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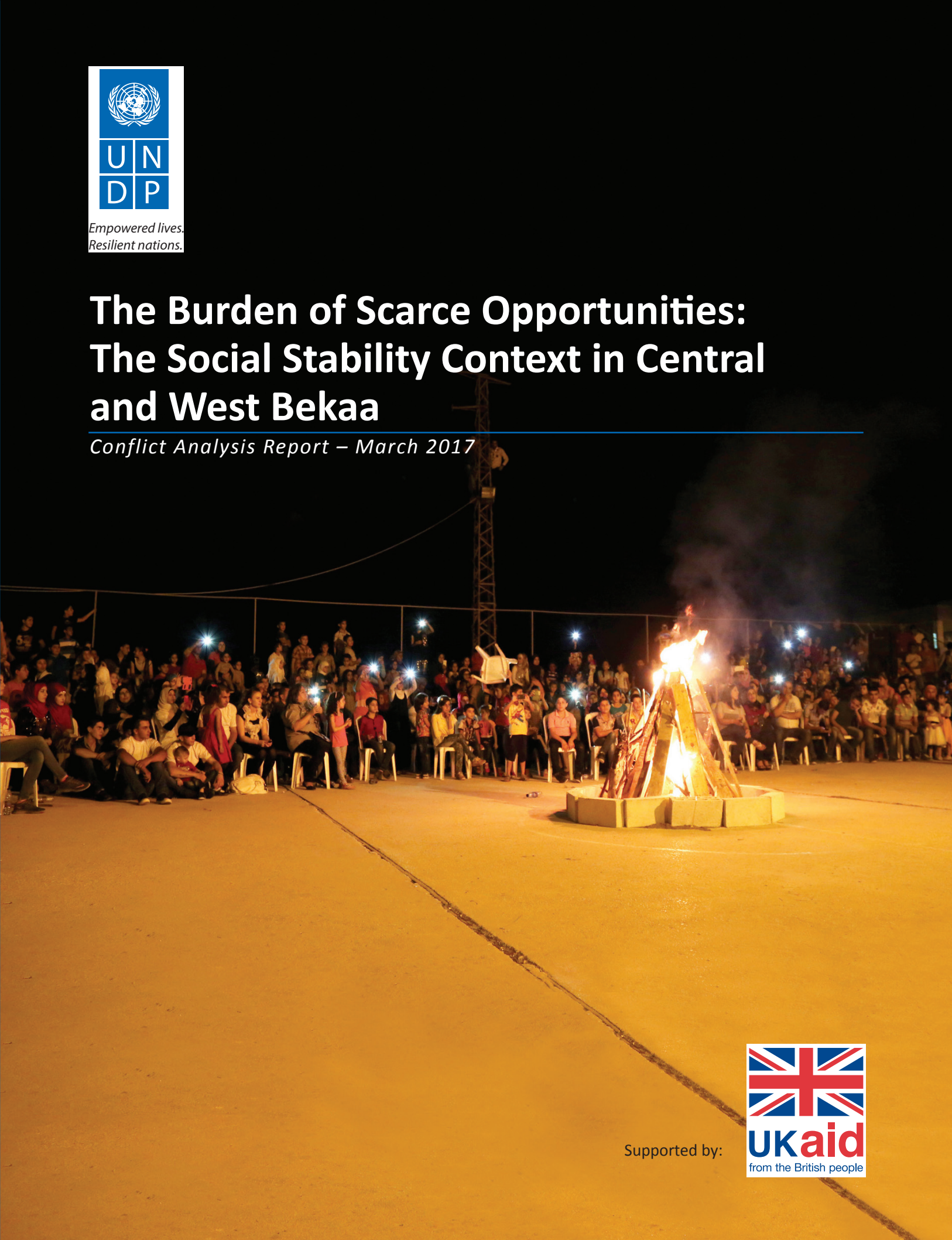
The Burden of Scarce Opportunities: The Social Stability Context in Central and West Bekaa

Conflict Analysis Report – March 2017



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This report was written by a team of researchers, as part of a conflict analysis consultancy for UNDP Peacebuilding in Lebanon Project to inform and support UNDP programming, as well as interventions from other partners in the frame of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). This report is the fifth of a series of six successive reports, all targeting specific areas of Lebanon that have not been covered by previous similar research. Through these reports, UNDP is aiming at providing quality analysis to LCRP Partners on the evolution of local dynamics, highlighting how the local and structural issues have been impacted and interact with the consequences of the Syrian crisis in Lebanon. This report has been produced with the support of DFID.

