

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN LEBANON OVERVIEW, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*Revisiting the Humanitarian System: The Call
for Country Ownership in the Case of Lebanon*

Policy paper

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Beirut, October 2016



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Abstract

The 2015 Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) Report⁰¹ highlights that in 2013, 147 countries received humanitarian assistance, with countries from the Arab region, particularly those affected by the Syrian crisis, being the highest beneficiaries of aid. More than 3 billion US dollars was directed to Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. This amounts to 15% of the total international humanitarian response and 43% of the funding directed to the top ten recipients. Notably, Lebanon is among the top 10 countries receiving humanitarian assistance. The statistics of the GHA report reveal that overall humanitarian financing has been dominated by international humanitarian agencies and NGOs, which overshadow local and national NGOs; from 2010 to 2014, local and national NGOs received only 1.6% of the total amount given directly to NGOs.

In this context, this policy paper has been developed from a civil society perspective. It looks at the case of humanitarian intervention in Lebanon focusing on the role of different humanitarian actors and examining the partnerships established between international, local and national NGOs. The analysis sheds light on

- i) the need to localize humanitarian response through strengthening local capacities to prevent, manage and respond to crises and enhance cooperation with local authorities*
- ii) the need to establish links between humanitarian intervention and the long-term sustainable development vision and, finally,*
- iii) the need to ensure genuine implementation of aid effectiveness principles to ensure effective outcomes.*

The paper relies on the review of literature (books, articles, statements, position papers and websites) covering humanitarian assistance, development aid, partnership, coordination, collaboration and aid effectiveness. It attempts to answer the following questions: What are the different roles played by diverse actors (local and national NGOs, international NGOs, private sector) in humanitarian assistance? What are the factors that hinder an effective partnership between INGOs, local and national NGOs in humanitarian action in Lebanon? What conditions are needed to ensure the localization of humanitarian response in Lebanon?

Lastly, the paper suggests some recommendations to improve the humanitarian intervention and eradicate the existing aberrations and flaws in the humanitarian system.

01 Global Humanitarian Assistance, "Global Humanitarian Assistance Report," Development Initiatives, 2015 available at http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/GHA-Report-2015_-Interactive_Online.pdf [last accessed 23 July 2016].

01. INTRODUCTION

Currently, there are over 125 million people in the world that are in need of humanitarian assistance⁰² due to both natural disasters and man-made crises. Accordingly, around 147 countries receive humanitarian assistance.⁰³ Several actors are part of this global humanitarian system working towards providing humanitarian assistance and action. This includes states, host-communities, UN agencies, international organizations (e.g., International Committee of the Red Cross), and non-governmental organizations (international, regional and national) among others.

An efficient, effective⁰⁴ and responsive, sufficient and coherent global humanitarian system⁰⁵ is essential to ensure that humanitarian needs are met and resilience and capacity are built in a transformative process to predict, manage, and recover from a humanitarian crisis.

02 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Global Humanitarian Overview," 2016, available at <https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/GHO-2016.pdf>, [last accessed 30 July 2016].

03 Global Humanitarian Assistance, "Chapter 4: Global Humanitarian Assistance Report," Development Initiatives, 2015, p.52 <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Chapter-4.pdf>, [last accessed 15 June 2016]

04 As defined by the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship, humanitarian action aims at saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters. Humanitarian action also aims to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations. The effectiveness and efficiency of these actions are further elaborated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development as an activity to achieve its objectives and measuring outputs in terms of cost-efficiency and timeliness. See more at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dacriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

05 The State of the Humanitarian System 2015 uses four performance categories to assess the performance of humanitarian action. This include categories sufficiency, effectiveness, efficiency and coherence. Accordingly the humanitarian aid should be covering needs, timely and set based on priority of the needs of the recipients, its outputs should reflect the most rational and economic use of inputs and align it broader peace and development goals and adhere to core humanitarian principles. The "The State of the Humanitarian System 2015," ALNAP, 2015, available at <http://sohs.alnap.org/#performance-falling-short> [last accessed 30 July 2016].

However, several academic and development practitioners' and fellows' analyses⁰⁶ on the humanitarian system and the actors involved show that challenges and gaps persist in all these aspects⁰⁷. Thus, there is a need to revisit the humanitarian system and suggest steps to improve the performance of the different actors involved in providing Humanitarian Assistance.

