirable in the international arena, and I believe they have the best intentions and try their best to help refugees and Lebanese; however, several refugees are perceiving something completely different; they feel discriminated against and alienated, and I make specific emphasis on the settlements of Tamnine el Fawka. The international community seems to have forgotten about these settlements in a rural area of Lebanon, and the local non-profits have had to fill in the gaps left by INGOs and the government. INGOs have a greater capacity to provide assistance, and the fact that refugees complain that they are being treated badly by some INGOs is disappointing to say the least. In addition, the government mentions that the help and aid of INGOs is not even enough to make it to most refugees, in light of the massive bureaucratic structures of the different UN organizations, most of the aid is spent on overhead (considered as a necessary evil).

I believe the lack of leadership by the government and the past deadlock of a presidential figure have placed many obstacles in the way for these INGOs to conduct their work more successfully. Obtaining capable and specialized employees that are connected enough to the crisis, and are also aware of the contextual complexities of the issue should not be something that Lebanon is responsible for. The need of more prepared staff should be highlighted, and INGOs should work towards having people more connected to the realities of the crisis.

CHAPTER VIII

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A number of challenges being faced by refugees in Lebanon appear to be directly connected to a lack of compliance by institutions and a lack of leadership by the government, which as a result brings many obstacles for INGOs and NGOs to work on the ground and form successful and effective coalitions to address the crisis in a more sophisticated manner, where resources would be more easily distributed and allocated. In addition, the contradictory statements among stakeholders makes it harder for the international community to assume the fact that their donations need to be increased, in light of the current inexistence of a standard plan and policy to address the refugee dilemma in Lebanon. It is not an easy dilemma whatsoever; and I believe that despite the effort by many INGOs to do more, sometimes the lack of a structural governmental plan to address the issue reduces their capacity to do so. I also believe that many INGOs on the ground must guarantee that their services and staff are well prepared and knowledgeable of the local contexts and of the populations at risk, in light of the negative opinions I found of their work among refugees. I consider that the Lebanese government is in a weak position; as a country with very little resources, and a massive population of refugees, I believe building capacity in government institutions would be a great start before calling on the international community to increase their aid; however, this must be a task where the international community should also provide greater assistance. Emphasizing the role of civil society is essential on addressing the main challenges of this crisis, and it must be done from a bottom-up approach, and not otherwise. The empowerment of communities and the emphasis on local NGOs and grassroots

organizations must be an approach that the international community should take into consideration; they usually focus on the most affected communities and are able to tackle challenges in a less bureaucratic manner.

An interviewee from HRW offered his personal speculation, and he believes that the government has no intention of providing refugees with a legal status or any other significant assistance, because Palestinians might demand the same. One of my interviewees from the group 'refugees' stated, "The problem is that, if they are given status as refugees then there would be obligations from part of the Lebanese government, and that government is not even able to provide for its own citizens." In the terms of education, my interviewee from HRW believes that the education offered in settlements is only a temporary measure; however, he mentions that the quality of education varies from school to school so it is difficult to generalize. But on a report by HRW (2016) "Lebanon: 250,000 Syrian Children Out of School," it is stated that despite the availability and the willingness of stakeholders to provide access to education, there are many other obstacles that obstruct the quality of education that these Syrian children are receiving. Most of the challenges that the Syrian youth is having to access education seem to go back to restricting measures put in place by government entities, and the lack of enforcement for those policies implemented to "help" as a response to those challenges. As mentioned by HRW (2016), "The lack of a residency permit deprives many Syrians of education, freedom of movement with a fear of checkpoints, and their ability to conduct many educational and legal processes (p.39)." The interviewee from UNHCR also addressed the debate on education stating, "Education is provided in schools, and that the government is very strong in letting refugees access education in

public schools.” Again, as I learnt from refugees, “Certainly, Syrians have access to public schools, but now the following question would be, what kind of access? They might have access, but that access is useless if Syrians cannot understand what they are being taught. Plus teachers are not being paid enough, and this in result becomes a cycle of never-ending problems.”