For any further information, please contact directly: Bastien Revel, UNDP Social Stability Sector Coordinator at bastien.revel@undp.org and Joanna Nassar, UNDP Peacebuilding in Lebanon Project Manager at joanna.nassar@undp.org

Report written by Muzna Al-Masri and Zeina Abla

Researchers: Ali Chahine, Marianna Altabbaa, Zeina Abla and Muzna Al-Masri.

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Front page picture: Fire camp in Majdel Anjar organized by UNDP Peacebuilding project – photo credit: UNDP

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Summary

This report introduces the conflict context in the Central Bekaa region. The area is of geostrategic importance as it contains the main border crossing to Syria and the Damascus highway, the international route from Beirut to Damascus. It is also home to around a quarter of all Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The area which once lived off services and trade through the border crossing and the Highway, agriculture, and agro-food industries, has been hit hard by the Syrian crisis and is burdened by the sharp decrease in economic opportunities and the doubling of its population.

Politically, the majority of the local population continues to support Future Movement, despite the fact it is increasingly contested by religious actors, including Salafi political groups and Islamic charities on one side of the political divide and Al-Itihad party, Hezbollah and the Lebanese resistance brigade on the other. The governor of the Bekaa and the Lebanese armed forces play a key role in managing the Syrian refugee population, reflecting a national securitized policy that imposes restriction on Syrian residence and shelter. Municipalities, particularly given the large size of the villages and the relative experience of their members, are at the forefront of the relationship with refugees and key in mitigating local conflicts. Donor agencies, civil society actors, and the shawish provide different models of shelter management while the former are key in supporting both the Syrian refugees and the host communities.

The region is trapped in the entanglements of the national Lebanese political schisms, and kidnapping as well as blocking of main roads are frequently used forms of social and political contestation. Municipalities are caught in between political divisions and pressure to address growing needs and demands for services, which affect their ability to mitigate local divisions and, at times, feeds antagonistic relations.

In terms of relationships between the host community and the refugees, the report highlights the implications of local competition over livelihoods and economic activities. Voices from the Lebanese side blame the Syrian refugees and request restrictions on their economic activities while Syrians,

struggling with the overbearing difficulties of managing daily life, express a feeling of being exploited by their hosts. The national and regional policy concerning refugees requiring Lebanese sponsorship of Syrians in Lebanon and prohibiting the moving of settlements is increasing the vulnerability of Syrian refugees and contributing to the development of patronage and corruption networks.

The report reveals how conflict insensitive policies, implementation of such policies as well as media discourse contribute to a negative portrayal of the Syrian refugees. Such negative portrayal of the Syrian refugees is instrumentally used for local political gain. Syrian-Lebanese partnerships for improved relationships are weakened by immigration of empowered or educated Syrian civil society actors. The region nevertheless enjoys an infrastructure that helps to create connections, including a long history of municipal action and a cultural heritage of mitigating conflict as well as strong family and clan ties with the Syrian refugee population. The approach of international aid organizations, particularly in targeting the host community, as well as that of local civil society organizations, including the budding Syrian NGOs, is also forging connections locally.

