SURVEY ON THE LIVELIHOODS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

BEIRUT RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CENTER

There are an estimated one million refugees from Syria living in Lebanon, with more arriving every day. As the situation in Syria continues to deteriorate, it is increasingly likely that many will remain in Lebanon for many months, if not years, to come. The Beirut Research and Innovation Center was commissioned by Oxfam to survey 260 households, representing 1,591 individuals, about their living conditions, sources of income and expenditure patterns, coping mechanisms and perceptions of life in Lebanon. The survey shows that many families are spiralling deeper into debt, living in cramped conditions, with few job prospects and dwindling hope for the future.

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The plight of Syrians living as refugees in neighbouring countries has been documented on many levels. Accurately assessing their needs is vital to ensure that the aid essential for their survival is provided. However, the majority of studies have focused on primary needs, with most evaluations employing rapid techniques of data gathering and analysis, which rely on second-hand information and formal records. Oxfam commissioned the Beirut Research and Innovation Center (BRIC) to carry out a wide survey investigating in detail refugees' perceptions of both their current situation and their future prospects. The survey's aim is to paint a bigger picture of the long-term conditions and needs of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon.

A team of researchers assembled by BRIC conducted the study from August to October 2013. The accuracy of the report and the opinions expressed are those of the BRIC research team and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of Oxfam.

A multi-track approach was designed to meet the time and budget constraints of the research project. Three questionnaires were developed. The first targeted key Lebanese officials working as service providers for the Syrian refugee population. The second served as a guide for a series of five focus groups of eight to 12 people in several regions in Lebanon. Results from these focus groups informed the content of a third, more detailed questionnaire. The third instrument was developed to document the social, economic, and demographic conditions of 260 households and to assess respondents' opinions and prospects for their situation in the future.

This study is distinct from others in that it adopts a methodology that not only assesses individual households, but also takes into account the general conditions of the clusters in which they live, with the aim of drawing larger correlations than a simple household survey. Thirteen clusters in six regions in Lebanon were selected. For each, two to three clusters were defined to create a sample that was as representative as possible of the various hosting conditions. Data was analyzed across the full spectrum of the refugee population; then details were verified, examined and refined within the confines of each cluster to draw out any particular patterns or correlations. The study looks at four main areas: demographics and household information; economic conditions; social conditions and future outlook.

Oxfam wanted detailed answers to very specific questions. The report is therefore set out to develop a broad framework to understand the conditions under which these questions could be answered.

The main findings of the report are as follows:

1. The Syrian refugee population in Lebanon tends to be slightly younger than the Syrian population at large and tends to have slightly more females. However, the majority of the households still represent the typical Syrian household, with a few families bringing with them members of their extended families. The median family size (5.1) and its composition are not too different than the typical Syrian one.

2. Most refugee households are still headed by men. However, women now head a considerable number of households (20 per cent) and have assumed responsibility for their families.

3. The refugee community tends to have a slight over-representation of urban middle and lower middle class than is typical back in Syria, with great variations in terms of personal savings and skills to survive in Lebanon.

4. Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) comprise about 4.2 per cent of the total surveyed. They tend to have a similar demographic profile to the rest of the sample but arrived in Lebanon more recently than the rest (the average duration of their stay is two months less than for non-PRS). They tend to have much smaller households (on average 4.7 people per household). Their income level and congruent spending levels tend to be slightly less than the overall population, otherwise they exhibit similar characteristics. There is evidence to suggest that they tend to organize semi-formal support networks faster than other refugee groups.

5. On the whole, households tend to favour settling in whatever decent shelter they can afford and would prefer not to move shelters unless landlords raise the cost of rent. The average family has moved homes 1.5 times. Types of residence seem to be affected mainly by what is available at the local market in the preferred area of settlement, and show little correlation with any other factor.

6. The arrival pattern is clearly influenced by the location of the clusters, with the settlements closer to the northern border having been populated early on. Refugees have only recently started settling in other regions, lending credence to the theory that areas closer to the border are being saturated, forcing people further in and further south.

7. The average household income is a bit less than $250 per month, as provided by its head or a secondary member. However, there are great variations of income and expenditure across regions. The median income across all regions is $200 per month.

8. The largest expenses consist of food ($275 per month), rent ($225 per month) and medical services. The latter, however, is harder to quantify as there is a tendency to consider a major emergency expense as a recurring cost. Utilities incur an expense of $60 per month. The high level of spending on food and rent leaves little to spend on other essentials like education. However, there is a great discrepancy in spending levels, with some families relying completely on in kind support for certain items like food or rent. After adjusting for this fact, the average cash spending per family is calculated to be in the range of $520 per month.

9. Female-headed households tend to be slightly poorer than the rest of the population in terms of declared income. However they tend to spend equally to male-headed households, despite their lower income. This indicates a strong possibility of income streams still coming from relatives left behind in Syria.

10. The difference between income and expenditure is covered mainly through UNHCR and UNRWA subsidies. Over 85 per cent of respondents have registered for this support. The average family receives about $90 per month. UNHCR's cash payments are based on household size, and this survey found little statistical correlation between grant size and household expenditure or spending requirements.

11. To cover the remaining gap between income and expenditure, families have relied on personal savings (which on average total $371, with great variations between communities). These are, in most cases, depleted within the first six months following arrival. For the average family, these savings have covered less than one tenth of their expenditure since arrival.

12. Most families rely on friends and family to support them when faced with medical bills and particular emergencies. However, a greater number is dependent on debt to cover daily expenses, with the hope that the situation will get better soon. The average household has accrued about $454 in debt. However, some have borrowed considerably more than others. On average 77 per cent of the households surveyed are in debt.

13. Only 32 per cent of the working age population (17 per cent of the total population) has reported having paid employment (albeit sporadically) to support their families. A further 25 per cent stated that they were looking for work, but so far had been unable to find employment. A great majority of respondents have had to change careers and seek less skilled work to secure an income in Lebanon. Though prejudice and discrimination in the work environment abound, the main problem according to many respondents is that the local economy has no additional jobs. In addition, the survey uncovered little evidence to suggest that Syrian refugees are setting up their own businesses or buying equipment to work.

14. At the same time, it seems that most families have not made adjustments to send their more able-bodied members out to look for work. The level of dependency on the main income earners of the family is still very high, just as it was in Syria.

15. Respondents reported not being able to fully employ their skills in their jobs. Whereas at least half the respondents had jobs that required a high level of skill prior to leaving Syria, more than half stated that the jobs available for them in Lebanon require unskilled labour. By contrast, some 23 per cent said that they were not skilled enough to find jobs in Lebanon.

16. Only about 25 per cent of school age children are attending school, with a higher enrolment rate for girls. Differences in regions are considerable though no direct correlation was found to any one factor. It seems that the dominant pattern is that families are sending one or two of their younger children to school but not the majority.

17. Most respondents feel safe in the communities where they have settled, though some feel that they suffer from prejudice and discrimination. In general, the refugees tend to depend on each other and have developed complex word-of-mouth communication networks rather than formal co-operation structures.

18. NGO briefings are more effective in communicating with refugees than SMS mailings. Even so, most respondents said their main source of knowledge about services is word-of-mouth. In fact, the focus groups have clearly shown the extent to which rumours affect perceptions of aid and its continuity and eligibility criteria.

19. Respondents were divided almost equally between those who believe they will return to Syria soon (i.e. in less than year), and those who think they will be staying in Lebanon for a year or more. The early settlers had the highest hopes of an imminent return, though feelings of despair were not uncommon. Over 11 per cent estimated that they would be staying in Lebanon for longer than five years or indefinitely.

20. The overwhelming majority stated that the reason for fleeing Syria was the violence and fighting, and that returning to their home country would only be possible when peace is restored.

21. When expressing their greatest concerns and fears, respondents listed issues such as poverty, remaining in refugee status, lack of dignified work, missing out on education for their children and losing a loved one during war. Sectarian strife and illegal status in Lebanon were viewed as lesser concerns.

2 OBJECTIVE OF THE SURVEY

The survey commissioned by Oxfam was meant to provide an indicative tool to assess the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and to document key questions related to existing coping mechanisms, social and economic conditions and respondents' fears and aspirations regarding the future. The survey centred on very specific questions; however, to answer these questions, BRIC had to develop a framework for a comprehensive understanding of the overall conditions for the refugees to better assess and represent the voices of the refugees with regards to the specific questions at hand. To this end, the report covers far more ground than scope of the survey initially requested.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the situation of Syrian refugees, BRIC scoped the following areas related to the lives of the target group:

- Demographics: documenting the main demographic aspects of the population and comparing them with existing data on the Syrian population at large to assess where the refugees are coming from and what social constraints surround their presence in Lebanon.

- Economic conditions: assessing the economic constraints related to income and expenditure, work, skills, levels of financial assistance received, and coping mechanisms. Through the comprehensive survey, it will also be possible to assess the refugee community's economic impact on the Lebanese economy.

- Social conditions: examining available social services in relation to actual needs, as well as living conditions in light of social constraints.

- Future prospects: putting the above mentioned conditions into perspective and following special lines of inquiry to draw out a more accurate and realistic assessment of refugees' hopes, fears and constraints. Additionally, a glimpse at social cohesion among Syrians and between Syrian refugees and their host communities will be analyzed.

The study also aims to understand the perception of the Lebanese officials most concerned with dealing with the refugee crisis on a national and local level. It examines their perception of the problem alongside that of the refugees themselves and to tries to develop a comparative framework for bridging the gaps in perception in the future.

3   TARGET GROUP

At the time of writing, UNHCR had already documented and registered close to 800,000 Syrian nationals in Lebanon, in addition to more than 47,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria who have been admitted into Lebanon. Several hundred thousand Syrian nationals have also fled to Lebanon but have not registered with UNHCR or UNRWA and it is difficult to assess if they are permanently residing in Lebanon or if they are moving back and forth across the Syrian border. To that must be added over 300,000 Syrians who lived in Lebanon prior to the crisis, working in permanent or seasonal jobs, who can no longer return to Syria as they did in the past. The exact number of the latter group is highly disputed. There is no way of verifying the full scope of the Syrian presence in Lebanon since the political upheaval began in Syria in March 2011. As such, this study focuses primarily on communities that have very clearly identified themselves as refugees, and the majority of the subjects were selected from communities that settled in Lebanese towns and villages in the last 30 months.

As communities and individuals have been subjected to rapid changes of status and residence, this study does not represent a complete picture and should be viewed only as a snapshot. The study sampled Syrian households who identified themselves as refugees, regardless of their registration status. The methodological approach was to target existing communities to understand communal as well as individual conditions rather than targeting specific categories of refugees. The fact, however, that the majority of the respondents have already registered with UNHCR is perhaps because the survey targeted areas with a visible refugee presence. It is also notable that individuals who have refused to register with UNHCR are eventually changing their mind and registering themselves in order to benefit from legal and financial support and services.

Scores of Lebanese nationals and other nationalities, who had resided in Syria, have fled the country and entered Lebanon. Those will not be part of the study, despite the fact that their plight is of no less concern; however, the limited time and resources available for this study did not enable a comprehensive documentation of their situation and they must be part of further investigation in the future.

4   METHODOLOGY

Sampling strategy

The aim of the study was to maximize the explanatory power of the data through a mixed methods approach. This combined quantitative data collected through a detailed survey with qualitative data collected through focus groups and interviews with key officials. The advantage of this process is that it employs a representative sample of the general population to a reasonable level of accuracy using stratified targeting of the sampling locations as described below.

The population distribution in Lebanon is not very well documented. However, UNHCR figures indicate that urban areas are accommodating approximately two-thirds of the refugee population, while rural areas are accommodating about a third. Urban areas are divided into larger urban zones around major cities and smaller zones in secondary cities. However, population distribution is not equal across all areas; some large towns may have accommodated fewer people than some of the smaller towns. A small agglomeration was defined as less than 2,000 refugees, a medium one was between 2,000 and 10,000, and a large settlement was more than 10,000 refugees. Therefore, when considering the sampling of clusters, two important factors needed to be taken into account: the size of the area and the documented number of refugees from Syria residing there.

In a second phase, a matrix of regions accommodating refugees in Lebanon was drawn, with relative Syrian populations listed for each. Specific regions to be studied were originally mandated by Oxfam. Within each region, larger towns, smaller towns and villages were listed. The target was to collect a proportionally representative sample of the populations residing in each type of settlement, while maintaining a representative distribution for the regions as a whole. A first analysis demonstrated that the chosen regions covered approximately 45 per cent of the refugee communities. The team then analyzed different options for the sampling clusters within these regions. The most detailed breakdown of the refugee communities was made public by UNHCR about three months ago. This was used as a reference for distribution ratios.

Based on that proportional distribution, the team selected two clusters in every targeted region to be as representative as possible of the types of communities in that region. In regions where refugees tend to settle in small numbers, clusters were selected to reflect that pattern of settlement, while regions where refugees settle in larger groups led to the selection of larger settlements. The clusters selected were then verified to provide an adequate overall representation in terms of urban/rural areas, larger/ smaller communities of refugees and the sectarian affinities of host communities. A final list of clusters representing towns and villages was selected, covering approximately 18 per cent of the population of refugees in such a way that there was equal proportional representation for each of the towns' classifications.

Clusters were chosen so that each cluster would have 20 respondents regardless of the size of the population in that cluster. As two clusters were selected in each region, the total surveyed respondents in each region was 40, with the exception of one of the larger regions for which three clusters were sampled. The sample size in each cluster would give a margin of error of between 15 and 20 per cent. This is not an ideal database but a reasonable one given the constraints. It is sufficient to document trends but not to assess specific conditions in any given cluster. However, data from the different clusters gains more credibility as it aggregates across

the clusters. We estimate an accuracy level of six to seven points margin of error for most answers when considering the population as a whole.

Within each cluster, individual households were randomly sampled through different approaches depending on the community size. In smaller communities, the approach was to select at random the tenth household that researchers got introduced to, while mapping the locations of the refugees within the community. For the larger communities, the approach was to identify the larger areas of agglomeration within that community, and then assure that questionnaires were taken from different parts of the area. In the much larger areas, the team depended on available community centres that could identify the different groups in their areas and use their knowledge to have at least one questionnaire from each.

The final sample size was 260 households scattered across different regions in Lebanon. Given the large population of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (now estimated at more than 1.3 million individuals or approximately 250,000 households), the population size has little effect on the margin of error of any given sample. As such, our stratified sample of 260 households by different cluster locations yields a 95 per cent confidence level and a six points margin of error.

The total sample of 260 households included a total of 1591 individuals. As such, the sample represents approximately 1.3 per thousand of the Syrian population in Lebanon. The individuals surveyed (as opposed to the households) provide a large enough sample to estimate a three points margin of error for the demographic data.

The methodological approach, however, has certain limitations. For instance, research teams were not able to reach out to many households of single individuals, nor was there a concerted effort to track homeless individuals. Furthermore, it became clear from various narratives that homelessness is often a temporary condition until people find a residence in a shack, or a collective refuge. But verifying the permanence of the condition of homelessness is an issue that remains beyond the scope of the study.