At the center of this revision is the need to improve country/national ownership⁰⁸ or what is sometimes called "localization,"⁰⁹ which entails shifting the leadership of humanitarian action from global to local, respecting the country context and ensuring local involvement based on active participation, developing capacities and empowerment, as well as accountability.¹⁰ These key components of localization ensure the active engagement of all local actors, including the government, local authorities, civil society, etc., in needs-assessment, design and planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation in the different cycles of humanitarian assistance programs. Even so, the UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 affirms responsibility

06 Read assessments on humanitarian system, Alice Obrecht, "De-internationalising humanitarian action: Rethinking the global-local Relationship," *IRIS*, 2014, available at http://www.iris-france.org/docs/kfm_docs/docs/obs_questions_humanitaires/eng-obshuma-obrecht-octobre2014.pdf [last accessed 29 July 2016]. Also, Tara R. Gingerich and Marc J. Cohen, "Turning the Humanitarian System on its head", *Oxfam*, 2015, available at https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/rr-turning-humanitarian-system-local-capacity-270715-en.pdf [last accessed 29 July 2016]; and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "OCHA Global Humanitarian Policy Reform Report," 2013, available at https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/GHPF_Report_FINAL%20%28web%20and%20printing%29.pdf [last accessed 29 July 2016].

07 "The State of the Humanitarian System 2015," *ALNAP*, 2015, available at <http://sohs.alnap.org/#performance-falling-short>

08 The concept of "country/national ownership" used in this paper refers to the term adopted in the Paris Declaration in 2005 during the Second High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. Accordingly, country ownership is when the partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies, and strategies and co-ordinate development actions. This requires commitment to the participatory approach and broad consultative process by the partner countries in developing and implementing their national development strategies. From the donors side, country ownership requires full respect to this leadership and strengthening partner capacity to exercise it.

09 Localization has been among the top proposals revealed by the Voices survey prior to the first World Humanitarian Summit. Accordingly, some top proposals listed in regard to localization are:

- When possible shift leadership of humanitarian action towards local actors, national institutions and regional cooperation, with the international humanitarian community taking a support role included:
- Empower affected people to take a leadership role, better support first responders and complement local coping and protection strategies wherever possible
- Expand direct funding to local organizations

Please note that with regard to these proposals and others on enhancing localization, the paper stresses the role of the host country rather than the host community. This requires leadership to be given to national institutions first and also requires respecting the national ownership principle.

World Humanitarian Summit Voices Survey, World Humanitarian Summit, 2016 available at <http://voices.whsummit.org/results> [last accessed 29 July 2016]

10 Beatrice Pouligny, "Supporting Local Ownership in Humanitarian Action," *Global Public Policy Institute*, 2009, p.109, available at http://www.disastergovernance.net/fileadmin/gppi/GPPiPPR_local_ownership_2009.pdf [last accessed 20 July 2016].

must be taken first and foremost by the state responding to the humanitarian crisis and notes that the affected state plays the “primary role” in “the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory.”¹¹ Yet, in most cases, the call for international assistance becomes necessary, due to the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis. This international assistance should ensure localization. It should aim at empowering national institutions and regional and local authorities and actors so that they have stronger leadership and more efficient use of country systems as agreed in the Accra Action Agenda (AAA).¹² It should involve empowering affected people to take a leadership role and reduce their dependency from aid, supporting first responders and complementing local coping and protection strategies, wherever possible, to secure durability and efficiency. Country Ownership requires as well expanding direct funding to national and local organizations. This is in direct relation to the role played by the key stakeholders at a national level, particularly with civil society actors. The latter should not be considered only as an implementing partner but also as a direct channel to reach out to diverse communities and assess their needs and necessities for more effective responses. Moreover, being part of the affected society, civil society actors can identify appropriate humanitarian responses more adequately and ensure the capacity-development and empowerment of the people.

Yet, what we see “in the field” is that localization of humanitarian response is generally ignored and/or misunderstood. A new trend could be observed and it is the registration of national offices of international organizations as national organizations, which is considered to be localization. In fact this practice does not empower local organizations; rather, it leads to competition which is not always fair and the replacement of local organizations by international ones with national registration. Moreover, lack of localization is particularly visible considering the flows of direct funding. As the Global Humanitarian Assessment Report 2015 reveals, in 2014, only 0.2% of total international humanitarian assistance went directly to local and national NGOs.¹³ The lack of direct funding was also shown by the State of Humanitarian System 2015 report,¹⁴ revealing that even though 4 out of 5 of the 4480 humanitarian organization recipients are national NGOs, they are still hardly receiving direct funding. To overcome this challenge and

11 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182, UN Resolution Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, December 1991, available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r182.htm> [last accessed 29 July 2016]

12 In 2008 at the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness an even greater number and wider diversity of stakeholders endorsed the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA)

13 Global Humanitarian Assistance, *op.cit.*, 2015.

14 See more at “State of the Humanitarian System,” *op.cit.*, 2015.

access funding, even indirectly, local organizations establish partnerships¹⁵ with international NGOs, who have easier access to financial resources.