The report urges the Lebanese government to reconsider the policy on Syrian refugees' residency and shelter and to facilitate the registration of deaths and births. In parallel, it recommends that donor agencies and civil society organizations advocate for such a change. The Lebanese government is also invited to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the influx of international aid to improve Lebanese governmental services in rural areas and take on a greater role in ensuring interventions are strategic and sustainable. Donor agencies and civil society actors are urged to invest in national level and structural interventions to support the economic infrastructure and create employment opportunities, as well as local level employment-generating projects particularly those encouraging Syrian-Lebanese cooperation like community markets. Support to host communities, particularly through infrastructure and solid waste management interventions and infrastructure at the municipal level and to livelihoods projects should be maintained.

I. Introduction

This report provides an analytical overview of social stability in the region commonly known as the Central Bekaa and administratively located within the Zahle and West Bekaa districts of the Bekaa governorate. The report aims to give a snapshot of the situation in the region at a specific time and concentrates on social and socio-political conflicts at the local level to support peacebuilding and social stability programming as well as conflict-sensitive aid delivery.

The analysis is based on a desk review of existing literature and semi-structured key informants' interviews with 48 members of the Lebanese and Syrian refugee communities, Lebanese officials and activists, and Syrian and Lebanese NGO staff. Regarding the gender and national break-down of the sample, 10 interviewees out of 48 were women and 24 were Syrians. This report also benefits from additional observations and informal conversations during the field visits. All interviews were conducted in Arabic by a mixed male/female and Syrian/Lebanese research team proficient in both Arabic and English between 19 December 2016 and 23 February 2017. The report follows other similar conflict analysis reports covering the northern part of the Bekaa in 2015 and areas located in south Lebanon and Akkar in 2016.

II. Context

The Bekaa region is a valley spanning between two mountainous areas (Mount Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon Mountains) at an average altitude of 1,000 meters above sea level. Until 2004, administratively this region formed one governorate but then was split into two; the northern Bekaa becoming the Baalbeck and Hermel governorate and the Bekaa governorate which kept only three districts or cadastres (Qazas): Zahle (geographically situated in the Central Bekaa), West Bekaa, and Rashaya which is located in the southern part of the Bekaa. The Bekaa governorate consists of more than 85 municipalities and has the largest official border crossing with Syria.

This report covers villages in the Qazas of Zahle and West Bekaa. While this report does not encompass the whole of the West Bekaa, it covers what is popularly called the 'Central Bekaa', i.e. the villages on or close to the Damascus high way where a large concentration of refugees is hosted. The Zahle Qaza has an area of around 420 km2 out of which more than one third is agriculture-irrigated land. It consists of 30 municipalities, most important of which is the city of Zahle that forms a key economic centre in the region. The West Bekaa Qaza covers a slightly bigger area (470 km2) stretching from the Western mountains to the valley and consists of 31 municipalities.

A. Demography: concentration of vulnerability

It is estimated that more than 500,000 persons are living in the Bekaa, almost half of whom are Lebanese residents while the remainder are mainly refugees from Syria, Lebanese returnees, and Palestinian refugees. Around 36% of the Syrian refugees in the Bekaa governorate lived in a total of 1,424 informal settlements (IS) – the most common form of shelter - as of May 2016[1].

[1] OCHA, Bekaa and Baalbek/Hermel Governorates Profile, May 2016 <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/10052016_Bekaa%20and%20Baalbek-Hermel%20Profile.pdf> [accessed 13 January 2017].

Lebanese living in the Qaza of Zahle were estimated at 177,000 with more than 20% classified as poor[2]. The Lebanese residing in the Qaza of West Bekaa are estimated at 65,000 and almost 30% are considered poor[3]. In addition, more than 240,000 registered Syrian refugees live in the Bekaa (167,000 in Zahle Qaza and 63,000 in the West Bekaa Qaza and the rest in Rachaya Qaza)[4]. In many villages, like Ghazze, Qab Elias, Marj amongst others, the ratio of refugees to locals is two or three times higher.

Among Syrian refugees, more than three quarters are considered severely and highly vulnerable. There are more than 35 highly vulnerable areas/villages in the governorate of the Bekaa where refugees are three times more numerous than the Lebanese poor[5].