Figure 1: UNHCR map showing the locations and relative sizes of refugee settlements in Lebanon (as of September 2013)
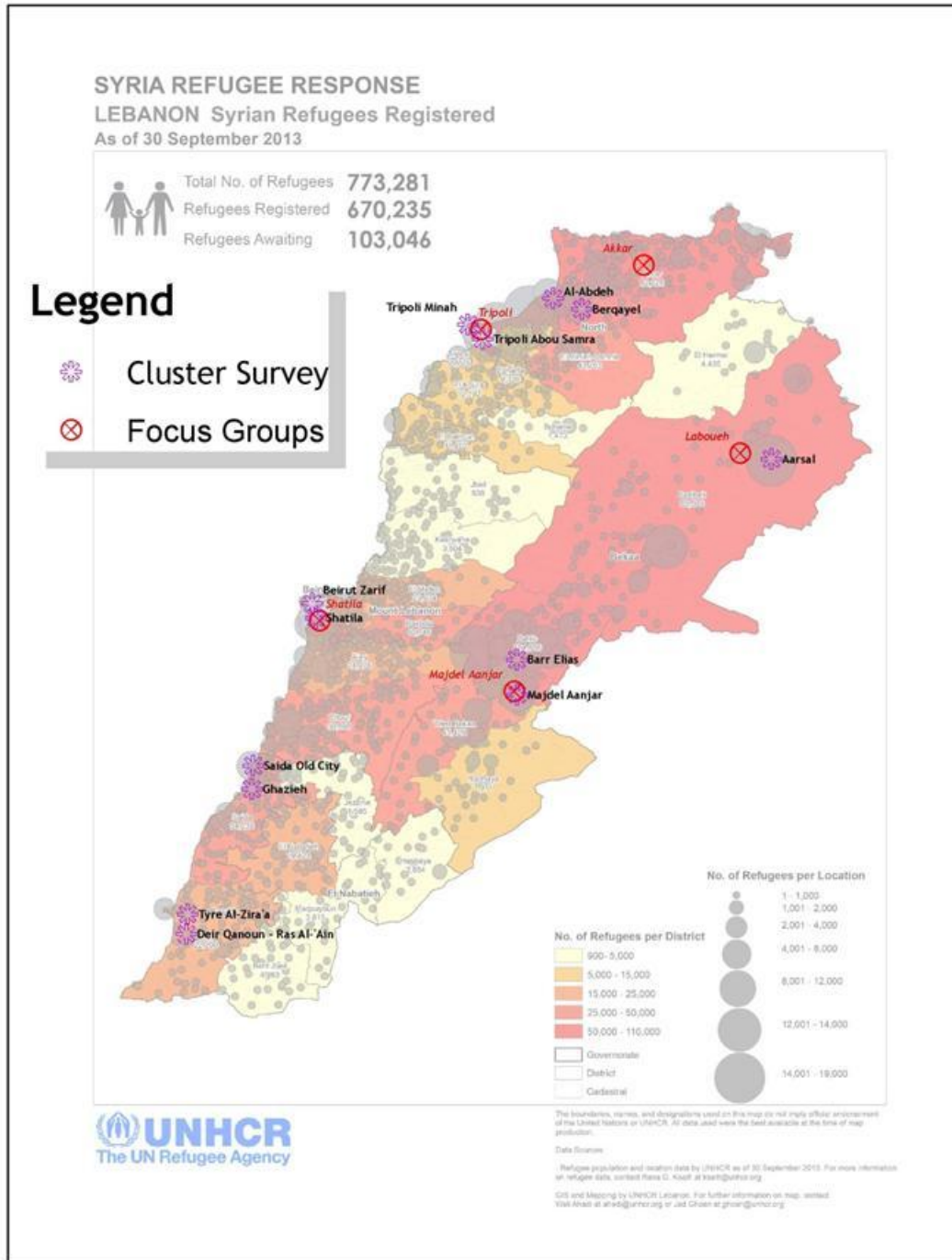
Constraints and limitations

Several limitations are worth noting regarding the study methodology. For example, even though sampling was designed to be as random as possible, some problems arose when a truly random sample was considered. The main constraint was the lack of means to generate a random selection system to tap into the population at large. UNHCR records are the most complete available documentation, but they only cover about 60 per cent of the population.[1] Border police records do not consider people that are being smuggled into the country (albeit a small number). Both database records provide a somewhat incomplete picture for the following reasons:

- It is impossible to track which individuals are permanent residents in Lebanon and which individuals regularly go back and forth to Syria;

- It is impossible to track the place of residence of individuals once they are registered;

- Even if tracking of residence was possible it would be extremely expensive and would multiply the resources needed to complete the survey by following each randomly selected individual to their residence.

Secondly, the cluster samples ended up covering mostly UNHCR and UNRWA registered population with non-registered population clearly under-represented (only 13 per cent of the sample). To that end, it is recommended that further analysis be carried out in the future to cover clusters where non-registered population may reside in higher densities.

Finally, when reviewing the questionnaires, some questions were clearly misunderstood by some of the respondents. In other cases, respondents refused to answer particular questions. As a result, some questions ended up with a lower response rate. In such cases, those respondents were dropped from the calculated averages, to ensure that the calculation remain on the basis of actual respondents. However, at no point did the removal of cases exceed two respondents for any particular question.

5 MAIN FINDINGS

The findings of the study will be presented in four sections: demographics, economic conditions, social conditions, social cohesion and social outlook. In each section, the quantitative data will be juxtaposed with information and knowledge that the focus groups generated to create a comprehensive interpretation. The questionnaires were composed of 85 questions.

5.1 Demographics and basic information

The survey engaged 260 respondents (132 females and 128 males), one from each household. Two thirds of the respondents (177) were heads of households while the other third were other members of the household. It became obvious from the focus groups that women often refused to identify themselves as heads of household despite being the primary income earners, as their husbands were either still in Syria, visited sporadically, or were symbolically considered to still be the head of the household even though they were no longer the main income generators in the family. The status of women as heads of household is reviewed in more detail in later sections.

Demographics

The average household size in all clusters was calculated to be about 6.1 people. Many respondents stated the total number of people in the household simply as the number of people in their nuclear families, but when asked to provide details, proceeded to list names of other relatives living within the household. Upon a critical look at the data it seems that a substantial number of refugee households include extended family members who were not always part of the original household structure in Syria. Nephews, grandchildren, older aunts and other relatives are a common addition to the new household structure in Lebanon. Approximately 21 per cent of households included extended family members. Therefore the average number of people in each household is actually 6.5 and not 6.1. This is certainly larger than the average Syrian household, known to be approximately 5.1 persons (Syrian statistical abstract, 2011). However, household size varied considerably from one region to another. Some clusters had a high average of eight people per household (Tripoli-Mina), while others had a low average of 4.3 (Tripoli-Abou Samra). The largest recorded household was comprised of 27 persons. Larger households were considered outliers which affected the average but were not representative of the condition of the majority of households. The median household size was 5.1. This is indicative of the fact that some households sustained several additional relatives while the majority of households represented more or less the Syrian average.

The proportional structure of the population in terms of age differs considerably from the Syrian general structure.[2] The main areas of difference are a substantial over-representation of five to 20 year-olds and an under-representation of 20 to 29 year-olds. In the older age brackets there are some minor variations with a slight under-representation of over 50 year olds. The median age of the refugee population is 17.5 years, below the national median of about 21 years.

Table 1: Distribution of population according to age groups and comparison with Syrian general population statistics

Age bracket	0-1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	>65	total
No. of people in sample	28	180	236	250	190	123	121	119	90	69	54	34	25	23	49	1591
% of people in sample	1.8%	11.3%	14.8%	15.7%	11.9%	7.7%	7.6%	7.5%	5.7%	4.3%	3.4%	2.1%	1.6%	1.4%	3.1%	100.0%
% female	46.4%	45.0%	58.5%	44.4%	47.4%	56.9%	76.0%	54.6%	58.9%	53.6%	48.1%	47.1%	52.0%	30.4%	44.9%	52.4%
% male	53.6%	55.0%	41.5%	55.6%	52.6%	43.1%	24.0%	45.4%	41.1%	46.4%	51.9%	52.9%	48.0%	69.6%	55.1%	47.6%
%Syrian population (2011)	2.6%	10.5%	12.5%	11.5%	10.8%	9.4%	8.2%	6.5%	5.8%	5.2%	4.1%	3.8%	2.7%	2.3%	4.1%	100.0%
% female in Syria 2011	2.6%	10.4%	12.3%	11.6%	10.5%	9.2%	8.4%	6.8%	6.1%	5.3%	4.2%	3.9%	2.7%	2.2%	3.8%	100%
% Male in Syria 2011	2.6%	10.5%	12.5%	11.5%	10.8%	9.4%	8.2%	6.5%	5.8%	5.2%	4.1%	3.8%	2.7%	2.3%	4.1%	100%

Another main discrepancy with Syrian demographics is the ratio of females to males. The male population among the refugees comprises approximately 4 .6 per cent, while in the baseline general population in Syria there were about 103 males for every 100 females in the population. The predominance of women was an expected result of the survey and the figures clearly demonstrate a higher female presence among the refugees (52.4 per cent). This over-representation is not as dramatic as is being portrayed in the media but it is most evident by the under-representation of 20 to 40 year old men, with the largest gap being in the 25-29 age bracket. There is also a high representation (seven per cent) of all-female households or all-female households with very young male children. In general, these are indications that there is a tendency to send the women out of harm's way while the men remain in Syria. Another intriguing phenomenon is that females under the age of 20 represent a bit less than 50 per cent of the age bracket, and in the school-age bracket, they represent even less (46.8 per cent). This finding should be given particular attention in further studies as it could represent an increased trend in marrying girls off at a young age.

The sample also demonstrates a major shift in the structure of households upon arrival in Lebanon. About 20 per cent of the families are now headed by women. This count includes several households, where the men are still travelling back and forth to Syria, but where the women clearly identify themselves as the family's main bread winner. Almost a tenth of the women-headed households still counted their senior male members among their income

earners, which may create a small problem in the data. The income generated by these members is not accounted for as part of the household income, yet as shall be seen later in the report, the discrepancy between family income and expenditure cannot be accounted for unless we take into account that these men are still contributing to the households' livelihood. The data suggests that up to two per cent of households declare absent male members when it is beneficial to do so (such as to get UNHCR assistance, which is based on family size) and omit them when seeking to improve their eligibility for charitable distributions (widows and orphans are generally given priority in the distribution of *zakat*). The number of female-headed households does not account for families where the woman is effectively the head of the household but men are still allowed a symbolic role as head of household. There is no direct way in the existing data set of accounting for these cases.

Figure 2: The demographic structure of the population

Age range

Male   Female
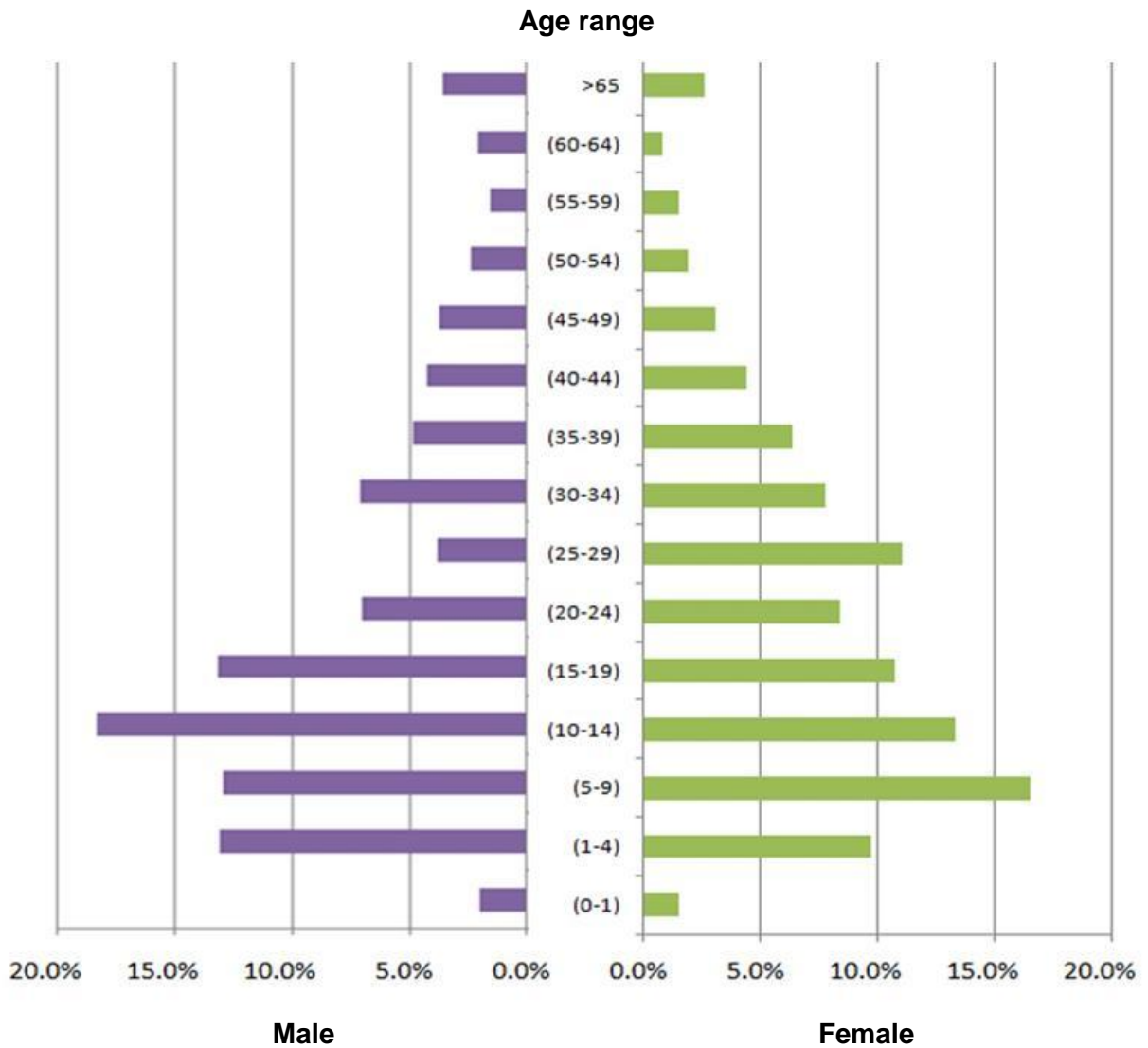
Women-headed households tend to be younger than the average household with a median age of slightly less than 15 which is more than two years younger than the rest of the refugee population. Curiously, women-headed households tend to have considerably fewer children aged under-five than the average household, both in Syria and among the refugees at large. No live births were documented in these families since their arrival. Not surprisingly, these households tend to have the fewest men the largest gap of male population between the ages of 20 and 35. On the other hand, they tend to be smaller households with the average number of people per household standing at less than 5.1, close to the median of the general population. With regards to settlement patterns they seem to have arrived at around the same time as male-headed households and differ little in terms of their origins from the rest of the population.

The average family has resided in Lebanon for approximately 9.6 months with significant differences depending on which part of the country they have settled in. Some clusters have been there for about 15.5 months (Tripoli Mina), while others have been there for an average of only 4.7 months (Majdal Anjar). In general, the older communities are in the north of the country, as well as in Zira'ah near Tyre and in old Saida. People have settled in Beirut and the Beka'a Valley more recently. Since settling in Lebanon, there have been some 24 recorded new births among the sampled households. This is indicative of a birth rate of about 19 per thousand per year, considerably less than the usual Syrian birth rate of 33 per thousand. Nonetheless, projected over the population at large it is expected that there have been some 18,000 live births in Lebanon from Syrian refugees.[3] These children often lack proper registration and for the most part there have been no procedures put in place yet to establish birth records.