I believe the new administration in Lebanon has an historical agreement in Lebanon to get things done, and it should take advantage of this moment to make those overdue changes in regard to refugee’s policy, and use this momentum on the Lebanese political arena to build on strategies to enhance accountability and enhanced governance, and take advantage of international aid to build capacity while helping Syrian refugees and Lebanese communities to acquire better lives. However, history has taught Lebanese that the same old politicians will never change. But, Lebanese communities that are heavily affected by the crisis deserve a reliable system that can provide them with the most basic services, and serve them, without them having to turn to resilience and build their own ‘private’ government. Also, some refugees just ask for a chance to have access to a dignified life, and they are not even asking for a better life, but just for the essentials of life with access to basic necessities. A policy reform is necessary to allow refugees to make their own decisions, and leave to another country if they wish, since permanent stay in Lebanon is against the law, which I respect. However, Lebanon should make viable a path for refugees to solve their situation if we consider the current lockdown on their legal limbo, where desperation reigns over determination and hope. At the end, a route for them to have alternatives would be more humane than the current discourse of allowing them to stay and struggle undocumented just to satisfy the elites and fulfill the

labor market's demands. A system of collaboration and mutual understanding, where Lebanon could benefit itself while helping refugees would be ideal; however, it has never been more possible than now, where the political discourse seems to have leverage and drive to accomplish viable changes on the system. There is a high possibility of change, but most Lebanese people believe that as long as the same old politicians and their cronies are still in power, nothing will improve.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

I believe that foreign influence from Saudi Arabia and Iran using Lebanon as their battleground for regional leadership, might hinder an autonomous and self-sufficient Lebanese state and goes beyond the Lebanese people's will to find solutions for the refugee crisis. As the refugee crisis in Lebanon enters its sixth year, most people would expect that there would be a clear policy and a viable coalition addressing the current challenges of the contextual complexities that set the agenda among stakeholders. However, the reality on the ground is far from unified and consistent, and there are several contrasting statements among stakeholders that create confusion and mistrust, which in turn exacerbates the impediments of refugees. The absence of an agreement among actors might just be added to another chapter of Lebanese confessionalism, and how it can, occasionally, become unsustainable and fruitless. More importantly, the lack of a strong leadership among state actors and a weak state became the main driver of creating cyclical issues with no solution at sight, and the irreversible postponement of urgent changes to prevent a greater conflict in Lebanon. Ideally, the current political momentum in Lebanese politics, and the return of an agreement to elect an executive power bring about the possibility, and the power necessary to apply long-needed changes, and create a successful coalition with a clear administrative structure, in order to address the current limbo of Syrian refugees; however, Lebanese politics are far from idyllic. For Syrian refugees, a legal solution will not thwart their right of return to a state, unlike the Palestinians; therefore, building solutions for them and for Lebanon should go hand by

hand in order for those to be effective and sustainable by creating what could be best for all.

Today, several factors have an immense burden on the response by many Lebanese towards Syrian refugees. These factors could be used to explain many of the negative feelings and behaviors from the locals towards refugees. On one hand, there is religion, Lebanese society's core and the main contributing factor for sectarianism. Syrian refugees in Lebanon are mostly Sunni Muslim, and Lebanese of other religious groups eventually see this as a 'deal breaker' that threatens to break the sectarian balance in the country. Also, historical factors have an immense influence, especially in older generations that lived through Syria's brutal military occupation and control of Lebanese territory. As well, the current political fragility of Lebanon, constantly threatens to falling prey to the Syrian conflict, combined with high levels of instability in the region add up to the sentiments among many Lebanese to reject Syrian refugees. To sum up, economic competition intensifies negative feelings among Lebanese towards Syrian refugees, and eventually, for many locals this is the only and most important reason to reject them. Certainly, humanitarian sentiments and instincts among many Lebanese citizens to help Syrians have not faded suddenly, but on the other hand, all these elements have increasingly made Lebanese less willing to help and provide assistance. Thus, there is the impression that Lebanon's confessionalism is also playing on distributing Lebanese among sectarian lines to respond to the Syrian refugee's crisis. This in addition to the varying conflictive perspectives among stakeholders, a suggestion that confessionalism might have another chapter of failing to propose any aggressive restructuring and proactive solutions, but it remains keen on maintaining Lebanon stable, and in some way

with the highest Human Development Index among Arab states in the Levant.¹⁴

However, silence and postponement on this matter cannot be the most sustainable choice, and the time to renegotiate the status quo shall come.