Table 1: Distribution of Population in the Bekaa[6]

Population	Zahle	West Bekaa
Lebanese above poverty line	140,399	46,006
Deprived Lebanese	36,426	19,437
Lebanese returnees	2,668	1,292
Registered Syrian refugees	167,174	62,805
Palestinian refugees	7,672	4,975

B. Political and religious composition: Between familial, political, and sectarian loyalties

The Bekaa is generally a mixed area in terms of political affiliation and religious and confessional groups including Christians, Sunnis, Shiites and Druze. In the Qaza of Zahle, Zahle is the largest city with a Christian majority, mainly Catholics, whereas Shiites and Sunnis represent significant minorities. The city boasts itself as being the largest catholic city in the Middle East.

Zahle is surrounded by large villages that are predominantly Sunni such as Bar Elias and Majdal Anjar, where different Islamic groups have influence and where a large number of refugees resides. Some villages in the Qaza have a Shia minority with a predominance of Sunnis, such as Taalbaya, where approximately one fifth of the population is Shia, the remainder being Sunnis. Others are mostly a mixture of Christians with a Sunni majority like Qab Elias and Jdita. Christian minorities vary in size from almost a third in Qab Elias to less than a tenth in Bar Elias. The cadastre of the West Bekaa is also predominantly composed of Sunni villages with Christian minorities in some villages.

During the 1975-1990 war in Lebanon, according to interviewees, the majority of the villages of the Central and West Bekaa did not witness major fighting possibly because of sectarian homogeneity, which means there is no enduring residual antagonism[7]. Throughout and after the war, during the Syrian

[2] Based on the latest upper poverty line of $4/day, according to CAS, UNDP and MoSA Living Conditions and Household Budget Survey 2004-5 as quoted in OCHA document.

[3] UNHCR, <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=4596>, 2014.

[4] Source: OCHA.

[5] Source: OCHA.

[6] Source: OCHA.

[7] It was mainly the city of Zahle which went through fierce battles during the eighties. At the time Zahle, a mostly Christian city, was a stronghold of the Phalange and in conflict with the Syrian regime. For further details on conflicts in Zahle see: New York Times, 'Syria Ends Siege of Lebanese Town, Raising Hope for an Easing of Crisis', 1 July 1981 <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/07/01/world/syria-ends-siege-of-lebanese-town-raising-hope-for-an-easing-of-crisis.html> [accessed 9 March 2017].

army's presence in Lebanon, locals from various communities in the Bekaa developed economic and social relations with the Syrian regime, be it in trade, transportation or as political clients or supporters when the Syrian regime was a key political player locally. These war experiences and connections have influenced political allegiances in certain villages until now and can feed tension dynamics.

There was a shift in popular allegiance away from the Syrian regime's allies after the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri and the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon. This is best indicated by March 14 political camp's winning all the seats of the governorate in the last parliamentary elections (2009 – see Table 2). While the overarching popular allegiances remain the same, the recent municipal elections further illuminate some nuances in factors shaping political allegiance.

The municipal elections in 2016 reflect the continued importance of family loyalties. Most municipal competition in the region were family-based, with political party influence depending on every family's affiliation. Within the prevailing family-based structures, latent sectarian divisions persist. In the villages of Qab Elias and Taalbaya, for example, Christians managed to receive a bigger share of municipal seats than their electoral size, a continuing historical trend, which provoked discontent across the more conservative Sunni population.

Only Zahle witnessed a political turnaround during the municipal elections in May 2016. Following the death of a prominent political leader of a feudal family (Elias Skaff), the influence of the Christian parties (the Free Patriotic Movement, the Lebanese Forces and the Phalange Party) increased and they secured most of the municipal seats in coalition. In the other Sunni villages, the political affiliations vary, yet the Future Movement remains the most influential party, with some popular allegiance to Abdel Rahim Murad or Islamic groups (see section III: actors).