The sample included about 4.2 per cent of households who have moved to Lebanon from Palestinian refugee camps in Syria. The research team was specifically asked to not exclude Palestinians from the survey and to document the rate of their occurrence in the sample. There are no official statistics on the number of Palestinians coming from Syria, as this has always been a complex political question in Lebanon. Following a verification exercise by UNRWA in August 2013, the most recent estimate of PRS in Lebanon is 47,000.[4] If that is the case, the number of the Palestinians in the sample seems to be representative. Palestinian households tend to be smaller than average (4.8 people per household) with a higher percentage of female-headed households (45 per cent). They tend to be more recent arrivals in Lebanon, at least two months later than the average refugee households.[5] Their families' incomes tend to be slightly less than average; however, as their average household size is smaller, their economic status tends to be almost on par with the average for the whole sample. Unless otherwise specified in this report, the findings with regards to PRS demonstrate little variance with the total population.

Registration with UNHCR / UNRWA

The majority of households have registered with UNHCR, or with UNRWA in the case of Syrian Palestinians. Eighty seven per cent of the households were registered, and another nine per cent of the households either wanted to register or were waiting for their procedures. The average family waits on average 2.9 months between the time of its arrival and the time it receives UNHCR registration.[6] On the other hand, four per cent stated that they did not want to register with UNHCR. The main reason provided was a fear that if they registered with UNHCR, they would not be allowed to go back to Syria. There is a pervasive sense (that was also demonstrated in the focus groups) that the Syrian government would actually seek retribution from anyone who registered as a refugee.

It took most Palestinian families on average 2.5 months more than their Syrian counterparts who registered with UNHCR to finalize their registration with UNRWA.[7] As a result they have tended to receive slightly less support. As their numbers are limited in the sample they feature as a negligible figure in the cluster analysis. However, when taken as a separate category on their own we can discern that fewer of them have received UNRWA support (67 per cent) than those who have received UNHCR support among the general refugee population (87 per cent). Those who have received UNRWA subsidies get slightly less per month than their Syrian counterparts (average $86 per household per month compared with the general average of $96 per month for the general refugee population). However, given the smaller size of their households, despite the delay in their receiving support, the positive impact of that support on the household is more significant.

On average, families that have received UNHCR support have received a cash subsidy of $737 for the total duration of their stay. However, respondents reported different monthly rates of support between areas. Attempts at correlating reported assistance levels to income, expenditure, and type of housing have all failed, and it is unclear why assistance varies by location. Some participants of the focus groups asserted that the recent arrivals were receiving less than earlier ones, but this statement was not corroborated by the data. The only criterion that was found to be somewhat applicable is the correlation of the size of households to the amount of subsidy received (this is not a perfect correlation but it is the best match that could be found). While UNHCR's cash grants are currently paid on the basis of household size, this does not appear to be a reliable indicator of need.

Disabilities

Several households indicated living with family members with permanent disabilities, or with chronic diseases that amount to disability. This was not a detailed survey and the figures must be understood as indicative as the questions were general and no specific assessment was carried to verify the disabilities. Approximately 3.6 per cent of the sample indicated some type of disability, with great variations across clusters. The issue of disability remains a specific question that requires much more analysis than was possible in this study.

Residence

The majority of the surveyed households seem to have found a stable residence in Lebanon. Seventy per cent of respondents indicated that they currently inhabit the first residence they found when they arrived in Lebanon. The average household has inhabited 1.5 shelters since arrival. However, upon closer look, the main drive behind that figure is the few families that change housing situations very frequently, which suggests individual problems rather than a major pattern. Reasons for changing residence vary considerably from one area to another. The main drive to move is the attempt to find less expensive shelters, followed by the wish to improve shelter conditions or seek a better habitat.

Figure 3: Distribution of shelter types in each cluster
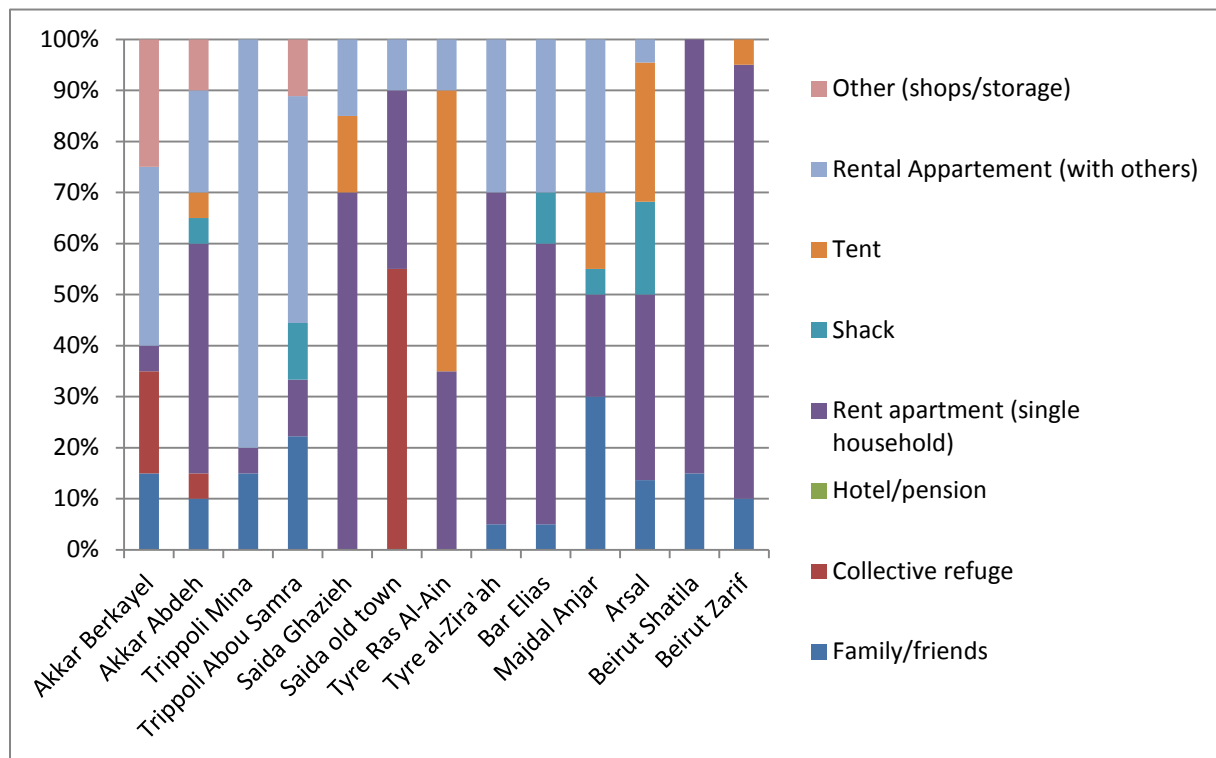
Approximately 43 per cent of the households live alone in rented apartments. However, there is significant geographical variation; only five clusters show a high rate of this form of accommodation (Chatila, Zarif, Abdeh, Ghazieh, and Zira'ah). Twenty three per cent rent apartments with other households and share living facilities (but do not cook and eat together); 10.8 per cent are staying with family and friends; and 19.6 per cent live in insalubrious conditions like shacks, tents, shops, and other inadequate shelters. As previously indicated, there was not a concerted effort to track homeless households as this would have required a different research methodology. Moreover, focus group participants pointed out that homelessness is a temporary phase that some people go through but they very soon manage to find shelter, albeit not a very humane one at first. Other modes of residence were listed by respondents (3.5 per cent), which include renting shops and storage basements.

Female-headed households are more likely to stay in rental apartments with other households (33.3 per cent) and with family and friends (16.7 per cent) than alone. There is also a slightly higher percentage of them living in shops and warehouses (7.4 per cent) than the average household. Otherwise they exhibit the same residential conditions as the overall population.

Particularly difficult residential conditions were observed in Tripoli-Mina. Households living here had the largest number of family members and yet the majority of the respondents lived in apartments with other families. Collective shelters in Old Saida also seemed to be a rather difficult living condition to endure. Likewise, more than half of the cluster in Tyre Ras al-Ain was living in tents.

There was no correlation found between the type of residence and either the income or expenditure of the family, nor was there a clear connection between amounts declared by families as monthly rents and the type of residence selected. Sometimes families paying higher rents lived in worse accommodation in areas that are not particularly known to be expensive parts of the country. The only explanation of choice of residence was the availability of the housing stock in the town where people opted to settle. Focus group respondents said that landlords sometimes exploited people and raised the rents. Families that were able to look or had a better network for searching for accommodation tend to get the better deals. Very few people have moved to a different town according to the focus group respondents. However, those who did move were primarily seeking better value for money in terms of housing.

5.2 Economic conditions

The survey provides a rather grim outlook regarding the economic conditions and financial coping mechanism for refugees. However, it must be stressed that measuring households' personal economic data is neither an easy nor a straightforward task. Respondents may downplay certain sources of income and exaggerate expenses, with the hope of preserving their eligibility for aid or support. Normally, questionnaires would have to be more detailed and provide many checks to allow analysts to calibrate answers. In this survey, the list of working household members is compared with the income figure that the family has provided; the total income earned is compared with total spending, and questions were asked about the gap between the two. Furthermore, questions were asked to verify the matching of total expenses with the larger components of that spending. Finally, matching the results with the outputs of the focus groups allows for a finer understanding of some of the discrepancies.

The following picture emerges from the survey:

• Several family members are either still in Syria or are commuting back and forth to Syria, earning at least a minimal income to cover part of the gap between income and expenditure.

• Whereas the listing of major items of expenditure is relatively accurately listed, most families either failed to document sudden expenses like medical costs, or they failed to mention the assistance they received during such emergencies. In some cases, people confused one-time payments with monthly payments. The data contained quite a few major medical payments, but it is highly unlikely that such expenses are accrued by families on a monthly basis. On the other hand, it seems likely that households list these expenses because they are paying debts accrued during the emergency. In general, once the data is adjusted for these high peaks, the figures provided for expenditures become relatively more consistent.

• Many of the answers provided in this section are qualitative or textural answers, requested by Oxfam to a get a feel of people's perceptions. It is very hard to provide a quantitative analysis for those. For instance it will be very difficult to discern the categories of jobs practiced by the refugees in great detail.

Income

Overall, the average monthly income for refugee households stands at a little less than $250 per month. However, there is major discrepancy between the different regions, with incomes ranging from cluster averages of $86 in parts of Akkar to about $547 in parts of Beirut. The median income stands at about $200 per month, indicating that the majority of families earn below the average and that there is a poor distribution curve among households, with a few

households making considerably more money than the bulk of the surveyed refugees. The data we have would not allow for the accurate construction of a GINI indicator.

Figure 4: The distribution of household monthly incomes across the sample.
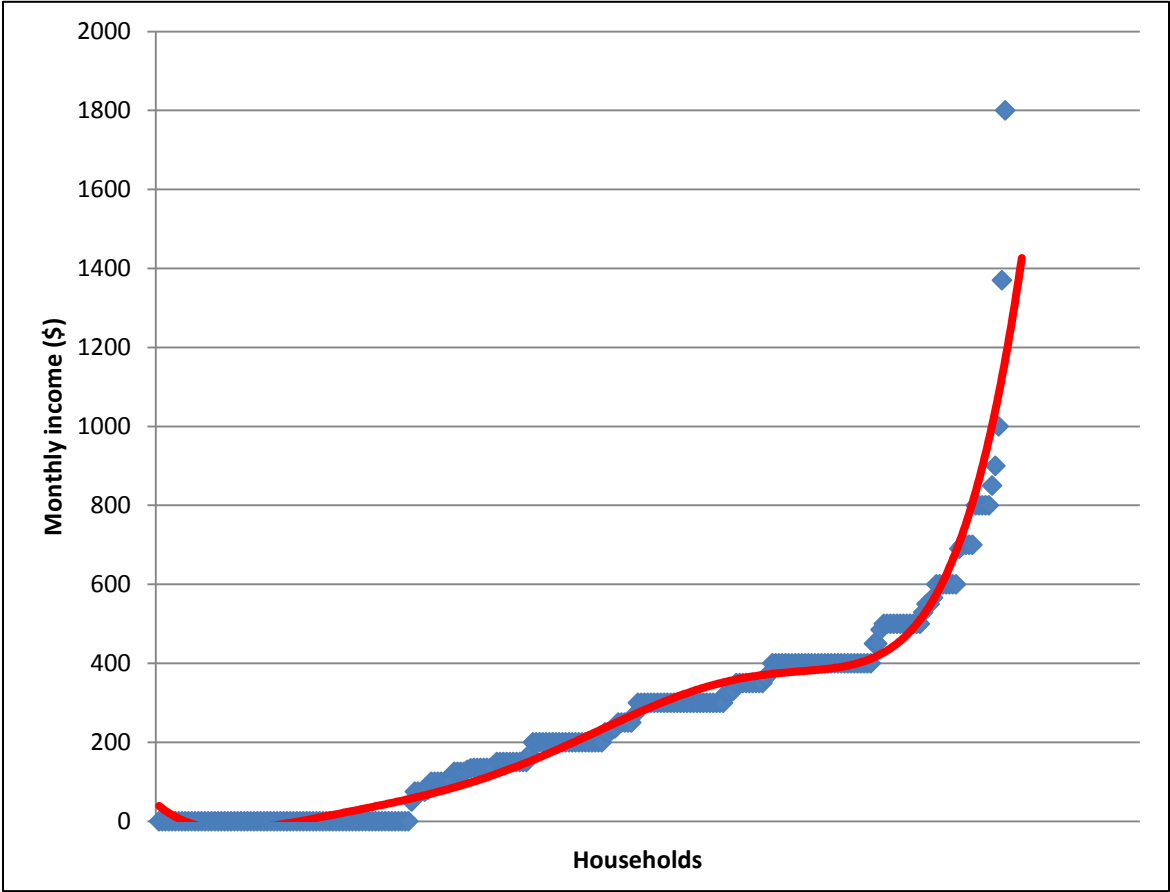
It was impossible to assert to any degree of certainty if there were any income streams still coming from Syria. Most respondents denied receiving any remittances or funds from back home or from abroad. The few who responded in the positive did not divulge amounts. It seems that for the most part, those who are still receiving support from within Syria are only getting it in cases of emergency. It was a fairly common case for families without any income whatsoever to have substantial expenditures. While this is not particularly surprising as families may sometimes be out of work during a particular month, the ratio is still high and diversified across the whole range of clusters. This could suggest that some income streams are still flowing from Syria, especially considering that a substantial part of the working age male population is under-represented in the sample, and are most likely still earning income back home.

Female-headed households may benefit most from remittances as they tend to report earning considerably less income than the average household. Their monthly income averages only $217. Almost 43 per cent of them reported no income at all.