¹⁴ UNDP (2016). Human Development Report. Lebanon. Human Development for Everyone: *Briefing note for countries on the 2016 Human Development Report.*

CHAPTER X

RECOMMENDATIONS

Lebanon is indeed a unique case that defies many of the standards of international aid, and it is important to consider the complex contextual factors to propose feasible solutions. The solutions must support the livelihoods of refugees, and the socioeconomic dynamics of the Lebanese society. At the moment, these two communities depend on each other to keep a healthy balance, and any solution that benefits only one group and neglects the other has little hope of being fruitful. Therefore, a cohesive plan is necessary. Crucially, input from locals to develop a sustainable, cooperative plan may have the potential to benefit the refugees and the Lebanese. An interconnected strategy could work best, and this study therefore aims to explore such solutions. Technical approaches by humanitarian aid agencies, NGOs, and other international organization based on standards models may need to be reconfigured so they can take into consideration the local complexity in order to create effective and collective policies. Lastly, government institutions may need to implement solutions that create a healthy environment to formally integrate refugees into the economy, allowing this one to flourish and benefit both communities (UN HABITAT and AUB, 2015, p.75).

In agreement with the party interviewed that represented the government, the international community should find alternative solutions for their aid to be delivered more efficiently, and also, take bigger responsibility, since most of the time the goals for fundraising are not met. When these goals are not met, it affects the development programs and the potential benefits it could have on the affected population. In addition, I

agree that the Lebanese government needs to tighten up a bit their system, and be prepared with a strong and qualified leadership team to deal with tasks that are also their responsibility. I have hopes on the new Lebanese administration, as the new executive head seems to have strong statements on policies, and seems to have the necessary coalitions and support from other powerful stakeholders to make positive changes happen in the country. Furthermore, certain policy shifts that could fill the loopholes and legal gray areas for refugees would be more sustainable and humane than allowing them to remain undocumented and without a chance to move on, or move out of Lebanon.

There are local non-profit organizations such as Nabad Association for Development that are working together with the Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees in the Beqaa Valley. Their projects emphasize cooperation, and Lebanese people and Syrian refugees see their work in a very positive way. As a local NGO, the majority of their projects are contingent upon funding, and I believe the majority of the international aid should be awarded to grass-roots organizations such as Nabad, that prefer to work with a bottom-up approach and build capacity in the community. I strongly consider that providing more support for local nonprofits, and encouraging the international community to further collaborations with these organizations would be ideal.

Additionally, INGOs should allow the creation of faster and more sophisticated mechanisms for aid to be allocated and benefit directly the affected parties, and increase their pledge and call for a bigger responsibility on donors to cover the costs of overhead. The international community is doing a lot of work, but unfortunately, it is not enough. The international community needs to take a bigger responsibility, and the Lebanese

government has taken several steps, but they are not able to do much without the monetary assistance of international organizations and foreign parties. However, this does not mean that the government is doing enough, because it is not. As the main authority in Lebanon they have a bigger role than they think, and their authority and leadership is indispensable to make viable and sustainable changes. The role of the government must be tightened, and they should be responsible as well, for the creation of organized plans and tactics to allow for the allocation of more aid, and put an emphasis on accountability and cooperation. The past deadlock on the government might have discouraged many international actors from allocating aid as well, due to a lack of governmental infrastructure and capacity to address the issues of the refugee crisis. However, now that a government has been formed, it must work towards cooperation, accountability and the creation of a structural agenda to allow more aid to be allocated, and ensure that the aid is delivered and used properly. Lastly, government institutions should enhance their cooperation with INGOs and local NGOs, and provide a path of guidance and direction for 'what to do next'.