Table 2: Members representing the Bekaa governorate in the Parliament, elected in June 2009

Members	Party	Qaza	Religion
Jamal Jarrah	Future Movement	West Bekaa/Rashaya	Sunni
Ziad el Kadiri	Future Movement	West Bekaa/Rashaya	Sunni
Amine Wehbeh	Democratic Left Movement	West Bekaa/Rashaya	Shia
Wael Abou Faour	Progressive Socialist Party	West Bekaa/Rashaya	Druze
Antoine Saad	Progressive Socialist Party	West Bekaa/Rashaya	Greek Orthodox
Robert Ghanem	Independent within March 14	West Bekaa/Rashaya	Maronite
Nicolas Fattouche	Zahle In our Hearts Bloc	Zahle	Greek Catholic
Tony Abou Khater	Lebanese Forces and Zahle Bloc	Zahle	Greek Catholic
Joseph Maalouf	Lebanese Forces and Zahle Bloc	Zahle	Greek Catholic
Shant Jinjinian	Lebanese Forces and Zahle Bloc	Zahle	Armenian Orthodox
Elie Marouni	Kataeb and Zahle Bloc	Zahle	Maronite
Assem Araji	Lebanon first and Zahle Bloc	Zahle	Sunni
Okab Sakr	Lebanon first and Zahle Bloc	Zahle	Shia

C. Security: a strategic cross-road

Security conditions in the Central and West Bekaa have been relatively stable. The area has not witnessed major attacks or clashes like neighbouring Baalbeck/Hermel and most of the security incidents have been of a local nature. Nevertheless, the geo-strategic position (because of both the Damascus Highway and the long border with Syrian) along with the political divides and the Syrian crisis increase the security threats within the Bekaa. Tensions emerge around main roads, namely the Damascus highway or the main road connecting the northern part of the Bekaa and Baalbeck to the rest of the country[8]. These routes are of strategic importance to Hezbollalh, and residents of the West and central parts of the Bekaa who are opposed to Hezbollah often resort to closing the roads as a means of exerting political pressure. In addition, road closures are commonly reported as a means for the local population to express discontent or to demand changes from the government or security forces. Moreover, rifts exist between Shia and Sunni neighbourhoods in mixed villages such as Taalabaya, in line with the sectarian division in the country, yet conflicts rarely escalate into violence.

The Lebanese Army Forces and its intelligence branch (LAF) are active in the area. They evict settlements for security reasons and at times informal settlements (IS's) are removed with no alternative location. The army frequently conducts raids on IS's and almost half of all the army raids which took place between May and August 2016 in Lebanon were conducted in the Bekaa[9]. Municipalities complement this security system by registering refugees in their localities, as required by the Bekaa governor's decision, and by imposing curfews at night.

Nevertheless, illicit activities are common in the Bekaa. The number of car theft was as high as 265 in the first eleven months of 2016.[10] This can be explained by the fact that in its northern part a great number of criminal networks operate. Kidnapping is also common as a criminal act and occasionally for political reasons[11]. The recent kidnapping of a senior Christian citizen in the Zahle neighbourhood, in January 2017, ignited fury and a popular call for increasing security. Following the kidnapping, all political parties converged towards supporting the Ministry of Interior's decision to implement a security strategy targeting the Bekaa specifically.[12] Smuggling and trafficking of humans, weapons, drugs and goods continue across the borders benefitting from the proximity to Syria. These criminal activities already existed before the Syrian crisis but spread after it. In 2016, 20 people reportedly died while crossing informal borderlines[13].

D. Economy: an agricultural area stressed by border closure and water pollution

The Bekaa is traditionally an agricultural area. Farming and agro-food manufacturing are the main sectors of the local economy.

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[8] سالم, بول. "لبنان والأزمة السورية: تداعيات ومخاطر." Carnegie Middle East Center. Accessed January 27, 2017. http://carnegie-mec.org/2012/12/11/ar-pub-50324.

[9] Lebanon Support (Organization), 'Conflict Analysis Bulletin, Issue 4, September 2016', Civil Society Knowledge Centre, 2016 <http://civilsociety-centre.org/article/conflict-analysis-bulletin-issue-4-september-2016> [accessed 4 January 2017].