Figure 5: Average distribution of monthly income per household in general and for female-headed households.
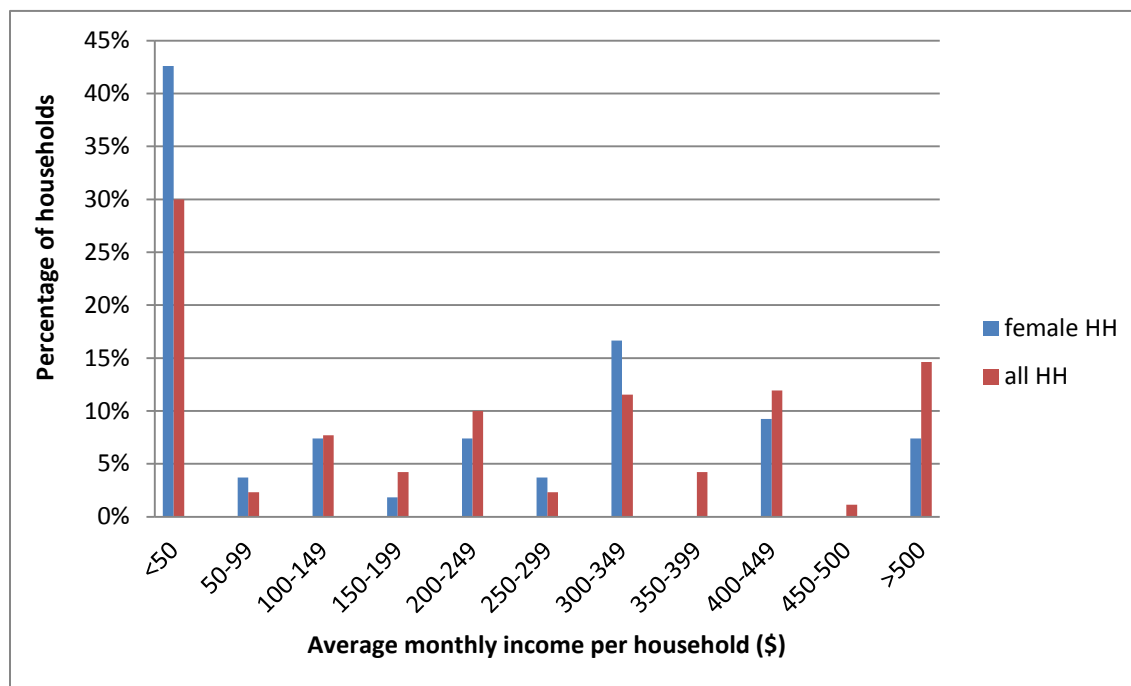
Aid

Respondents indicated receiving different levels of assistance and aid from UNHCR and UNRWA.[8] The focus groups noted differences in terms of the size of payments, delays in payments in certain areas, and difficulty in understanding the criteria for payments. The average household has received approximately $737 (equivalent to $76 per month) over the duration of their stay in Lebanon. However, it should be noted that since not all families are registered with UNHCR or UNRWA, registered families actually have received an average of $90 per household per month. There are broad regional disparities in this regard, with some regions receiving substantially more aid per household than others; mainly as a result of an apparent pattern of larger households in those areas. Nonetheless, as indicated earlier in the report, the correlation between household size and received support is not perfect, and many people had difficulty understanding the discrepancy between household size and assistance levels.

Areas with larger households and higher levels of need have also indicated that limited cash supplements have been provided by international organizations, local NGOs, and charitable individuals. Three clusters exclusively reported such activities at a rate of about $170 per household in total, or about $15 per household per month. It seems that the shortfall in income is most often being covered through loans rather than with cash supplements. In-kind support is harder to assess financially as respondents have indicated receiving items but not their values. Most support takes the form of food packages, which 63 per cent of households have received at some point, although they indicated in the focus groups that these donations were very limited and sporadic. Blankets and winter clothes have also been distributed to a large number of households (68 per cent). Hygiene kits were received by just below 50 per cent of the sample. Other aid is limited and comprises furniture (26 per cent), health services (12 per cent), fuel (eight per cent) and educational supplies (six per cent).

Remittances from Syria and abroad were very limited and concerned only a handful of households and rare individual cases. The analysis of remittances, however, requires more rigorous investigation as most families do not disclose their income for fear that this would disqualify them from aid programmes. The focus groups indicated a great fear among many participants from rumours that UNHCR is considering discontinuing its financial aid to some households and this is causing major concern among refugee families.[9] It seems likely that some households are receiving financial support from family members in Syria. As indicated in the demographic section, men between the ages of 20 and 29 are under-represented among the refugee population. It is likely that this age group has tended to stay behind in Syria and may be contributing to their families' incomes in Lebanon. Given the reluctance of respondents to disclose much, if any, information about remittances, it is difficult to quantify the impact of this source of income on households' budgets; however, where possible, these financial flows should be taken into account.

Personal savings

The average surveyed family brought with it approximately $370 in savings when it arrived in Lebanon. However, there is a significant discrepancy in the distribution of those savings since a few families brought substantial savings, while more than half brought nothing. Personal savings, with the exception of a few families in the sample, were barely sufficient to cover the first six months of refugees' stay in Lebanon. As families have stayed an average of 9.5 months in Lebanon, it should be expected that most have used up all their cash savings by now. The issue of personal savings must also be qualified as many have indicated that they have sold their jewellery. Gold jewellery is often perceived by Syrian families as a form of savings. Forty four households (17 per cent) reported that they had sold jewellery. As many did not venture to offer the real value of what they sold, the survey has had to rely quantitatively on the few who divulged this information and extrapolate. Households that divulged details about sale of jewellery (31 households) indicated an average return of about $1,237. Other sales of assets remain very sporadic and limited to a few cases of no significant statistical meaning.

On a macro-economic level, Syrian refugees are estimated to have brought around $100m with them to Lebanon. This does not include more affluent Syrians who have not identified themselves as refugees.

Expenditures

The average family spends approximately $520 per month. However, variations in distribution are considerably less obvious than in the case of income. The highest average spenders (Beirut-Zarif) spend about $580 a month while the lowest average spenders (Akkar-Bekayel) spend roughly $359 per month. The average household thus has to cover an average monthly shortage of about $274. Families have used UNHCR support ($90 per household for the eligible registered households) and personal savings (now depleted for the most part) to cover some of the shortfall ($60 per month on average). The remaining $129 balance is therefore being partially covered by accruing debt (see below).

Main expenses include on average $275 per month for food costs. This expense shows little variation across regions and more correlation with regards to the number of people in the household. For the most part, this is an indication that households rely on pre-processed foods, rather than a systemic approach depending on economies of scale to feed people. Households have clearly not yet been able to capitalize on their capacity to cook collectively. The low level of spending, combined with an increase in spending as household size increases, reflect a tendency for most families to consume the cheapest processed foods available.

Figure 6: The correlation of the household monthly cash spending on food with the number of people in the household. The figures do not include the value of in-kind support received by families.
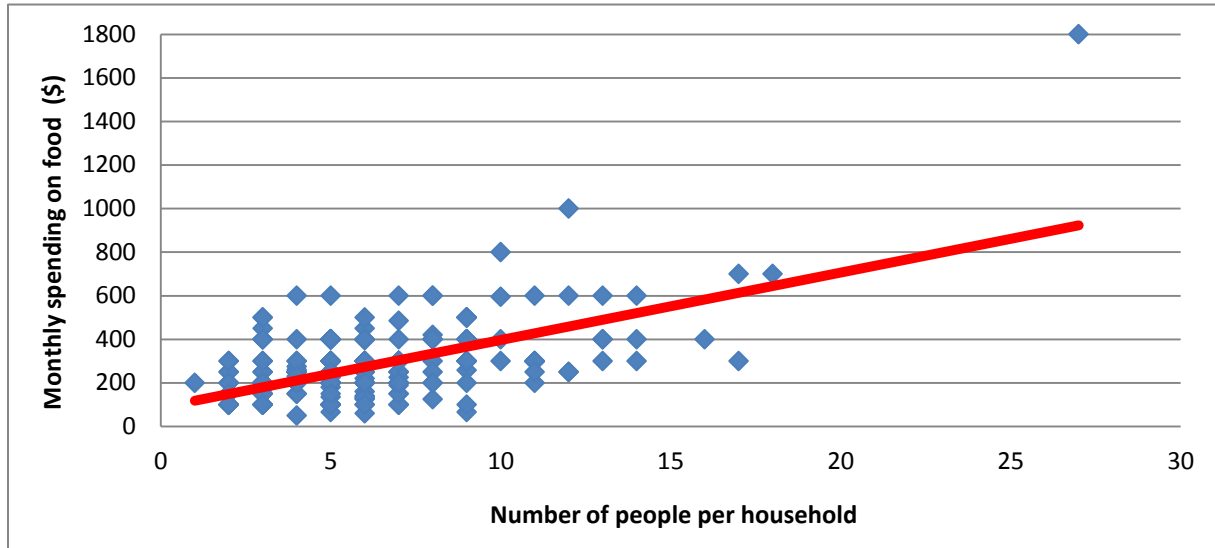
Rent is another major expense for families. It costs on average $225 per month per household. As seen in the residence section above, the main factor affecting rent is the type of housing stock in the area of settlement and the local demand for that stock. For a detailed account of the housing sector in Lebanon, a more comprehensive survey would be needed.

Figure 7: Average monthly rents paid by the refugees in different parts of Lebanon.
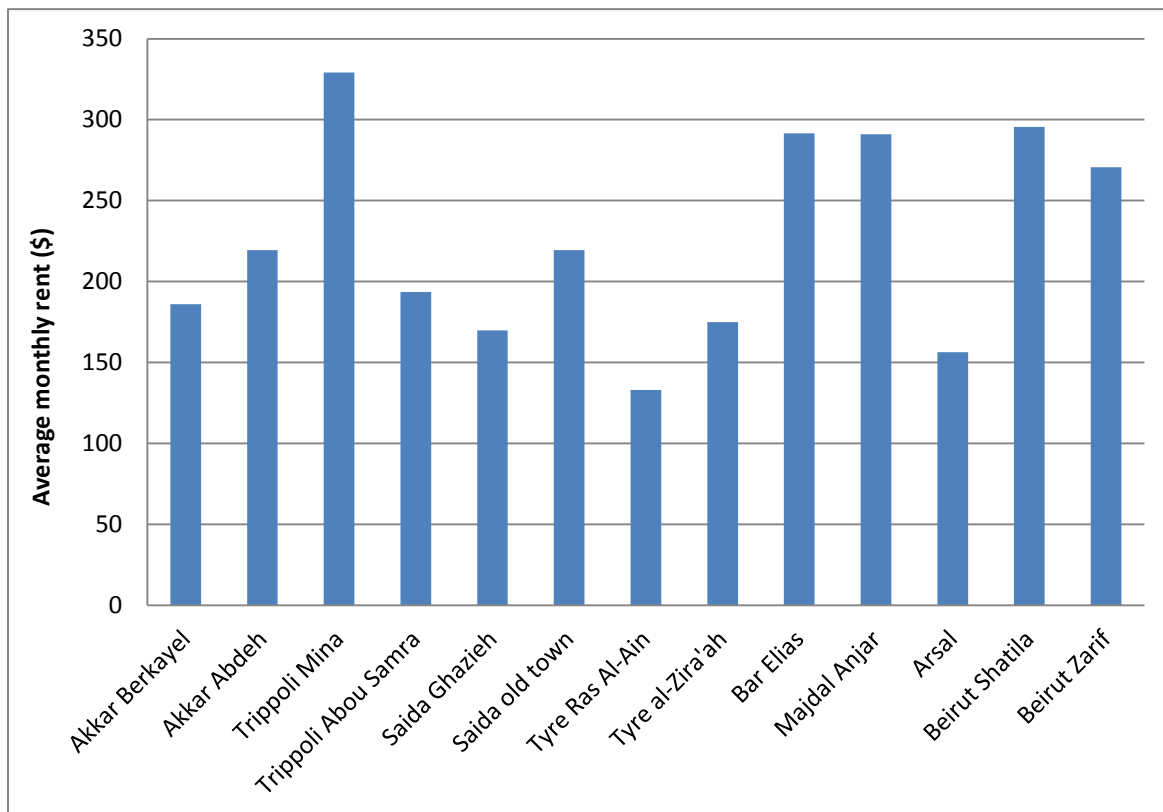
A considerable number of households have declared no spending on rent and to a lesser extent on food, suggesting that they receive these as in-kind support. This means there is a discrepancy in the data between the overall averages and the average cash spending per household that actually pays for these items. The figures listed above are the averages for the households that actually pay cash for them, while the overall average monthly expenditures are for the whole sample.

Another expense is education, which can cost an average of $125 per month (mainly reported in the Saida and Tyre clusters). In those clusters where people are not required to pay for schooling, attendance remains low. However, those who are attending school seem to be mostly going without paying. This usually indicates a high level of entry into public or charity schools; however, official Lebanese sources indicate this is happening at a much lower rate than indicated by the survey.

As mentioned above, it seems that medical expenses are exaggerated and some respondents are projecting large medical bills accrued in a one-off payment over a longer period of time. The data on income vs. expenditures can only be balanced (after adding up the financial aid from UNHCR and the spending from savings as well as the figures on debt) if the larger reported medical payments are eliminated from the list. Only then is the total income from all sources (including reported debt) at a scale to cover the actual reported expenses.

Other minor expenses were reported, utilities at about $60 per month constitute one of the major bulk expenses the average household has to pay. On the other hand, some individual accounts were presented in which people bought some equipment or assets like furniture in Lebanon. However, these are too few to make any significant statistical impact.

Female-headed households tend to spend a similar amount to the average household and, despite their apparent lack of income opportunities; their spending follows similar patterns to the male-headed households. However, once adjusted to average family size the female-headed households tend to be on par and perhaps spend a little more in certain brackets. This phenomenon once again raises the question of whether female-headed households are getting income streams from their male relatives back in Syria albeit in small quantities.