The international community should take more responsibility; exercise pressure for more leadership and accountability in the government; and encourage this leadership to work more closely with INGOs and NGOs, and other stakeholders, hence that every plan can be accomplished without the government failing to follow-up or coming up with an organized plan for the aid and projects to be delivered and accomplished. The international community should start from helping the government build functional capacity in order to implement all the steps mentioned above.

The International Community must be committed to respect Lebanon's sovereignty, while helping the state build capacity and enhanced governance and accountability, and call for bigger responsibility among international donors to cover the costs of the refugee crisis. The Lebanese state does not have the capacity to deal with the crisis, neither administratively nor economically, and that is where the International Community is lacking in providing assistance. Also, and equally important, most non-governmental organizations are not able to conduct their activities and projects successfully without the strong leadership of the state. Therefore, I emphasize an enhanced collaboration and a consistent agreement among stakeholders to create the trust necessary to attract more aid, and make the changes necessary to create the strategies that will determine the future of a whole generation, the potential rebuilding of Syria, and the long-term benefits for the needs of the Lebanese people.

I make the following recommendations with the hopes of contributing to the current demands and challenges of the affected communities; however, given the current complexities of Lebanese politics, my recommendations are not guaranteed to be implemented entirely. I make these recommendations taking into consideration the realities on the ground, the calls for an enhanced leadership and accountability among governmental institutions, which would in turn bring about greater contributions from the international community. However, first the international community should offer assistance in building capacity among government institutions that might not be at the level necessary to meet some demands. As well, I aim to emphasize the role of grassroots organizations as fundamental players in the process of assisting refugees and affected Lebanese communities. The political economy structures in Lebanon seem to be shaping

the response of state actors, Lebanese elites' association among sectarian basis, and their possession of the governmental physical structure just serves to hold more power and guarantee their constituencies. Other stakeholders are only able to do much as long as the elite consents. Powerful figures in the economy and politics such as the current president Aoun (Christian), Hariri (Sunni), Jumblatt (Druze), Berri (Shia), Nasrallah (Shia) and Gemayel (Christian) have in place a *stable* sectarian governance, but fully comprised of their own interests. This competition and power-sharing fragmentation on the ground of the Syrian refugees' dilemma present certain challenges; however, later election developments might give the slight impression that national interests are taking precedence over sectarian ones, which might finally bring about a solution for the refugee crisis (Van Veen, 2015).

Lebanese Institutions

- Put an emphasis on local grassroots organizations and facilitate their work, as their role is essential and they are the most connected to the realities and the parties involved on the crisis.
- Keep track of enrollment policies and follow up individually with schools to guarantee proper implementation of the legal framework.
- Stress the need for International donors for the allocation of aid in establishing schools in areas of greater need.
- Create a framework of cooperation, by proposing a structured agenda with INGOs and NGOs, and create an agreement, on at least, resolutions for the most challenging impediments of the crisis.

- Create a structural agenda of tactics and strategies to allow for the allocation of more aid, in cooperation with INGOs and NGOs in order to provide a path of direction and authority to provide solutions for the current challenges.
- Enhance accountability and leadership among institutions, and enforce compliance with the policies on place.
- Fully support non-formal education and vocational programs as a powerful alternative to fill many gaps in the education sector.
- Either ensure that students have access to quality English or French support programs or allow teachers the possibility to be flexible enough to teach in Arabic when required.
- Allow Syrians access to a loophole to resolve their situation through a non-permanent regularization of their legal status.
- Lebanon should remain a country of temporary status; however, providing refugees with incentives (work permits) to improve their situation and move-on would be more sustainable than a dead-lock in the settlement of their status.