This paper will reflect on the needed requirements to enhance country ownership by promoting the localization of humanitarian response. It will showcase Lebanon to specify the challenges faced and propose related recommendations. It is well-known that Lebanon, particularly after the Syrian crisis became a top recipient of humanitarian assistance and hosts several humanitarian actors. The first section of the paper will focus on localization, as the direct interpretation of the core principle of "Aid Effectiveness: 'National Ownership,'" and also as a key need in humanitarian assistance. It will then present a brief overview of the humanitarian assistance history of Lebanon and the level of diverse humanitarian actors' engagement to set the framework. The last section will discuss the way forward and suggests key recommendations to address localization within humanitarian interventions.

02. NATIONAL RESPONSE TO HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The existing resources and documents on aid effectiveness, particularly in humanitarian response, stress that first and foremost, the state holds the greatest responsibility in responding to humanitarian crises.¹⁶ This is most efficient when state institutions are able to mobilize resources, financial, human and in kind types of aid. It is worth noting that humanitarian challenges often exceed the ability of one partner to respond properly and adequately. It is thus important to create efficient and effective mechanisms of coordination among the various actors, with the aim of amplifying energy and resources, as well as complementing each other's efforts. In fact, the most effective response would be when the state is implementing a well-designed and nationally adopted comprehensive "contingency plan" in coordination with and complementary to all humanitarian actors. In case such a plan is lacking and state institutions are not ready to react timely and properly, civil society organizations (CSOs), national and local, take the initiative to provide the first and immediate response.

15 It is important to elaborate a proper and shared definition of partnership; partnership should be based on full transparency and mutual accountability, shared responsibility and joint planning, implementation and evaluation. The relations between foreign and local actors are not accurate comparing to this definition. They are more likely to be a one way accountability and transparency. Moreover, partnership should contribute to the creation of an enabling environment and to empowering local actors and enhancing their independence. The principles of partnership should include equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity as endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform on July 2007. See Global Humanitarian Platform, "Principles of Partnerships, A Statement of Commitment," July 2007, available at <https://icvnetwork.org/system/files/versions/Principles%20of%20Partnership%20English.pdf>, [last accessed 29 July 2016].

16 United Nation General Assembly Resolution 46/182, *op.cit.*, 1991.

Local responses to humanitarian crisis are significant in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. For instance, in most cases, local/national organizations are quicker to respond. First, because they are close to the impacted area and directly witnessing the beginning of the crisis and/or they can predict and measure its occurrence, unless it is an unexpected humanitarian crisis.¹⁷ Closeness and familiarity with the context help them to act with more appropriate and adapted responses to the needs. They have a deeper knowledge of the composition, traditions, indigenous culture, language and dynamics of the country to prepare responses. This will also ensure easier acceptance by the local communities (directly or indirectly affected by the crisis) and access to different regions/people. Being from the country, they can quickly and more accurately assess the short-term needs and necessities and link them to the longer-term. Their engagement is not time-bound; moreover their commitment to advancing the situation derives, in essence, from their mission, vision and *raison d'être*. This strong, locally-tied foundation should go hand in hand with a local CSO's right to define its own development path and long term strategies based on its right to self-determination (as a right adopted in September 2015 by the UNGA in Agenda 2030).

03. LOCALIZATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Unfortunately, local actors are not currently a primary party to the humanitarian system, despite all the given arguments proving their capacities and facts supporting their genuine role in humanitarian response. In fact, international actors do not recognize them as strong enough to play the leading role. Due to mistrust and prejudgment of local capacities, relationships between external/international and local actors carries a paternalistic component, which creates tensions between the two groups. Often, external actors use standards and parameters to evaluate the performance of local actors, even though these evaluation methods do not take into account local dynamics and are not adapted to the local context. Moreover, competition to access funding is an important factor behind the tension between local/national and international organizations. It is worth mentioning in this regard that some donors, especially state or state agencies, prioritize financial assistance delivery through their compatriots to minimize the political and financial risks. This creates additional challenges facing national responses and localization. All these factors negatively affect the empowerment of the national and local actors and their access to resources.

¹⁷ One can argue about the unpredictability of the humanitarian crisis especially in Lebanon. However, due to the longstanding unresolved multidimensional issues, crisis are always expected and thus contingency plans should be always taken in consideration

The regulatory framework restricting their ability to act independently is another factor limiting their capacities. Consequently, proper partnerships play an important role in eradicating tension and meeting the required standards for appropriate interventions. In some unfortunate cases, international actors avoid strong national/local actors, who seek full partnership,¹⁸ and prefer weaker ones with lesser experience to implement their already planned interventions instead.