Figure 8: Average monthly expenditure per households for the population at large and for female-headed households.
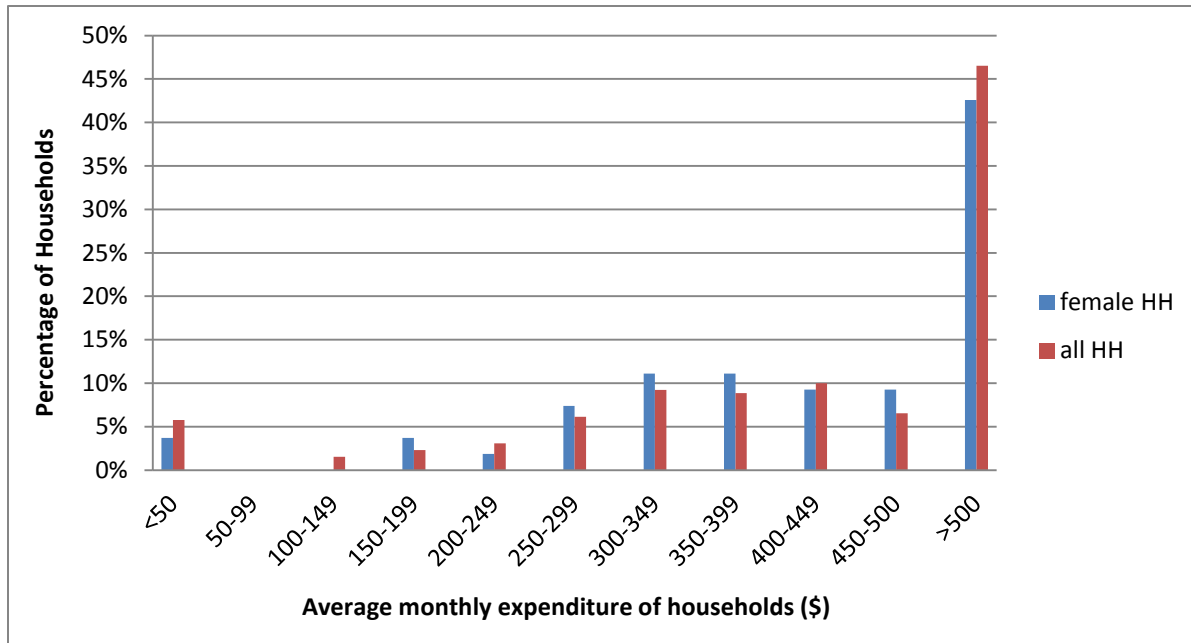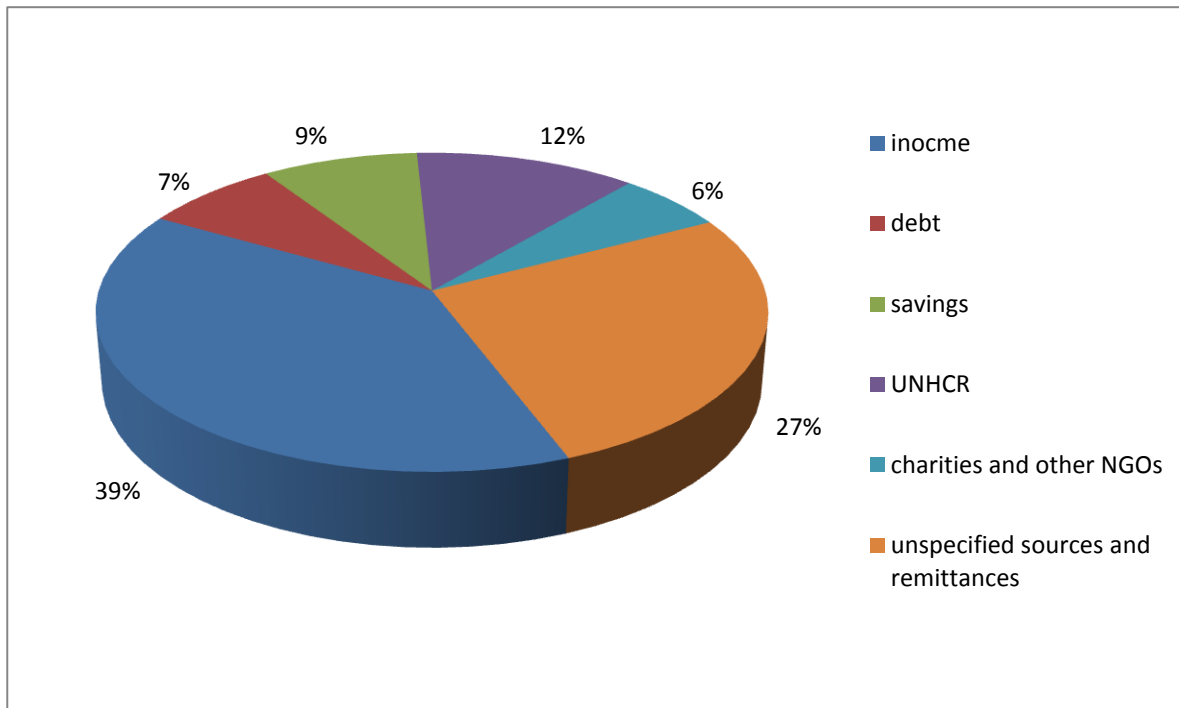

Debt

The average household surveyed admitted to accruing about $454 in debt during their stay in Lebanon. Looking more carefully at cluster dynamics, it seems that the older the settlement of the community, the more likely it is to have accrued debt. The case of the Tripoli-Mina cluster is most indicative with an average debt per household amounting to over $815 (the average residency of this cluster in Lebanon is over 15 months), while Beirut-Zarif represents the other end of the scale with an average debt of $153 per household and an average residency period of about seven months. Most families have accrued small amounts of debt with the median debt standing at about $300 per household. However, the average accrued debt per household for families that have been forced to borrow money substantially exceeds the average and amounts to $575. Thus debt does not seem to be equally distributed in the sample and families seem to have substantially different strategies for borrowing.

Indebted families seem to earn slightly less income from their work than the average household. However, there seems to be little relation between the average borrowers and the heaviest ones. Both the median borrowers and the highest two standard deviations earn almost identical incomes. The heaviest borrowers have larger families (7.6 people per household) while the median borrower tends to have a smaller household (5.6 people per household). This latter is still a bit larger than the median household size. In essence there is a direct correlation between the level of debt and the size of the household and this constitutes the single most important factor in accruing debt.

Nonetheless, cash loans alone are not, by themselves, sufficient to cover the difference between income and expenditures. With debt accounted for, the average family still has about $90 to cover every month. This again lends credence to the hypothesis that many families still

have someone capable of sending them some level of support from Syria or elsewhere. Only four families admitted that they received regular remittances from family in Syria, though they did not divulge the value of this remittance.

Figure 9: The breakdown of household sources of revenue adjusted to cover the declared expenditures.

Most households have indicated much larger spending than their combined income from work, subsidies, charities, accrued debt, selling of valuables and liquidating savings. The gap amounts to about 27 per cent of the total for the average household. Most likely this difference is being covered by remittances from relatives still working in Syria which were not declared to the survey team.

Main lenders are providing interest-free loans, and they are almost always family and friends, and to a much more limited level they include charitable NGOs and other charities. The focus groups pointed to an equal reliance on Syrian and Lebanese networks of friends and relatives for borrowing money. Most respondents say they have an idea of where to get a loan, but few have actually gone to financial institutions or micro-credit providers, and none have resorted to private high interest lenders. As most have rejected the idea of interest loans, it seems that the few loans given by banks (only 10 reported cases) were done according to Islamic banking regulations, but there is no way of verifying whether this is the case. If the idea of investment borrowing to establish a small business is to take root among the refugee community, it will need to be further investigated in detail. Most indications from the focus groups point to the fact that people are borrowing to cover the balance of their expenditures. There is very little evidence of people borrowing to set up new businesses. Only two households indicated that they bought work-related equipment while in Lebanon.

Female-headed households tend to borrow just as actively as the rest of the households, with 77 per cent in debt. Their debt level seems to be a bit more elevated than the population at large, with an average debt of $486 per household and an average of $620 debt per household that has been forced to borrow (compared to the figures for the general refugee population of $454 and $575 respectively).

Labour

A total of 272 people, 32 per cent of the working age population[10] and 17 per cent of the total population, were documented as having contributed income to the sample households.[11] However, for the most part their work was sporadic and not permanent. In essence, every working person is supporting more than five people besides themselves. Of the total households surveyed reported only 212 additional individuals (25 per cent of the working age population and 13.3 per cent of the total population) indicated willingness to work if they found the right opportunity or said that they are looking for a job. In total 57 per cent of the adult population should be considered as the labour pool among refugees. Of these 43 per cent seem to be unemployed in that they have not earned any income in the last month and are actively seeking work. However, the total population willing and actively seeking work is still within the confines of the social dependency framework prevalent in Syria before the crisis (30 per cent of the total refugee population as compared to 29 percent of the total Syrian population in 2010). The refugee community has still not made the sufficient social adjustments to encourage more adults within households to seek work. Such adjustments are extremely difficult to make. People have to break through many psychological, social and skill barriers before they start making the shift from being dependents to being providers. At this stage, the refugee community in general has not broken through these barriers.

Interestingly, female-headed households tend to have more working age members working despite the fact that most of their members are under age. More than 40 per cent of these households' working age members are active income earners. Another 30 per cent of the adult members (above 15 years of age) are also willing to work if they get the chance, thus bringing the total number of the labour force in these families to 70 per cent of working age members and 35 per cent of the population. Perhaps having made the first social transformation of becoming headed by a woman has made it easier for these households to make the further transformation of encouraging people to seek work.

Being part of the labour force is considered a very precarious position among the Syrian refugees. The most common picture emerging from the focus groups and the survey is that jobs are scarce and hard to come by. Approximately 500 (31.4 per cent) people in the sample have been documented to have worked at various intervals, though work is by no means a reliable source of income.[12] Most indicated that employers often take people on a trial basis and then let them go without paying them, salaries are very meagre and work does not match their skills. Nonetheless, the labour of the various members is still the largest contributor to the income of the households covering a bit less than 50 per cent of the actual expenditures. This is far better than the situation in closed refugee camps in other countries where refugees are totally dependent on aid and remittances from family members still working in Syria.

The overall picture of refugees working in Lebanon needs careful analysis. Only 56 per cent of the households reported that the head of household was working. Twenty-seven per cent indicated that another adult was working and only a few households admitted that their children were working (five per cent). This indicates that the distribution of income earners among the

population is very uneven, with several income earners in some households and none in others. The total number of working individuals was documented to be 272 people distributed over 181 households. In other words, there are 80 households (31 per cent) with no income earners at all while there are 19 households (seven per cent) with three income earners or more. The cluster of Bar Elias seems to have the highest level of economic activity among all clusters with 18 heads of households contributing to family income through work, while Akkar-Berkayel and Tripoli-Mina reported the least number of working household members.

Furthermore, the employment situation of Syrian refugees is hindered by structural problems relating to the poor economic conditions of the host communities and a lack of skills blocking access well-paid jobs. Most respondents (85 per cent) indicated that a lack of jobs in the local market is the main reason why they have had difficulty getting work. Respondents considered additional factors such as their lack of skills (23.5 per cent), unfair working conditions (16.5 per cent), and prejudice against Syrians (22.7 per cent). Yet, the focus groups also pointed out that there is a growing segment of Lebanese employers who are interested in hiring Syrians because they provide cheaper labour than their Lebanese counterparts. While the salary scale revealed in the survey clearly points in that direction in some cases, it is by no means a generalized phenomenon. The data at hand does not allow a comparative analysis of Lebanese and Syrian incomes across the country.

Figure 10: Original occupations of current heads of household (as a percentage) before coming to Lebanon.
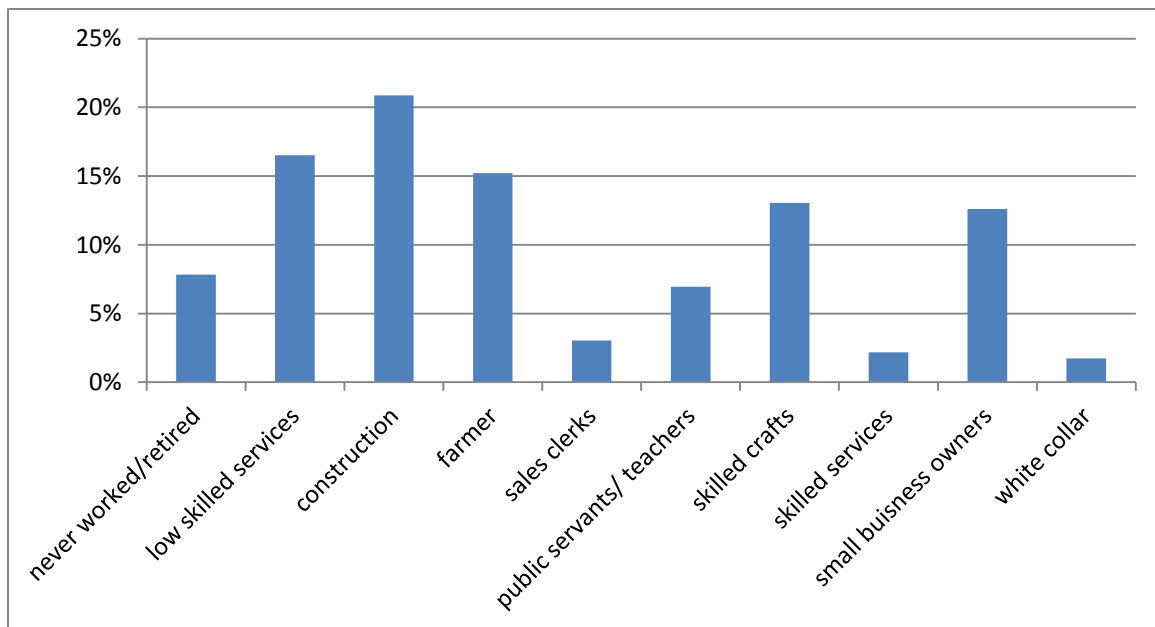
Most respondents feel they are working in jobs below their actual skill levels or that they would have to take jobs much below their skill levels to earn a living. More than 100 respondents said they had skilled jobs while in Syria, while only 23 respondents feel that they have the potential to get skilled jobs that match their qualifications. The situation is a bit less dramatic for people who perceive that they were semi-skilled or non-skilled. The inability to access jobs at the same skill level seems to be a factor in why people are not finding work. Thirty per cent of Syrian refugees consider themselves overqualified for the available jobs while 23.5 per cent believe themselves to be under-qualified. Those who are under-qualified seem to be either illiterate (see Figure 12 below) or seem to lack the communication and networking skills needed to work in their fields in Lebanon. This latter hypothesis is deduced from various comments made during the focus groups. Anecdotal quotes from people about the difficulty of accessing jobs were collected, but it is hard to assimilate them quantitatively. Less than one per cent of the working individuals believe that they have improved their skills or have gained new skills working in Lebanon while the majority feels that they have not improved their skills being in Lebanon.

Most available jobs are non-permanent in nature. The average person working has not worked more than five months consistently. Only about half of the respondents indicated that they were actually employed at the time of the survey. Some people have had to change their occupations to find jobs (63 out of 137 of responding heads of households) because there were no available jobs in their original line of work. Secondary income earners have experienced little change in occupation since most of them have only entered the work force recently. No respondent indicated that they had changed their occupation because they found better job opportunities. New occupations in Lebanon for the most part consist of construction, domestic help, clerical work and sales. Very few people are self-employed but no pattern was discerned from the interviews or focus groups to indicate that self-employment was particularly difficult. The job search dilemma for most refugees is one of their main sources of anguish. The overwhelming majority indicated that conditions for finding work in Lebanon are far more difficult than in Syria. The focus groups highlighted the perception that families are extremely concerned that they are no longer able to earn income and have been reduced to being dependent on aid.

Those who are finding work tend to have low level jobs well below the skill level of the jobs they used to have in Syria. Lack of education is a definite hindrance to getting work in Lebanon as most illiterate people are not able to get jobs. However, those with elementary level education seem to be faring better than those who completed secondary level education.