International Donors and Community

- Increase funding for education and local NGOs that are aware of the contextual complexity of the crisis, and have considerable knowledge of the population at risk.
- Increase funding for rehabilitation facilities and adjustments to infrastructure.
- Increase funding to guarantee that refugees can cover school-related expenses.
- Increase funding mainly for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

- Take a bigger role in supporting Lebanon as the country is currently falling short in funding for all the expected outcomes, this is a collective and global problem.
- As a global issue, it requires a more aggressive approach, as donations still fall short of what it is needed.
- Increase funding for social-cohesion programs between Syrians and Lebanese
- Provide greater support for an enhanced leadership among state actors and increased accountability.
- Put an emphasis on local grassroots organizations, especially in rural areas, as their need is greater and their work includes durable solutions for capacity building.
- Increase funding and provide technical support for multilateral organizations and INGOs with large overhead expenses, and push for more accountability.
- Push for a sophisticated system to be implemented to allow aid to be allocated successfully, and put pressure on multilateral organizations and INGOs to make reforms in regards to their structural allocation of aid and exorbitant overhead costs.

APPENDIX

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EACH RESEARCH QUESTION OR HYPOTHESIS

My questions were divided into three sets, one for Syrian refugees, one for Lebanese, and the other for Lebanese-Venezuelans. I used the same script for Lebanese to interview anybody else that was not a member of the other two groups (INGO's staff member, and others).

To Refugees:

1. What is your name, your education and professional background? – In this question, I intended to find out the background of my interviewee, and make the connections between his answers and his upbringing.
2. What are some of the most common impediments that you are facing at this moment and what are some of the approaches you have taken to cope or deal with those challenges? – In this question, I intended to examine the most common challenges that refugees were facing, and how were INGO's or NGO's helping to assist with those needs. In addition, I intended to capture the perception among refugees of the international aid methods in place. In some cases, INGOs were highly criticized by interviewees.
3. What is your current perception of the crisis after 5 years? – In this question, I intended to examine the general feeling among migrants after 5 years of crisis without any permanent solution at sight, with the hopes of capturing other challenges that might not come as easy with the first question.

4. Whether the temporal presence of refugees in Lebanon could lead to some dividends and benefits to the economy and the society of Lebanon? – In this question, I intended to obtain first-hand testimony from experts and other social groups, and obtain proof of the allegations that refugees in Lebanon might be used for low skilled labor purposes according to previous literature. In addition, I intended to examine the possible implications of the presence of refugees in Lebanon.

5. How is the Lebanese jurisdiction affecting your quality of life? Ex. Lack of Civil Rights (work permits, discrimination motivated by” keep the refugees away” and other limitations that you have encountered) – In this question, I intended to examine more in detail some challenges that several Syrian refugees are facing, and expand on what it seems to be one of the biggest impediments; the work and residence permits.

6. Do you believe education in unofficial settlements is enough for refugees to secure decent livelihoods and adapt to Lebanon? What skills would help refugees secure decent livelihoods? – In this question, I intended to examine the real value of education of education in settlements (if there were any), and what kind of access refugees had to continue their studies. Also, I intended to examine other alternatives of education, such as vocational education.

7. Do you think the Lebanese labor market is able to absorb the influx of refugees? – As well, in this question, I tried to examine if the Lebanese market was able to absorb the influx of refugees, and find parallels and contrasting statements with previous literature on this matter.

8. In your opinion, what cohesive national initiatives would you propose that could bring Lebanese and refugees together, and benefit both communities? Including better integration, specific Syrian Refugee policies, or a proactive governmental body to address the issue. – In this question, I intended to examine the possibilities of social cohesion, and of comprehensive initiatives between Lebanese and Syrians to contribute to solutions to the crisis. My hypothesis on this matter was that it is possible, but perhaps after my field research, the possibilities of social cohesion are higher among younger generations.

9. Please suggest any interconnected strategy that you consider could be the best approach to contribute to the stabilization phase? – In this question, I had the same intentions as with question # 8, I just phrased it in a different manner that might have been easier for the interviewee to digest.

10. Why did you choose Lebanon instead of another neighboring country? And also, what is your opinion on Lebanese hospitality? – In this question, I intended to explore the current perception among Syrian refugees of the current state of their situation in Lebanon, and if it would have been different in another neighboring country. My hypothesis in this question was that Lebanon was indeed the first choice among several refugees.