Furthermore, the 2015 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report indicates that the local and national NGOs' share of total funding was halved from 0.4% in 2012 to 0.2% in 2014 and their share of the total given to NGOs has also almost halved – from 2.3% to 1.2%. In relation, the number of INGOs receiving funding grew but lack of transparency on money spent persisted with 76% of aid having gone directly through international actors but only 38% of that aid being investigated.

Localization can benefit from partnerships established with international actors only when they respect the core principles of partnership, such as mutual responsibility, mutual accountability, and transparency and above all, political will and commitment. In 2007, in an attempt to strengthen the effectiveness of humanitarian action, most of the humanitarian actors (UN and others) came together under the Global Humanitarian Platform and agreed on Partnerships Principles.¹⁹ Nevertheless, partnerships between global and local organizations fell short because they were not equally designed and lacked transparency.

04. AN OVERVIEW OF THE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE HISTORY IN LEBANON²⁰

The long history of humanitarian interventions in Lebanon is closely related to conflicts

18 For a definition of full partnership, please visit footnote 15

19 *Ibid.*

20 This section will only provide an overview of Lebanon's history, from late 1975 to present, and will focus on the Syria crisis to further elaborate the situation. For detailed analysis see: Karam Karam, *Le Mouvement Civil au Liban. Mobilisations, protestations et revendications associatives dans l'après-guerre*, Paris, Karthala-IREMAM, 2006; and Lebanon Support, "The Role of Community Based Organizations in preparing and responding to crisis, a qualitative study", *Civil Society Knowledge Centre*, 2016, available at: <http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/resource/role-community-based-organizations-preparing-and-responding-crisis-lebanon-qualitative> [last accessed ??]; and Lebanon Support's research papers on the 2006 and 2007 crises, published on the *Civil Society Knowledge Centre* between 2015 and 2016, available at: <http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/hum/hum-papers>

and civil war. Unresolved conflicts and lack of comprehensive policies addressing their root causes remain a threat for civil peace and create continuous pressure on humanitarian needs.

From 1975 to 1990, the long civil war resulted in severe human and economic consequences, as well as increased humanitarian need. "The death toll of the 15-years war stood at more than 114,000 with over 184,000 injured, over 17,000 who disappeared and over 13,000 who were maimed."²¹ More than 98,000 families were internally displaced due to military action; many remained internally displaced persons (IDPs) for more than 10 to 15 years before they returned to their villages and towns of origin starting from 1995. The national economy was devastated, given the massive infrastructure losses and destroyed downtown of the capital, as well as several villages and towns. Lebanese CSOs played a very important role during the 15 years of war in providing different types of humanitarian response to the population in need. This included humanitarian assistance, emergency and relief, various primary health care programs, education, and livelihood programs. Humanitarian assistance for reconstruction and development of Lebanon received international attention, including UN General Assembly resolutions²² calling all member states and international and regional organizations to provide financial and technical assistance to Lebanon.

Lebanon also witnessed two large Israeli military actions against south-Lebanon after the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1993 and 1996 respectively. The result was massive destruction and 400,000 persons were forced to move to safe areas in the northern regions. Both military interventions lasted more than one week and the internally displaced were mainly hosted and treated by national institutions, with minor help from the international community.

21 Samir Makdisi and Richard Sadaka, "The Lebanese Civil War 1975-1990", *American University of Beirut Lecture and Working Paper Series*, No.3, 2003 p24; available at http://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/ife/Documents/downloads/series3_2003.pdf, [last accessed 30 July 2016].

22 Several UN Resolutions were issued calling for financial and technical assistance to Lebanon, including the following:

UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/46/173, Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon, December 1991, available at: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r173.htm>, [last accessed on 29 July 2016].

UN General Assembly Resolution, A/RES/45/225, Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon, December 1990, available at: <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/90AEE604C45ED72B85256AE7006293A0>, [last accessed on 29 July 2016].

UN General Assembly Resolution, A/RES/44/180, Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon, December 1989, available at <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/5ba47a5c6cef541b802563e000493b8c/dc623c32e1c92a7e85256a81006a3548?OpenDocument>, [last accessed on 29 July 2016].

UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/43/207 Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon, December 1988, available at: <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/5ba47a5c6cef541b802563e000493b8c/b94b7008e026f89685256a8100641918?OpenDocument> [last accessed on 29 July 2016].