Figure 11: Income generating activities undertaken by heads of households since arrival in Lebanon.
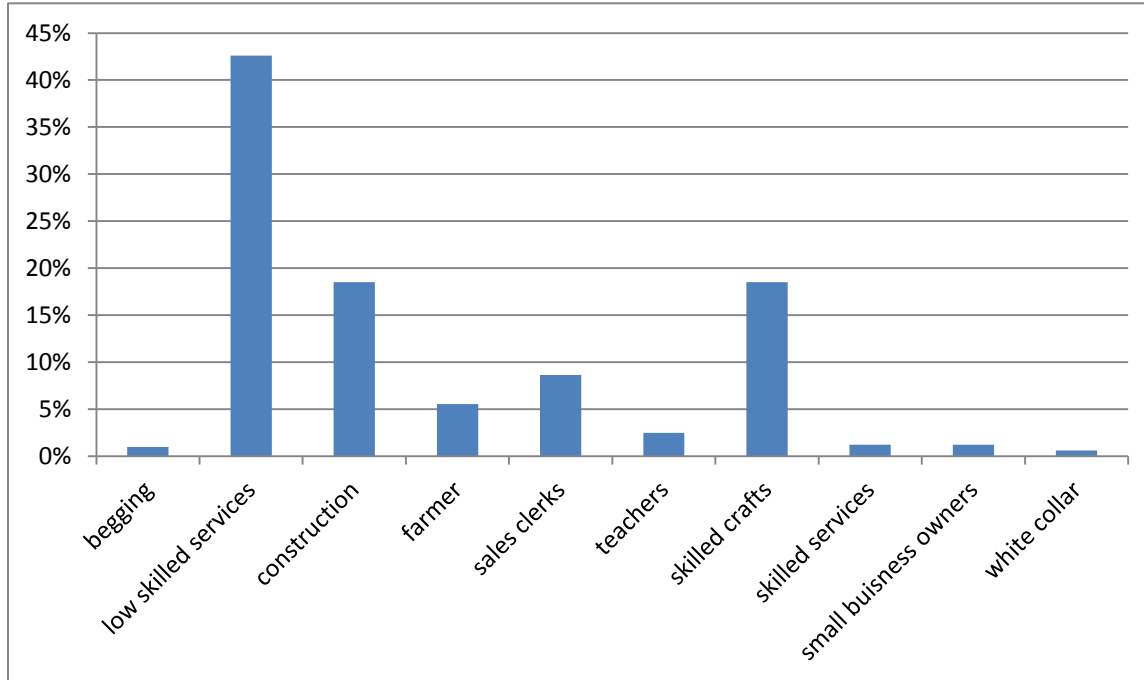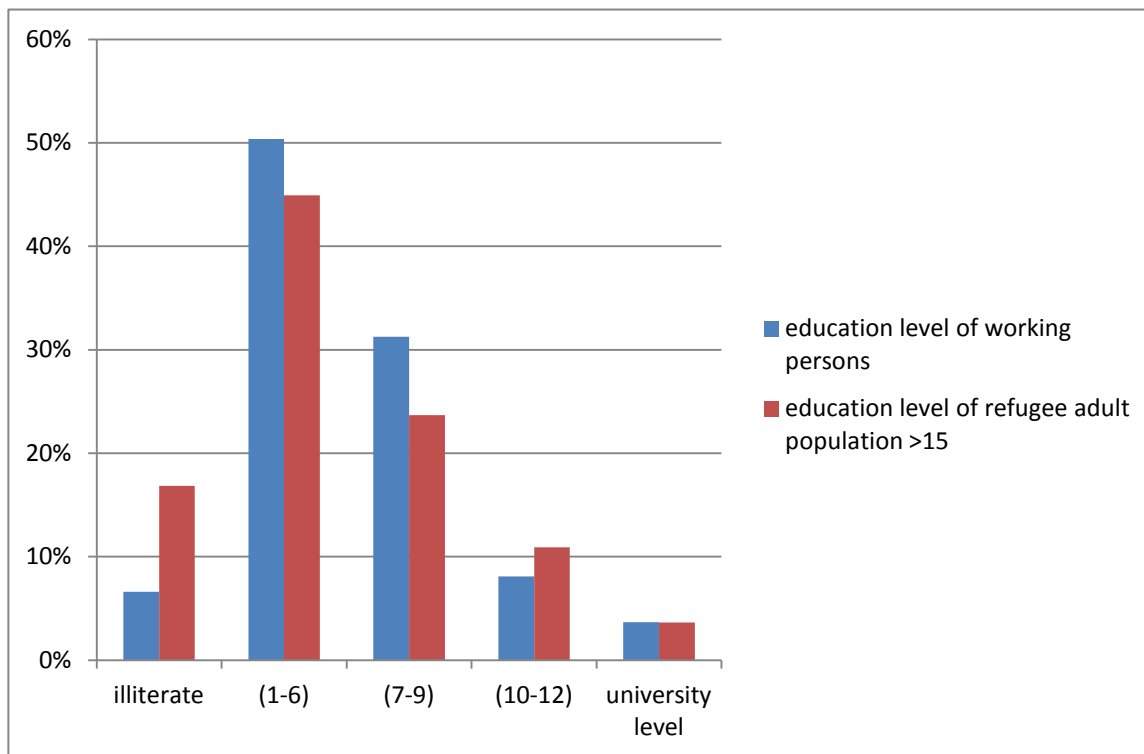

Figure 12: Education level of those able to find jobs in Lebanon compared to the education level of the adults over 15 years of age in the refugee population at large.

5.3 Social conditions

The majority of refugee families are enduring extremely difficult social conditions exacerbated for some by having to take care of members of the extended family. The focus groups demonstrated the full range of anguish and agony related to loss of social contacts; seclusion or anger by some members of the family; lack of self-esteem; over crowdedness; poor living conditions; poor health care and other problems. In the questionnaire, specific questions were asked to clarify some of the major social markers and constraints of the community.

Education

Education is a major concern for most families interviewed in the focus groups. Overwhelmingly, the participants put high social value on education and indicated with pride that children used to go to school in Syria and that in Lebanon they fear their children will be losing out on the chance of getting an education. The education of both boys and girls seemed to be of equal value to the interviewees. The vast majority of children who came from Syria have had schooling up to elementary level and most were enrolled in schools before they left. By contrast, the data collected reveals the magnitude of the disaster for the majority of families who sought refuge in Lebanon. On average only 25 per cent of school age children are enlisted in schools.[13] Only one student in the sample was in higher education. Most higher education students seem to have dropped out or have stayed on in Syria to pursue their studies (as has been noted above there is a significant demographic drop in the 20 to 25 age group among the refugees).

The gender difference is staggering, and requires a careful analysis. Considerably more girls are going to school than boys. About 29.6 per cent of school age girls are enlisted in schools as opposed to 21 per cent of the boys. However, as has been noted in the demographics section, there are fewer school age girls in the sample. So in reality, many families have not brought along all their school age girls with them. This is most likely an indication that girls are being married off at an early age and remaining with their husbands, though this assumption requires further investigation. The phenomenon is well-documented in the Syrian population at large but it is certainly worth further investigation in the future to see if it is being exacerbated by refugee conditions.

Most families responded that they are either not sending their children to school (52 per cent) or they are only sending some of them (26 per cent). Upon careful analysis, it is possible to clarify that the overwhelming majority are not sending all of their children to school. Individual data on household members indicates that most families have some school age children who are not attending school. The main pattern is for the family to send only one or two of their children to school, usually the youngest or one of the youngest. This observation in the narrative part of the survey cannot be calculated directly, but is an observable trend that can be corroborated by the focus group outcomes, where families have indicated that they will tend to send only their brightest children who show promise and willingness to school. Another observation that cannot be confirmed through numerical data, but was observed through the narrative part of the survey, is that a limited number of families will send only their boys to school and not girls. However, statistically speaking, girls' attendance is much higher than boys'.

Most families who were not sending all their children to school blamed it on their inability to afford the high cost of education and schools (35.4 per cent), and the difficulty of transporting children to school (13.8 per cent).[14] Less significant were factors like the high level of education of Lebanese schools (7.6 per cent), problems of accepting the curriculum (three per cent), children not being

admitted to schools (seven per cent), and children having to work and earn money for the family (5.4 per cent). Most other concerns were related to children having missed out on school in Syria because of the violence and parents believing they were no longer capable of catching up in school.

However, the main pattern of school dropout is observed clearly in the cluster analysis. Some clusters have demonstrated considerably more attention to sending children to school than others. Economic levels seem to have little to do with the pattern as both the highest income and lowest income clusters are failing to send their children to school. There is some level of correlation to be observed between how comfortable the refugees were with their Lebanese host communities and the perception of hospitality in relation to school attendance. Clusters where refugees felt high prejudice against Syrians or that Lebanese host communities were unsupportive tend to keep their children away from school. Within those criteria, the clusters that have lower incomes tend to have slightly higher dropout rates than the more affluent ones.

Nonetheless, even in the best of clusters only 62 per cent of the children are attending school and the rest are not. This was found to be one of the most tragic aspects of the Syrian experience and many expressed hope that the situation will be temporary and that their children will soon return to their free education in Syria. At least 29 per cent of those interviewed said that one of their biggest fears was that their children would lose out on completing their education.

One of the only apparent correlating factors for sending children to school is the level of support the households are getting from UNHCR. In clusters where UNHCR has given larger subsidies, children seem to have a better chance of going to school. All other attempts to link education to income, origin of population and family size have yielded poor correlation. It also seems that in areas where households have larger average debts, children tend to go to school less often, although this is a much weaker correlation.

Figure 13: Percentage of children going to school in a cluster as a factor to the average monthly support per household received from UNHCR in a particular region.
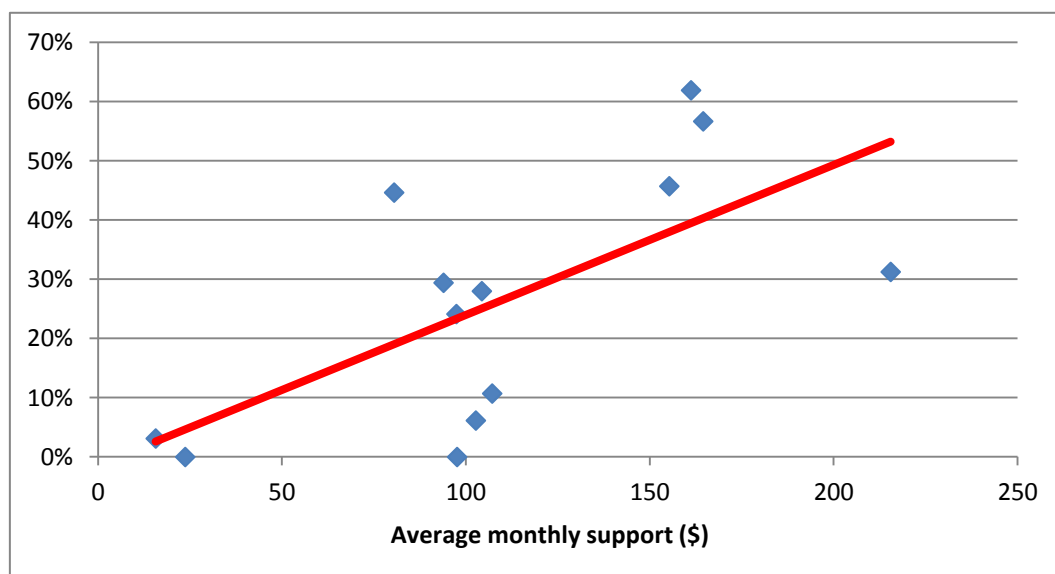
If the projections of school attendance in the sample area are an indicator, it can be assumed that the number of Syrian children enlisted in Lebanese schools by now is in the range of 130,000 students. In an interview with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), the estimated registration of Syrian children in the public school system was stated at around 50,000 students with the possibility of another 90,000 absorbed into the schools. Several conclusions can be drawn from this. First, that estimates of registration in public schools are probably inaccurate. Second, the likelihood that many children are being admitted to private schools or charitable schools on a charitable basis. This is corroborated by some evidence from the focus groups and explains why only one or two children are often selected to go to school. Third, the school system will not be able to accommodate many more refugees in the future since it is not coping with those that are already there.

Safety and security

Personal safety seemed to be a minor issue in most clusters. Around 68 per cent of the respondents feel safe in their new settlements; five per cent feel unsafe, while the remainder feels partially safe. The main reasons for not feeling safe are related to prejudice against Syrians (19.6 per cent) and crime (11.5 per cent). Sectarian conflicts feature only on a very small scale (three per cent). This latter fear is concentrated mainly in Tripoli and Akkar. Personal accounts in the focus groups corroborated the picture. Refugees tend to want to stay out of trouble and avoid problems, although occasionally they get caught in the middle of local conflicts.

## Social capital and mutual support

For the most part the refugees tend to mutually support each other. However, they feel their economic constraints are a hindrance to how much they can help each other. The focus group narratives indicate that people feel ashamed of not being able to give more help to their fellow refugees. Consequently, some value judgments are made concerning self-promotion and hoarding. Refugees who tend to be proactive about getting aid are believed to be manipulating the various NGOs and charities to get aid from more than one source are looked on with disdain by others. The data reinforces the general perception. About 85 per cent of the households felt that their refugee communities are mutually supportive all the time or at least whenever they can. The areas that show the least co-operative behaviour are generally among the areas of denser urban conditions, though this does not seem to be an exclusive reason.

None of the respondents in the focus group or in the questionnaires indicated that there is any form of formal organization representing them. They tend to rely most on their friends and family for support (138 respondents) and neighbours (149). More formal channels for help feature less prominently. The Mukhtar or district clerk is a known figure to ask for help (24 respondents), municipality (2), and police (5). Other sources of help tend to be religious figures and some of the local parties, but those are only evident in one or two cases. In some of the focus groups the respondents indicated good relations with the municipality. This seems to be an anomaly as most refugees do not indicate any major support - financial or otherwise - coming from local government.

The refugee communities tend to perceive their relationships with the host community in neutral terms on some level but can't help feeling exploited by the prices and rents on the other hand. Most respondents feel that the host community is helpful sometimes or all the time. Only 36.5 per cent of the respondents feel that the host community is not helpful. In general the narrative

part of the questionnaire points to safety being the most likable thing about the host area and the reason why they decided to move there (40 per cent), otherwise similar social customs (30.1 per cent) and the existence of relatives in the vicinity (12.7 per cent) had an impact. Exploitation in rents seems to be a major complaint and only a few seem satisfied with the low rents in their area (16 per cent). By contrast, high costs feature among the things they dislike the most about their residence (33.8 per cent). Refugees point to lack of utilities (9.2 per cent) and transport difficulties (five per cent) more prominently than prejudice and racism (4.6 per cent) as issues to dislike about their settlement areas. In contrast to the growing feeling of mutual solidarity between the refugees, the solidarity with the Lebanese community is independent of time and more dependent on the specifics of the host community itself.

**Figure 14: Percentage of refugee communities that perceive host communities as unsupportive**
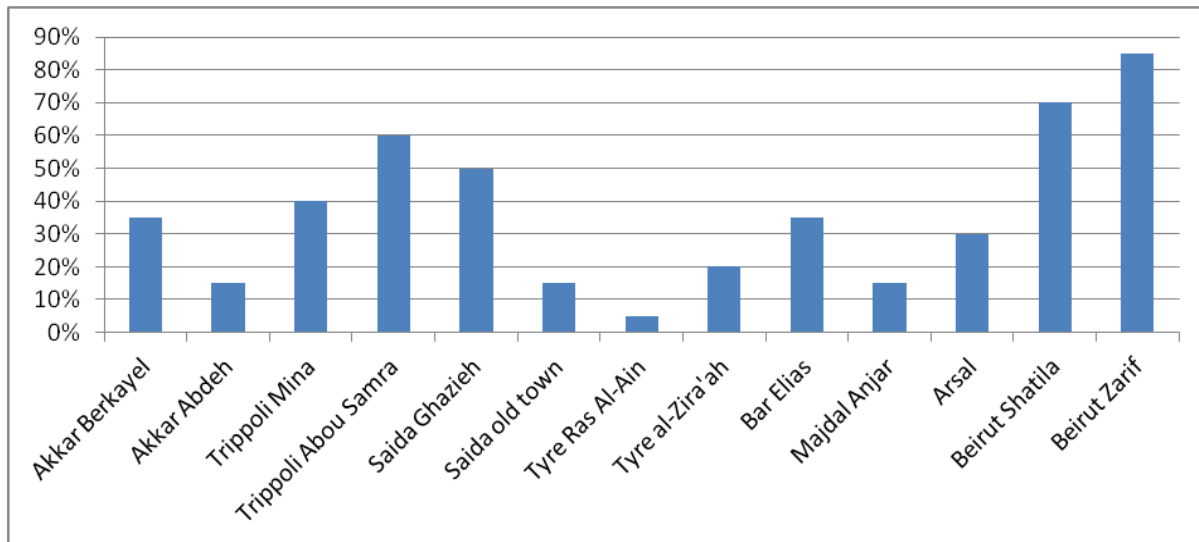
Only 41 per cent of interviewees indicated a desire to move from where they are living. In the focus group discussions it was apparent that, for most people, finding a refuge was such an ordeal that they would prefer to settle and not move again. Those who indicated that they would be willing to move said possible destinations would be other parts of Lebanon (11 per cent) or other countries (30 per cent). The majority of respondents indicated elsewhere that they do not think that they will realistically leave the country in the near future; therefore the issue of moving outside Lebanon is more wishful thinking than a material plan. In general most people seemed to be content with finding a refuge even if they might have some complaints regarding its location.