11. Is there anything you want to add that you consider important. – In this question, I tried to examine anything else that I previously did not cover.

To Lebanese Nationals:

1. What is your name, education and professional background? – provide name only if you wish to be identified. – In this question, I intended to find out the background of my interviewee, and make the connections between his answers and his upbringing.

2. How are Lebanese or how are you being affected by the refugee crisis? – In this question, I intended to examine their current challenges because of the refugee crisis.

3. How do you perceive your role in front of this crisis or what is your current perception of the crisis after 5 years? – In this question, I intended to examine their current perception of the crisis, and what methods they were using to cope with the challenges they were facing.

4. Whether the temporal presence of refugees in Lebanon could lead to some dividends and benefits to the economy and the society of Lebanon – In this question, I intended to obtain first-hand testimony from experts and other social groups, and obtain proof of the allegations that refugees in Lebanon might be used for low skilled labor purposes according to previous literature. In addition, I intended to examine the possible implications of the presence of refugees in Lebanon.

5. Only for experts: How the Lebanese context (its own jurisdiction) in contrast with the 1951 refugee convention is affecting the refugees' progress in this new social order. – In this question, I intended to examine the knowledge from experts on the fact that Lebanon was not a signatory of the 1951 convention, and the possible implications this event is currently having on the crisis.

6. Is education inside settlements enough to provide refugees with enough skills to be productive in the Lebanese society? What skills would help Syrians integrate better? – In this question, I intended to examine the real value of education of education in settlements (if there was any), and what kind of access refugees had to continue their studies. Also, I intended to examine other alternatives of education, such as vocational education.

7. Do you think the Lebanese labor market is able to absorb the massive influx of refugees? – As well, in this question, I tried to examine if the Lebanese market was able to absorb the influx of refugees, and find parallels and contrasting statements with previous literature on this matter.

8. What would you propose to support the refugees and benefit the affected Lebanese in order to contribute to the ‘so-called’ stabilization phase? This might include specific policies on Syrian refugees or proactive government bodies to address the issue. – In this question, I tried to examine possible cohesive initiatives from Lebanese and experts that might benefit refugees and affected Lebanese.

9. Please suggest any interconnected strategy or what type of policy that you consider could be the best approach to contribute to the stabilization phase? – As well, as question # 8, I tried to examine the possibility of social cohesion between Syrians and Lebanese.

10. Has Lebanese hospitality been affected by the Syrian Refugees’ crisis? – In this question, I intended to examine the repercussions that the protracted

characteristics of the crisis were having on the initial aid provided to refugees by Lebanese.

11. For humanitarian orgs only: What are those basic needs that the NGOs or your agency cannot address – In this question, suggested by Mr. Bauze from UNHCR, it was recommended to me that I include this question in order to address those challenges that refugees were facing, and that fall out of the scope of several international organizations.

To Lebanese-Venezuelans: In this group, I only included two extra question from that of the ‘ Lebanese Nationals’ script.

1. ¿Desde cuándo vive en el Líbano? Por favor indique si usted o sus padres emigraron a Venezuela durante el conflicto Libanes. Translation: For how long have you been living in Lebanon? Please indicate if you or your parents emigrated to Venezuela during the Lebanese Civil War. – In this question, I intended to find some parallels between those migrants that left Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War to Venezuela, and those now leaving Syria.

2. Usted, como hijo de migrantes de un conflicto, o como migrante de un conflicto, cualquier sea el caso. En su experiencia, ¿cuáles son las situaciones más difíciles que los migrantes resultantes de conflictos encuentran en su camino, y que consejos les darías a esos refugiados Sirios que se puedan encontrar en la misma situación? Translation: You, as a son of conflict migrants, or as a conflict migrant yourself. In your own experience, what are the most challenging experiences that conflict migrants encounter in their way, and what would you recommend to those Syrian

migrants that might be in the same situation? – As well, in this question I intended to examine the potential parallels between the challenges faced by this group of migrants and Syrian refugees, and the potential parallels/contrasts between them. In addition, I intended to examine possible recommendations from the experiences of migrants during the Lebanese Civil War.

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