UN Economic and Social Council Resolution 1989/100, Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon, July 1989, available at <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/F5B867E5DED545A485256AE70061CAC8>, [last accessed on 29 July 2016].

The 2006 Israeli war was another call for humanitarian intervention in the country and was defined as “not a typical humanitarian crisis, but principally one of protection.”²³ It lasted 34 days, but the toll was enormous, with more than 1,500 deaths, around 4,000 wounded and one million internally displaced persons. The southern regions were massively devastated. Airstrikes targeted the infrastructure in the whole country, with extensive damage. Yet, analysis of humanitarian assistance for the 2006 war revealed several failures and critical lessons-learnt.

Humanitarian actors, both international and national, were not prepared for the sudden war. Once they intervened, the intensity of the problem affected their efforts to address humanitarian needs. Some political divides were overpassed, due to the atrocity of the war.²⁴ Calls to respect the country system and institutions were very vocal during the 2006 interventions. Nevertheless, many donors and foreign agencies were criticized for their performance. Little attention was paid to the participation of local actors, to the extent that the coordination meetings were held in English, which restricted the active participation of many local groups heavily involved in the operations.²⁵ In this regard, the Lebanese initiative to appoint the High Relief Committee to coordinate between international and governmental actors focusing on aid was a positive step, but was not enough. The outcomes of humanitarian interventions were not the most effective and efficient and definitely did not always take into consideration Lebanese local needs and potentials. As noted by Relief International, “donors and the international community tend to look outside the country rather than inside when seeking solutions to problems.”²⁶ This was related to both human resources, where several expats moving to the country rather than empowering local capacities, and actual operations.²⁷ Moreover, coordination among international and local organizations was very weak, unless the former contracted the latter.²⁸ The same picture prevailed in the post war operations. International organizations competed with national and

23 Gilles Gasser, “Lebanon Crisis of Civilian Protection”, *The Humanitarian Response Index, 2007*, p. 103, available at http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/HRI_2007_lebanon.pdf [last accessed 25 July 2016].

24 <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/5876.pdf> and http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/HRI_2007_lebanon.pdf

25 Sarah Mahdi, “Lebanon and the Near East: New Challenges, Old Dilemmas,” *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine* 37, April 2007, available at <http://odihpn.org/magazine/lebanon-and-the-near-east-new-challenges-old-dilemmas/> [last accessed on 20 July 2016].

26 “Lebanon: Local institutions must lead the recovery effort,” *Refugees International*, 2006, available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-local-institutions-must-lead-recovery-effort>, [last accessed 27 July 2016].

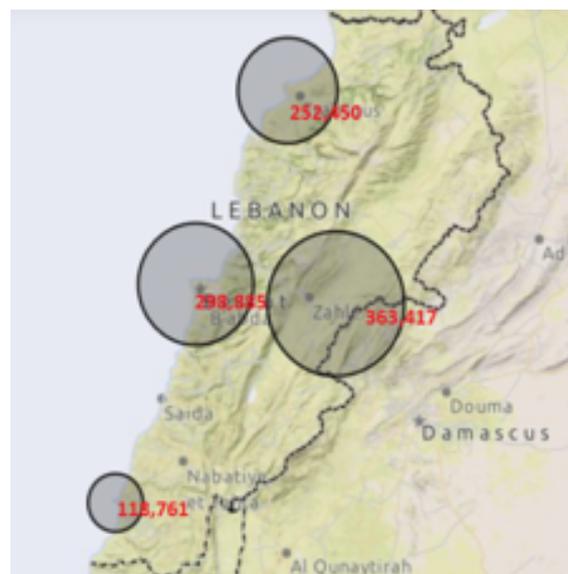
27 For instance, Relief International quotes a Lebanese government official as saying, “The UN has spent 30 million dollars to bring in trucks when Lebanon has plenty of trucks that were available for use. They could have just painted them in white instead of shipping them from abroad.” “Lebanon: Local institutions must lead the recovery effort,” *op.cit.*, 2016.

28 Edited by Adele Harmer and Ellen Martin, “Diversity in Donorship: Field lessons,” *Overseas Development Institute*, p.53 available at <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/5876.pdf> [last accessed 29 July 2016].

local actors to receive funding, thus to implement reconstruction and recovery plans.²⁹

Whereas Lebanon's humanitarian assistance history would provide some important insights for the need to localize humanitarian actions, the main focus of this paper will be limited to the recent humanitarian crisis Lebanon has been facing since 2011: the Syrian crisis. Given its duration—now over 5 years—and with no end in sight, the 'business as usual' approach should be completely changed. Humanitarian actors should be allowed to conduct a comprehensive and independent assessment of the whole experience so far, in order to unpack the threats, risks and opportunities in the coming years and properly address them.