Origins and social background

Questions were asked about the town/area of origin of refugees in the sample to help discern a particular migration pattern. Interviewers documented governorates accurately but because of limited knowledge of the local geography of Syria, they failed to discern whether specific areas were rural, urban or peri-urban areas. What we know for sure is that about 30 per cent of the sample came from major cities or their immediate vicinities. The largest representation of refugees in Lebanon seems to come from the governorate of Homs (37 per cent), and have settled mainly in the north and more recently in the Beka' Valley (Arsal). Other regions with large refugee representation are Aleppo (22 per cent), Damascus (13 per cent), and Hama (10

per cent). The majority of refugees from Aleppo tend to settle in Beirut and in the south (Saida and Tyre), while the majority of refugees from Damascus settle in Beirut, Saida, Tripoli and Bar Elias, just across the border from Damascus.

Figure 15: Composition of refugees in each cluster in terms of origin in Syria.
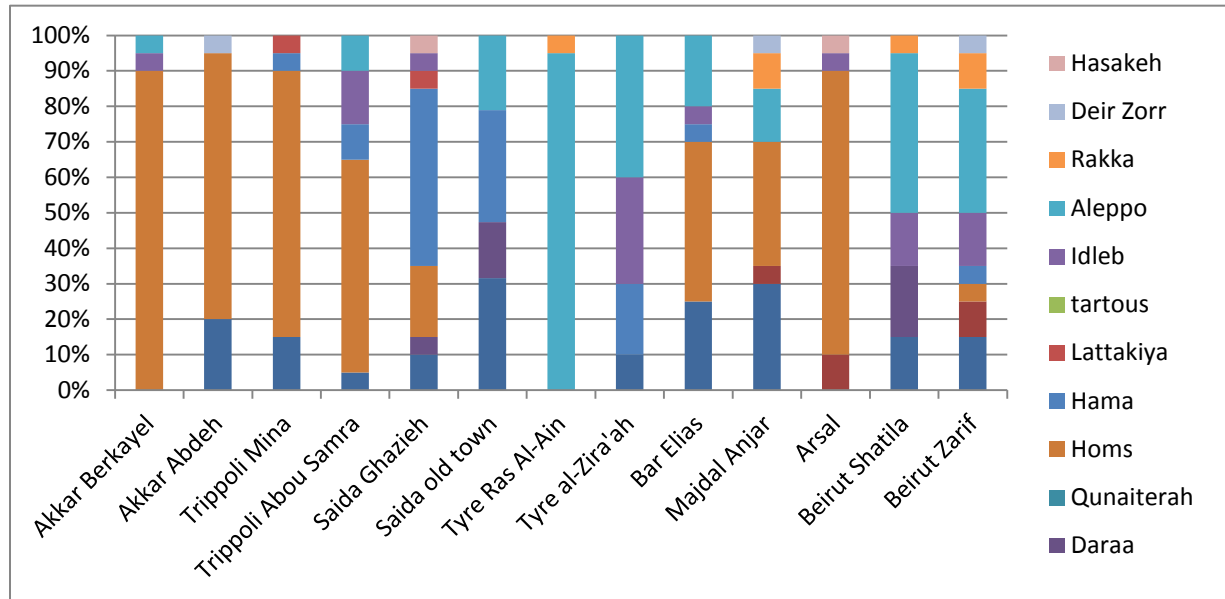
Once in Lebanon, refugees from similar regions tend to group together. Cluster analysis shows a very clear pattern of clusters with high concentrations of people coming from the same governorate. Analysis has shown that between 35 and 95 per cent of any cluster residents are likely to come from the same region. However, this is not quite as simple as it looks. The regions with the highest concentration of people from a single region tend to accommodate refugees form Homs and Aleppo governorates. Even though combined, these form the majority of the refugee population (Homs 37 per cent, Aleppo 22 per cent), their concentration in similar clusters goes beyond their statistical proportionality. Furthermore, upon closer look, only the Homs refugees tend to come from the same part of the Homs governorate. The others, while from the same governorate, may come from different areas and towns. The concentration of Homs city and Talkalakh residents in the northern areas of Lebanon were among the first waves of migration. They took place mainly as a result of the initial fighting in those regions. More recent arrivals however, tend to disperse more equitably in different parts of Lebanon.

The majority of respondents in the focus groups defined themselves as average Syrians. They expressed longingly how well they lived in their home communities and that things in Syria were more affordable for them. They also expressed without exception their superior living conditions and their independence in their homes. It is difficult to corroborate this idealistic and nostalgic vision with the actual conditions they came from. This is not to undermine or discredit their narratives but a more careful analysis is needed, perhaps on an anthropological level, for accurate comparison. However, the data at hand can give some limited indications.

In the sample, there was a significant representation of Syrian society at large. Farmers constituted about 13.4 per cent, construction workers and other building trades 18.5 per cent, skilled labour (carpenters, blacksmiths and electricians) 11.5 per cent, white collar workers

(managers, lawyers) 1.5 per cent, small business owners 11 per cent, public servants and teachers six per cent, clerks and sales people 2.7 per cent, low level services (drivers, cleaners) 14.6 per cent and skilled service workers 1.9 per cent. The sample also contained 6.9 per cent of current heads of household who have never worked before (students and home makers). One and a half per cent of the current heads of household are retired or too sick to work. Compared to the composition of society in Syria, there are slightly fewer farmers than normal and a slight over-representation of the urban middle classes.

Marriage

Ten marriages were recorded in the interviewed households since arrival to Lebanon (average stay of 9.5 months). All but one were between Syrians. Out of a population of 1591, the rate of marriage is 7.9 per thousand per year. This is relatively less than the usual Syrian rate of 9.5 per thousand per year. However, a detailed look reveals it is not much less than the rate of marriages in the governorates from which the majority of refugees come from. As such it seems that there is no major shift in marriage patterns to date.

Information and communication

Most focus groups asserted some level of communication taking place among refugees, though none would admit to formal networks of information of mutual support, mainly for fear that they might be viewed as political activities and would steer suspensions by the Lebanese authorities. The focus groups were insistent on promoting an image of the refugees as law abiding visitors, perhaps as a response to the fact that many Lebanese communities impose curfews and restrictions on the movements of Syrians. Instead of formal networks, the refugees rely on word of mouth communication. For the majority of households (92 per cent) it is the main source of information. Other sources of information include formal briefings by NGOs (21.1 per cent), UNHCR (22.7 per cent), international organizations (4.6 per cent) and general media (3.5 per cent). Lebanese government only features on the local level through municipal contact in some minor cases.

Word of mouth is also the favourite mode of receiving news about Syria (77.7 per cent) though other formal and informal news sources are used as well. People commuting to Syria and reporting back to their communities (32.7 per cent) are a very helpful source of news particularly about the original neighbourhoods and social affairs of relatives and friends. General media (36.5 per cent) and trusted media sources (24.6 per cent) are also main sources of information. Social media is a limited source of information despite the big hype about it in general political circles around the Syrian situation. Only nine per cent of the households receive information about Syria via social media. This is even well below the national average in pre-crisis Syria where 17 per cent of the population had access to the internet and social media. This could be an indication that the majority of the refugees come from areas in Syria that had less access to the internet in the past.

5.4 Future outlook

Intensive fighting was the main reason cited for leaving Syria. Often in the focus groups people recounted their decision to pick up and move as a way of escaping shelling, fighting, losing one's home, and in some cases losing a loved one to the fighting. In the questionnaire answers 93 per cent of respondents said violence was a major reason for deciding to leave. An increase in crime came second at 43 per cent of which 32 per cent was related to a fear of gender based

violence. Lack of work was a smaller factor by contrast (25 per cent). Specific fears related to sectarian violence (36 per cent) were also cited along with other reasons like trauma from losing a home or livelihood in Syria, political fears, kidnapping, etc.

Most focus group participants were eager to say that they would move back immediately when their particular areas in Syria became safe. Indeed, a common answer was that they would move if the shelling stopped (not necessarily other forms of violence). Participants said that life in Lebanon was very difficult and that they had no desire to stay any longer than needed. However, when asked separately in the questionnaire another perspective emerged. Only 33 per cent of the interviewees indicated that they would contemplate returning to Syria if the violence ceased only in their areas. The bulk (78 per cent) would only move back if total peace was achieved across the country. Achieving democracy in Syria was a rather more limited condition observed only by 27 per cent of the households, and to a lesser extent the availability of work back home (19 per cent). Other reasons cited mainly related to the individuals in the family being wanted for political reasons or because they were army deserters. About 19 per cent of respondents asserted that the fall of the regime would be a condition for their return to Syria. This was not one of the options on the questionnaire and yet was mentioned without any prompting.

Though most refugees would hope for a swift return to Syria (58 per cent) there are some who would consider settling in Lebanon (22 per cent) or prefer to go to a third country (20 per cent). This is different for the Palestinian Syrians who would overwhelmingly prefer to return to Syria (77 per cent) and to a lesser degree go somewhere else (23 per cent). No one indicated a willingness to stay in Lebanon. However the majority sense that this is an unrealistic wish. Realistically, only 52 per cent believe that they will return to Syria, while some 22.7 per cent are convinced that they will remain in Lebanon. This slightly less optimistic view of course, than the one put in public. Yet, when pressured about specifics, close to half of the respondents think they will stay in Lebanon for at least another year with the bulk thinking they will be there for between one to five years (41 per cent), between five and ten years (four per cent), or forever (seven per cent). In contrast the more optimistic think they will be back in about six months to a year (34 per cent); in three to six months (11 per cent), or less than three months (five per cent). The majority of the pessimistic views come from the clusters in the south of Lebanon (Saida and Tyre). However, the people who displayed feelings of despair were among those households that have been in Lebanon for the longest in the north of the country (Tripoli and Akkar) despite the general optimistic view in those areas.

When asked about their biggest fears, the majority responded that poverty (61 per cent) would feature among the most dreadful prospects for the future. Others included remaining a refugee (55 per cent), lack of work (29.6 per cent), no education for children (28.8 per cent), losing a loved one to war (28 per cent), sectarian strife (26.5 per cent), losing family honour (23 per cent) and being an illegal immigrant (19.6 per cent). Other minor fears were expressed such as children's health and homelessness.

6   THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LEBANESE OFFICIALS

To complement the responses of the Syrian refugees the research team conducted a series of interviews with Lebanese officials working directly with Syrian refugees. The aim of this was to make a better assessment of conditions and help provide a balanced perspective on conditions in the localities hosting the refugees. In addition to already prevalent discourses on Syrian refugees that focus primarily on the economic and humanitarian impact of the estimated 1.3 million displaced Syrians in Lebanon, these interview sought to address other aspects of the crisis by examining the situation from the point of view of the Lebanese municipalities hosting the large influx of Syrian refugees. They show the effect of the refugee presence on municipalities and host communities in the various Lebanese areas, including the wider responsibilities of local officials and the local economic and infrastructural impact. They also lay out the financial difficulties faced by municipalities and factors leading to possible tensions.

Most of the Syrian refugees that fled their country, following the violence that erupted in the wake of the anti-government uprising in March 2011, settled in poor communities in Lebanon that were already facing stressful economic conditions and poor infrastructure. As a result, the Lebanese government and local municipalities are struggling to meet the increased demand on services and infrastructure. The refugees tend to favour organizations that offer immediate financial assistance and material goods. Thus, the level of support provided by local governments to keep up some of the basic services tends to be less obvious. In the following section, the research team presents the perspective of national and local governments working to respond to the refugee crisis.

6.1 Officials' representation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon

Since the beginning of the Syrian uprising in March 2011, hundreds of thousands of Syrians have found refuge in Lebanon. By some estimates there are now more than 800,000 refugees registered with UNHCR in Lebanon.

> 'The next projection is that one million refugees will be registered by the end of 2013 and that the general Syrian population will be at 2 million. About 1.2 million Lebanese are affected directly and indirectly by the refugee situation.'
>
> Ramzi Naaman, Director of the National Poverty Programme, Council of Ministries (CM)

This large influx of refugees has significant consequences for a small country like Lebanon, which has a population of just over 4 million, especially on its struggling municipalities.

Syrian refugees are mostly located in the north, the south, and the Bekaa and Hermel areas. The survey, which covered key regions accommodating displaced Syrians, found the following populations of Syrian refugees (by region):

* In the Bekaa area, 40,000 in Ersal;
* 12,000 in Majdel Anjar;
* 45,000 in Bar Elias;
* 2,000 in Hermel Labweh village;
* 25,000 in the Northern Wadi Khaled region;

- Around 78,000 in the Aley, Metn, Chouf and Iklim areas;
- South Lebanon hosting 1,500 in Ghazieh, 40,000 in Saida and 20,000 in Tyre;
- In Beirut, there are some 35,000 refugees in Bourj Hamoud;
- The municipality of Ghoberi was nonetheless unable to provide us with accurate figures.[15]

According to Makram Malaeb, programme manager at the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), only 728,252 Syrian refugees are currently registered,[16] while an extra 12 per cent have entered illegally. Our survey shows that 10 out of 11 municipalities rely on their own statistics to record Syrian refugees, while MOSA relies on figures provided by the general security and UNHCR. According to MOSA, 70 to 80 per cent of Syrian refugees are women and children and 51 per cent are female. Male-headed households make up the majority, although there are a significant number of female-headed households, according to MOSA. However, 30 per cent of municipal respondents estimated that the dominant pattern consisted of female households. Another 40 per cent defined the predominant pattern as households headed by men, and about 30 per cent defined them simply as families or as evenly distributed between female and male households.

The survey also showed that a large number of municipalities were not able to provide an accurate figure on the number of refugee arrivals, except Saida, Ersal and Majdel Anjar municipalities, which recorded about 40 to 50 arrivals every day. This figure stood at 50 arrivals a week in the Aley region. MOSA underlined that about 3,000 people register every day on average, with some 10,000 to 12,000 crossing into Lebanon every day, but only 7000 to 8,000 returning back home. Regarding housing, about 70 per cent of refugees live in rented houses or stores while 14 per cent live in informal tented settlements, particularly in the Bekaa and South Lebanon areas. The survey has shown that most Syrian refugees tend to come from all over Syria, with about 27 per cent hailing from Homs, 17 per cent from Aleppo, 15 per cent from Idlib and 12 per cent from Damascus, according to MOSA figures. It was also noted that Lebanese border communities hosted Syrians from neighboring regions, such as Kousseir and Homs in Wadi Khaled or Ersal, and Reef Dimashk in Majdel Anjar.