05. SPECIAL FOCUS: THE SYRIAN CRISIS AND HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON



Since early 2011, the Syrian crisis has been a dominant priority for the international community. Various humanitarian actors are trying to address the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people both inside and outside Syria.

As a neighboring country, Lebanon became one of the first destinations for Syrian people fleeing their homes. As of June 2016, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon was

29 Éric Verdeil & translated by Eric Rosencrantz, "Post-2006 reconstruction in Lebanon: a laboratory for new urban planning practices," *Metropolitiques*, 2011, available at <http://www.metropolitiques.eu/Post-2006-reconstruction-in.html> [last accessed 30 July 2016].

1,033,513.³⁰ the highest per-capita concentration of refugees worldwide, exceeding 25% of the population (see map³¹ highlighting the geographical distribution of Syrian refugees in Lebanon). Estimates indicate a much bigger number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Adding Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon since 1948 and 1967 and Iraqi refugees living in Lebanon since 2003, the number could exceed 2 million, which is close to half the population.

In response, humanitarian aid flows to the country showed a significant increase year-by-year concentrating on the "Syria response" (See Table 1 below.)

Year of Funding	Total (USD)	Subtotal for Syria Response(USD)
2012	165,348,683	133,652,954
2013	1,040,838,468	1,020,740,982
2014	1,097,339,881	1,028,577,619
2015	1,282,683,872	1,258,600,540
2016 (by April 2016)	396,627,884	324,376,579

Table 1: Source: Retrieved from Financial Tracking Service, Tracking Global Humanitarian Aid Flows³²

As the Syrian refugee crisis escalated, the main focus of the Lebanese government was securing international funds to help with humanitarian assistance, whether through multi-donors trust funds or other mechanisms. The officials did not develop any serious plan to improve the status and the living conditions of the Syrian refugees. The response to the crisis came very late and fragmented, through a policy paper in 2014, setting the following three priorities for managing the Syrian displacement into Lebanon: 1) Reducing the number of "refugees" from Syria, 2) Addressing the rising security concerns in the country, 3) Sharing the economic burden by expanding the humanitarian response to include a more structured developmental and institutional approach benefiting Lebanese institutions, communities and infrastructure.

30 <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> [last accessed on 30 July 2016].

31 *Ibid.* Please note that the map was only altered by adding the geographical distribution of Syrian refugees in each location.

32 <https://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emerg-emergencyCountryDetails&cc=lbn&yr=2016> [last accessed 15 June 2016].

Later, the Lebanese government and the United Nations launched "The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan for 2015 and 2016." This document is far from being considered a comprehensive "national strategy." Moreover, the response of the Lebanese government is still undermining the necessity to nominate a multi-ministerial committee, acting under the direct supervision of the prime minister's office, to coordinate and follow up the implementation of the plan. The absence of such a national strategy that would prioritize local visions and interests in relation to the influx of Syrian refugees and the lack of a governmental involvement of a governmental entity was the main pretext behind listing several UN agencies and INGOs as primary channels of total humanitarian funding. They play an intermediary role between donors and beneficiaries, sometimes through local implementing actors. They cover all regions and various sectors, including food, shelter, education, health, water and sanitation, among others. Engagement of high numbers of international actors requires an efficient coordination mechanism with an inter-agency information sharing system. Consequently, a public portal³³ providing 3W information, citing Who is doing What and Where, was established. It is worth noting that even the public portal providing the 3W information is part of the UNHCR website and run by the agency, instead of the portal and its important role being delegated to the relevant national institution.

A quick reading of the information available at this portal shows:

1. **Humanitarian intervention in Lebanon covers a wide range of issues.** Several sectoral working groups are established to coordinate the work of the actors engaged in these issues.³⁴
2. **Humanitarian intervention in Lebanon covers different regions of the country,** namely Beirut, Bekaa, Mount Lebanon, North and South Lebanon.
3. **Main humanitarian actors listed in each of these sectors and regions are UN agencies and international NGOs.** There are only a few Lebanese organizations.

Based on the above, legitimate questions can be raised about the participation of Lebanese organizations: Are they not actively engaged in humanitarian intervention and responding to Syrian crisis? How well then do these INGOs and respective working groups evaluate, plan and intervene? Is the Syria Response Plan implementation in Lebanon effective and efficient? Does it enhance the localization of humanitarian assistance? As an attempt to respond to these questions, the following section will elaborate on the significance of localization and related challenges.

33 Syrian Regional Response Plan, Inter-Agency Sharing Portal, available at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

34 These groups are: Basic assistance working group, Child protection in emergencies working group, Education partners, Energy and water working group, Food security working group, Health working group, Information management working group, Livelihoods working group, Protection working group, Sexual and gender based violence task force, Shelter working group, Social stability working group.

As the Ministry of Social Affairs describes, “some national NGOs are able to compete with international agencies on funding, but they are in the minority and that access to funding needs to be expanded.”³⁵ The UNHCR funding update³⁶ shows that there is still a long way to go to fully respond to the overall Syrian crisis in terms of the funding provided; only 29% of the overall needed funding is available and there remains a 71% funding gap. On the other hand, for Lebanon, the funding gap remains at 59%, as for the total appeal made \$1,902,410,103, Lebanon received by July 2016 only \$775,314,067, around 41%.³⁷ While commitments to this funding should be met, they should also ensure more funding opportunities for local/national NGOs. This would also contribute to the sustainability of civil society in respective countries and a better response to the crisis.

Moreover, the case of Lebanon is like many other countries, given the lack of effective and efficient partnerships, be it between donors and local actors or between INGOs and local actors. “We are here to help you!” understanding prevails, resulting in the dominance of one on the other. Moreover, “distorted partnerships” are also a challenge, again for the sake of receiving funding.³⁸ Different practices in terms of partnerships established with local organizations exist, for instance, UNICEF notes that 50% of its partners are national and Mercy Corps mentions 90%,³⁹ but what one needs to question is if the partnerships really respect equality, transparency and mutual accountability.

Partnership should rather be considered as mutually benefitting, where each party has clear and accountable roles. Considering Lebanon, local capacity is vivid and strong. It should be at the center of humanitarian actions, setting priorities, identifying needs, and programming. Moreover, local organizations should be part of the coordination work and strategic planning exercises. Their expertise and lessons learnt are an added-value that should be engaged, not in an ad hoc manner, but rather in a continuous and systematic way.

On another note, INGOs became an attraction for local capacities in Lebanon. For instance, a quick look at www.reliefweb.int, which is a portal on humanitarian news, including jobs, lists 47 positions open.⁴⁰ All those in the employee-hunt are INGOs. Similarly, several job vacancies listed on the online Lebanese civil society portal “Daleel Madani” are of well-known

35 International Council of Voluntary Agencies, “Seminar Report on Financing Opportunities for Lebanese NGOs,” 2014, available at https://icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/141002Humanitarian_Financing_Lebanon_Report_web.pdf, [last accessed 30 July 2016].

36 UNHCR Funding update, Syria Situation 2016, available at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=10670>, [last accessed 30 June 2016].

37 <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122#>, [last accessed 30 June 2016].

38 International Council of Voluntary Agencies, *op.cit.*, 2014.

39 *ibid.*

40 As of 26 April 2016.

INGOs. On the other hand, there is some information with regard to staffing of the INGOs as well, for instance, ACTED has 87 national staff in comparison to 5 international staff.⁴¹ Some other numbers show a higher percentage of national staffing over international, for instance Danish Refugee Council 550:50; IRC 300:26; NRC 353:23.⁴² While these facts do not allow one to make a strong situation analysis for Lebanon, it is important to see that INGOs do attract a good number of the local capacity in Lebanon, probably due to higher salaries.

06. CONCLUSION: THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT AND THE WAY FORWARD IN STRENGTHENING LOCALIZATION

Many humanitarian actors, including the UN and the EU with its member states are looking for a new paradigm because they feel the need to change the former way of intervening with the aim at boosting the impact of humanitarian response.⁴³ Worldwide experiences on humanitarian assistance reveal that serious changes should be adopted in order to get effective and efficient outcomes. These changes should enhance and strengthen coordination and joint interventions as well as involve interested partners. This is increasingly challenging when resources are limited and cost-effectiveness is vital.

The new paradigm should take into consideration the close coordination with the "host country" rather than the "host community." This entails respecting "democratic" country ownership and requires empowering national (local and regional) capacities to be able to properly address the challenges. This should be strengthened, providing technical support and enabling organizational capacity development. Moreover, and due to the long lasting multiyear crisis in the case of Lebanon, estimations show that this conflict will even last for many years ahead. Thus, any humanitarian intervention should be linked to the long-term development vision going forward. Humanitarian assistance should be in coherence with the sustainable development needs of the country as well as the host communities who are supposed to be engaged in

41 Noted at ACTED website, <http://www.acted.org/en/lebanon> [last accessed 25 July 2016].

42 Simon Little, "Towards a 21st century humanitarian response model to the refugee crisis in the Lebanon," 2014, available at <http://www.enonline.net/fex/48/towards> [last accessed 30 July 2016].