The sectarian dimension also affected the choice of residence of certain families, with pro-regime Syrian families more prone to moving to the Hermel region. The south appears to be somewhat different, with saturation in other Lebanese regions resulting in the movement of both loyalists and pro-rebels Syrians into that area. Municipal respondents also stated that large cities and surrounding suburbs like Beirut or Saida were sought after due to greater work opportunities. Finally, municipal respondents believed that between 50 and 90 per cent of Syrian refugees relied on aid, a percentage that varied from one area to another.

6.2 The mandate of Lebanese municipalities

The survey has indicated that 100 per cent of municipal respondents saw a widening of their spectrum of responsibilities to include relief efforts in the wake of the Syrian crisis. All of them confirmed that there was no official mandate from the Lebanese state and that they acted on their own initiative and were motivated by moral concerns. They added that they had received an unofficial mandate from the interior ministry requiring them to record statistics on Syrian refugees and beef up security measures. Malaeb, from MOSA said that municipalities were 'at a level of governance which makes them completely independent and grants them a large mandate, which allows flexibility'. He admitted nonetheless that municipalities were not equipped to handle such a crisis. He also added that a security cell had been formed, which was chaired by the Prime Minister (PM) to handle the Syrian refugee issue.

6.3 The impact on infrastructure

All respondents surveyed relayed similar concerns that the influx of refugees increased pressure on infrastructure such as schools, health care, garbage collection, water and electrical grids.

Schools

Over 50 per cent of respondents were unable to estimate the number of children who had enrolled in schools around their area. In Ghazieh, 150 children were enrolled, in Majdel Anjar some 600, with others scattered in other schools, in Saida some 1,400 children, in Ghobeiri at least 500, while in Bar Elias at least 400. Municipal respondents explained that in some cases teachers were working double shifts, other respondents underlined that Lebanese teachers gave priority to Lebanese students, allowing Syrians to enrol only when there was enough space for them. Figures have shown that only a small portion of students was able to enrol in Lebanese schools. MOSA confirmed this trend, saying that only 33,000 Syrians were registered in local schools, in addition to 15,000 who were registered before the Syrian war. This placed the total number of Syrian students at about 50,000 yet there were about 400,000 Syrians of school age. With 350,000 Lebanese currently enrolled in schools, Lebanese institutions have a remaining capacity of 90,000, according to MOSA. Ramzi Naaman estimated that the cost of enrolment for each Syrian refugee was about $1,000.

Health care services

 A large majority of municipal respondents were unable to estimate in dollars the impact of the refugee influx on health care services in their areas, adding that municipalities were intervening with NGOs or MOSA at their own discretion to provide Syrian refugees with beds. However the municipality of Aley and regions said it had been able to open a clinic thanks to support from international and private donors. As a result it has been able to treat most cases, although was facing difficulties in providing medication for patients suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure. This was also the case in Ersal, where two clinics - one financed by the Irshad and another by the Hariri foundation - were providing basic services. In Saida, some clinics were able to secure $30,000 finance. Currently, UNHCR is covering 85 per cent of health care interventions, but funding shortfalls are increasing. According to MOSA, about $267m is currently needed to cover health care expenses for a population of 400,000 Syrian refugees, with the cost per Syrian amounting to $425 per year. The health care infrastructure is coming under stress especially in emergency rooms. The health care problem was more acute in border areas, where people previously relied on cheap Syrian health care that is no longer available since the Syrian conflict began.

Electrical grid, water and garbage collection

All the respondents estimated that one of the most costly repercussions on Lebanese municipalities was the increased expense of garbage collection. Others also listed increased pressure on water, sewage and electrical grids. This added pressure has resulted in maintenance problems such as faulty pipes and transmitters, which are being regularly replaced. A large majority of municipalities reported that their expenses had doubled and that they had difficulty in obtaining funding. While municipalities such as Labweh or Majdel Anjar relied on private or international donors, many respondents claimed that they did not receive any subsidies. The state's role was also deemed as non-existent. Some municipalities such as

Wadi Khaled relied on greater credit lines, others such as Tyre have put in place new cash generating projects to face added expenses while others such as the Bourj Hamoud municipality is cutting costs from services considered as non-essential. MOSA estimated that about $450m was needed for this year alone. For next year, to sustain the same level of services, Lebanon would need to secure $1.2bn, with a further $8bn required to counteract the negative economic impact of the refugee situation.

6.3 Increased inflationary prices due to refugee influx

Inflationary trends vary greatly from one area to another. Surprisingly prices seem to be increasing mostly in populous areas, with hikes starting at 40 per cent reported in Labweh, 50 per cent in Tyre, 100 per cent in Majdel Anjar and a majority of other municipalities and 200 per cent in Saida. In Ghazieh, Hajj Hassan Halabi explained that business owners were restructuring office space into smaller areas so they can host a larger number of refugees. This large influx of refugees has also translated into a new economic reality. A majority of the municipal respondents noticed an inflationary trend without being able to quantify it. This was more noticeable in border areas such as Majdel Anjar, or Wadi Khaled where most people relied on cheap Syrian products before the war started.

6.4 Increased competition for jobs

Another direct impact of the large influx of Syrians refugee is the increased competition for jobs, as Syrians are perceived as cheap labour. According to MOSA about 377 stores opened recently in 10 Lebanese localities. While there are no real figures on unemployment in Lebanon's border areas (estimates range from eight per cent in 2009 to up to 20 per cent), it is certainly increasing among the more vulnerable segments of the population.

More people are turning to Syrians, who are paid $6 a day instead of the local average $15 or $20 rate in rural areas especially in agriculture and construction. Rates were higher in Ghobeiri, Beirut where Syrian refugees are willing to accept $15 instead of $25. Syrians were also considered to be more competitive, because they were willing to work longer hours according to the municipality of Bourj Hamoud. The perception as to whether the impact of refugee presence was positive or negative also differs between regions. In Saida, Ersal and Labweh, municipal respondents considered the impact neutral, as Syrian refugees accepted jobs that Lebanese were not willing to perform. Only did the Aley municipality consider the presence of refugees as positive because they believed their presence created more work opportunities for Lebanese who were able to rent out their houses, a blessing given the gloomy Lebanese economic context. At the level of the CM, it was stated that while negatives outnumbered positives, it was undeniable that more money was being spent in the country and food vouchers distributed by NGOs were increasing sales of local produce. Finally, a dichotomy was noticed between the perception of Syrian refugees' working conditions that municipal respondents claimed were humane and the reality as described by Syrians. Also, most admitted that Syrians were sometimes earning less than half of what Lebanese earned. In addition, the Ministry of Economy has instructed the police to prevent Syrians registered as refugees from opening any businesses.

6.5 The issue of social cohesion

The refugee issue appears to be becoming more and more problematic. Today, Syrian refugees are spread over more than 1500 localities, according to Naaman. Vulnerable areas have been identified based on communal poverty indicators combined with the number of refugees. Some 206 localities are believed to be most at risk, situated mostly in the Bekaa and Akkar regions. 'We have identified some 45 municipalities as possible ticking bombs and we are trying to gear up the work of NGOs in these areas,' adds Naaman. According to the director, there has been an increase in criminality of 60 per cent all over Lebanon. Interestingly in border areas, people were more receptive to the plight of Syrians, while in areas inhabited by Lebanese from a different sectarian background than the majority of Syrians, people seemed to be less receptive. According to Naaman, social cohesion seems to be at risk because of the local radicalized political context which gives any individual problem a sectarian or an ethnic (Syrians/Lebanese) dimension. There are currently two different dynamics which are either driven by sectarianism (such as in the south which is mostly Shiite) or by nationality in areas where people are not accustomed to seeing Syrians.

As an example, political tensions have been reported in Wadi Khaled, which has witnessed increased skirmishes between Lebanese and Syrian residents and the Syrian army. In the past year, there have been sporadic incidents involving heavy shelling and gunfire from the Syrian side of the border into Lebanon, which has seen the loss of over a dozen lives. In the Bekaa, tension has taken another shape with growing conflict between Syrian refugees and Sunni residents on one side and Shiite residents on the other. Due to its location on the porous border with Syria, Ersal, a Sunni village has become a place of transit for refugees coming into Lebanon. As a result, Labweh (a Shiite village) and Ersal have witnessed a series of sectarian kidnappings. In the second week of April a series of kidnappings took place between residents and members of the Shiite Jaafar tribe after the abduction of Hussein Jaafar from the al-Bustan village in Hermel. Seven Sunni Ersal residents were eventually released by the Jaafars, while five tribe members were released by locals from the town. In June, unidentified gunmen killed four Shiites in the Bekaa region of eastern Lebanon.

6.6 Planning for the future:

All municipal respondents admitted that they had no plan for the future in the event of a protracted Syrian conflict, nor did they have proper funding for such a plan. Over 80 per cent of them believed that the presence of refugees would be detrimental for Lebanese communities in the long run. MOSA emphasised that they had put in place a plan requiring the approval of the next government, which was yet to be formed. Naaman highlighted the existence of a contingency plan, which would entail the creation of new border structures if the number of refugees entering Lebanon exceeded 30,000 people per day. In conclusion, both municipal respondents and ministry officials seem to be ill prepared to face the sheer size of the Syrian crisis.

'Now that two years have gone by since the beginning of the Syria war, we need to start planning on ensuring the livelihoods of these refugees by providing them with jobs. We need to develop projects that allow us to introduce Syrians to the labour market without competing with Lebanese, as well as bringing the two populations to work together on common projects, in order to ease up tensions. Our main challenge is to stop dealing with the Syrian refugee situation on a daily (reactionary) basis without planning for the future,' says Naaman.

6.7 Recommendations of respondents

More efficient and transparent criteria for the distribution of resources

During the survey it was noticed that municipal respondents did not trust the work of NGOs and that they believed that the funds received by Lebanon were squandered on redundant assessment studies, multiple survey teams and excessive security. Many municipalities were not co-operative when initially contacted. In addition, some municipal respondents underlined that conducting focus groups would be counter-productive because most refugees were disappointed by the work of NGOs and that distributing aid during such meetings might encourage refugees to co-operate. Interviews with municipal authorities have shown that the perception of wasted resources is impeding the current relief effort and worsening tensions between Syrians and Lebanese communities and relief agencies.

Create development projects addressing marginalized communities to help rebuild trust in the state

In the face of a protracted Syrian conflict, emergency responses should be dovetailed with long-term development assistance and infrastructure projects that employ locals, as these would benefit both Syrian refugees and host communities.

Establish camps or ensure a housing solution for refugees

As the conflict escalates in Syria, the number of Syrian refugees coming into the country will keep on growing. A common opinion expressed by respondents was the need to establish refugee camps in border areas to solve the problem of registration, smooth out the relief effort, lessen the burdens on the local population and appease security fears. Several municipal respondents also underlined the pressing issue of offering viable housing to refugees and possibly imposing rent caps to stop their exploitation by Lebanese land owners.

Insuring proper distribution of aid

Several municipalities reported that the distribution of food aid was essential to maintaining security in their region since the lack of sufficient food was often linked to higher levels of criminality.

Security

Security was listed as a major concern. Respondents advocated better control of the influx of refugees in Lebanon and enhanced security in the different municipalities.

NOTES

[1] UNHCR has, at the time of writing, indicated the number of refugees to be almost 800,000, with over 100,000 of these still awaiting registration. However, the size of the total refugee population is still contested with official Lebanese sources saying the total figure including registered refugees, previous resident workers in Lebanon and non-registered recent arrivals to be about one million people. This figure is highly debatable as the number of resident workers prior to the crisis was estimated by most sources to be in excess of 300,000 people. UNHCR figures are open source data; however, UNHCR assumes no liability for them and for any interpretation of those figures. This report uses their figures only as base reference, but develops its main findings based on the results of the focus groups and questionnaires collected through original field work. The authors of the report are, however, indebted to the valuable information provided by UNHCR on the location and number of refugees across Lebanon. The design of the cluster samples was based in part on overall distribution figures published by UNHCR. The authors of the reports however, assume full responsibility for all assumptions made on the basis of the UNHCR published data.

[2] All information about the general Syrian statistics was taken from the Syrian Statistical Yearbook of 2011 issued by the Central Bureau of Statistics. The document, representing data collected and calculated in 2010, constitutes the best available base line information for the Syrian population before the beginning of the Syrian crisis in March 2011.

[3] UNICEF is documenting some of these cases but no specific data has been published yet.

[4] UNRWA, 'PRS in Lebanon', http://www.unrwa.org/prs-lebanon

[5] The largest influx of Palestinian refugees from Syria during in December 2012 and January 2013, following the fighting in Yarmouk camp.

[6] UNHCR has made great strides in reducing waiting times over the past few months. In October 2013 the backlog was reduced by 15 per cent. Current waiting times nationwide are 39 days, but there is significant variation by region.

[7] While the research does not address the reasons behind this difference, UNRWA does not have the same surge capacity as UNHCR and was not initially fully equipped to deal with the shift from responding to the needs of a largely fix population of long-term refugees to an emergency response. Many of these issues have now been addressed and the situation on the ground has improved.

[8] UNRWA payments per household are slightly below UNHCR payments given to the wider refugee population mainly because the average household is slightly smaller. Respondents in some focus groups indicated an initial lag in receiving UNRWA payments. However, at the time of conducting the survey this gap appeared to be closing.

[9] The introduction of UNHCR's new targeting regime in November 2013 is the likely source of this concern. Due to funding gaps and pressure from donors, UNHCR has introduced a targeting regime where the most vulnerable 70 per cent of registered households will continue to receive assistance; the remaining 30 per cent will have assistance withdrawn. There is an on-going appeals process for those households excluded in the first round of targeting.

[10] Working age for this purpose is taken to be 15-65.

[11] In a very limited number of cases children were reported to contribute to family income, those were dropped out of the labour analysis and the count reflects only the work by the head of the households and other adult members.

[12] This figure features all those who were ever economically active even for a short time since arrival to Lebanon (including a very limited number of children). It does not reflect the number of currently employed people discussed earlier, though it corroborates the hypothesis that the working age adults not currently employed should be considered as unemployed, since most seem to have statistically engaged in some level of income earning in the past.

[13] Data on their performance in schools was not obtained and requires a completely different approach for study.

[14] Free public schools do not always have space to accommodate refugees and, as shall be discussed elsewhere in the report, the absorption capacity of Lebanese public schools is limited. Lebanon's public school system normally covers less than half the actual demand for schooling and the main providers of education are private institutions. Private schools are not free; even when subsidized by charities they still require parents to cover at least some auxiliary costs other than tuition.

[15] These are municipal estimates of their refugee populations.

[16] Interview was carried out on 10 September 2013. By the date of writing the report UNHCR has brought the figure to almost 800,000 people.

This report has been prepared in good faith on the basis of the interviews and surveys conducted, and on the information available at the date of publication by the Beirut Research and Innovation Center (BRIC). The research was commissioned by Oxfam in order to inform its programme and humanitarian responses. The findings, interpretations and conclusions in this report reflects the opinions and perceptions of key informants and interviewees and do not necessarily reflect Oxfam policy or practice, nor do they represent the views of BRIC as an institution.