43 Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Joint European Commission, United Nations World Food Programme, "A new paradigm for boosting the impact of humanitarian responses to food crises," Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 23 May 2016, available at <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/415685/icode/> [last accessed 30 July 2016].

the response efforts.⁴⁴ Commitment to long-term and sustainable funding should be part of the new humanitarian system with increased transparency, and where aid and development effectiveness principles are fully respected.

“Country ownership” is one of the important principles of the Paris declaration on aid effectiveness. Thus, country systems should be respected and reformed if and when needed, as one of the principles underlined by the Accra Agenda for Action on aid effectiveness. The state should play an active role in coordinating between diverse actors. It should also adopt a multi-dimensional, multi-sectoral and long term national strategy, taking into consideration the challenges and opportunities for responding humanitarian crisis. Such a strategy ought to define and clarify the roles of all actors. Accordingly, partnerships established between these different actors should not be selective, as which commonly occurs between one or more Ministries and one or more international organization,) but rather comprehensive, enabling, inclusive and participatory in process. In turn, the Lebanese government should abide to the normative standards by respecting four main rights of refugees as minimum requirements for decent conditions: legal status, livelihood, access to health, and education. These four minimum requirements should become mainstream for the protection of vulnerable groups including women, children, youth and people with disability.

In the case of Lebanon, the state is preventing certain areas of response and halting programs such as employment, livelihood and housing for political reasons. National and local actors are the ones who are able to challenge any kind of unproductive measures and advocate for a proper and comprehensive national plan. International organizations, including UN agencies, are obliged to abide by national policies, even when they are discriminatory and not relevant. As an example, the Lebanese government does not allow some livelihood programs to boost the independence of refugees, thus limiting the role of international organizations. As a result, these international organizations withdraw from providing proper humanitarian assistance. National and local actors have the legitimacy to advocate for reforming both the country system and policies towards Syrian refugees, and therefore should be empowered and given the leading role in this regard.

44 In this regard, the latest position of Medecin Sans Frontieres to pull out from the WHS is important to be noted. MSF pointed out the tendency “to dissolve humanitarian assistance into wider development, peace-building and political agendas.” Particularly to address the root causes of the humanitarian crisis, humanitarian assistance should be in line with the long-term development needs and the vision of the country. It must respect national ownership and the right to develop and adopt a comprehensive approach relying on the empowerment and capacity development. This should not result in dissolving humanitarian assistance in development agenda but rather implementing coherent policies at all levels.

In relation, the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) should be taken as an opportunity to revolutionize the humanitarian system itself starting with the commitments made to strengthen localization. This entails a firm commitment to dedicate at least 25% of humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020. Clearly, further support to Charter4Change, the initiative for locally-led response within the humanitarian system, and launch of the NEAR Network of Southern organizations is complementary to more funding. The implementation of these commitments requires a firm political will but should also take into consideration Agenda 2030 adopted by the United National General Assembly in September 2015. This should be part of the long term vision where humanitarian assistance and resources will include development programs, empowering Syrian actors and enhancing their participation.

Obviously, the implementation of the humanitarian summit outcomes will evolve with time.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, achieving success from the summit will depend on the commitments of the different parties and mainly, the follow up mechanisms adopted by the summit.⁴⁶ There is a need for an inclusive, participatory, transparent, democratic and accountable mechanism engaging all humanitarian actors with a clear mandate. This mechanism should be activated as soon as possible. Moreover, an independent body should be created in order to elaborate clear binding benchmarks based on the core principles of human rights to measure progress and hold different humanitarian actors accountable.

45 The summit is a point of departure in getting those in the aid community to work differently, to improve the way we deliver assistance," said the Summit head Antoine Gérard. Tom Esslemont, "INTERVIEW-Refugees, warmongers and bloodshed targeted in first global aid summit". *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, January 2016, available at <http://news.trust.org/item/20160111070315-hkcum/>.

46 The Summit was attended by an impressive 173 Member States, including 55 Heads of State or Government, many from countries affected by humanitarian crises. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed disappointment that the world's most powerful leaders did not attend the Summit, notably those from the G7 countries except for German Chancellor Angela Merkel. However at the closing press conference, Ban Ki-moon said "The absence of these leaders from World Humanitarian Summit does not provide an excuse for inaction." "World powers slammed for not joining World Humanitarian Summit", *Daily Sabah*, 24 May 2016, available at <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2016/05/25/world-powers-slammed-for-not-joining-world-humanitarian-summit>, [last accessed on 6 July 2016].

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