[10] سامر الحسيني. "جريدة السفير | البقاع: أمن مهدّد.. ونزوح مُكلف واقتصاد يترنّح. Accessed January 27, 2017. <http://assafir.com/article/521613>.

[11] سالم, بول. "لبنان والأزمة السورية: تداعيات ومخاطر." Carnegie Middle East Center. Accessed January 27, 2017. <http://carnegie-mec.org/2012/12/11/ar-pub-50324>.

[12] الربيع, منير. "حزب الله والمستقبل يلتقيان على أمن البقاع." almodon. Accessed January 27, 2017. <http://www.almodon.com/politics/2017/1/25/حزب-الله-والمستقبل-يلتقيان-على-أمن-البقاع>.

[13] سامر الحسيني. "جريدة السفير | البقاع: أمن مهدّد.. ونزوح مُكلف واقتصاد يترنّح. Accessed January 27, 2017. <http://assafir.com/article/521613>.

Agriculture, however, suffers from serious and chronic challenges, the most important of which being water resource management. Water pollution reached an unprecedented level last year, due to the pollution of the Litani River which has not only harmed farming but also the health of the local population. This problem remains unresolved. Pollution and environmental degradation are other serious consequences of unsustainable environmental management. Since the aggravation of the Syrian crisis, the sector was also hit by the closure of inland trade routes.

The Bekaa's economy also possesses an important agro-food industry, including dairy production, wineries, potato chips and cereals' manufacturing, amongst others[14]. The region ranks second in Lebanon after Mount Lebanon with regards to the number of agro-food establishments (hosting 30% of Lebanon's establishments).[15] This is an important economic sector in Lebanon as being the number one industrial sector and accounting for more than a fifth of Lebanese exports. Like farming, the closure of inland trade routes to Syria for goods' exports severely affected the sector.

In 2014, the Ministry of industry chose one of the villages of the Qaza of Zahle as a site to set up a special industrial zone. The project did not materialize yet, but is expected to benefit the region if properly implemented. The Bekaa also enjoys from its strategic location in relation to Syria, the main land route out of the country. Transport and related services, as well as trade activities, also benefited from proximity to borders. The bigger cities that are well located have become also commercial centres.

The cultivation and trade of drugs is not commonly practiced, unlike in the villages of the northern Bekaa. However, smuggling of goods, drugs and people forms a source of income for villages closest to the borders and has been prevailing since before the Syrian crisis[16]. This business benefited from the larger size of the refugee population with the related restrictive measures and the border closure policy[17]. Remittances from immigrants is another livelihoods source, more so in the West Bekaa than in the Central Bekaa villages.

III. Actors

This section presents actors that have a significant impact on the previously mentioned conflict issues in the region. While acknowledging that national actors, such as ministries, the general security and others, have an influence on the overall conditions of refugees, this report focuses on the local context from which originate the main conflict issues identified by key informants. Some of the actors with local significance are also national political actors and are part of the countrywide political and sectarian divisions. Others have roles limited to the region's boundaries.

A. Local Authorities

The Governor is the highest local authority in the Governorate and has extensive powers and jurisdiction, representing the executive authority. The Governor of the Bekaa issued a number of circulars, requiring all municipalities to start and regularly update databases on the refugees they are hosting and urging them not to recognize any birth certificate, rent or shelter agreement for any refugee not registered

[14] Chamber of Commerce Industry & Agriculture Zahle and Bekaa, 2014 التقرير السنوي للعام (Zahle, 2014) <http://www.cciaz.org.lb/uploads/report/11_local_en.pdf>.

[15] Investment and Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL), Agro-Food Factbook 2016, 2016.

[16] Oussama Al Kadri, 'تهريب البشر عبر المصنع: على عينك يا دولة' (Beirut, 1 March 2016) <http://al-akhbar.com/node/253223>.

[17] Samer Al Husseini, 'مجدل عنجر: جريحة في إشكال بين مهربي البشر', Assafir (Beirut, 10 July 2016) <https://assafir.com/Article/8/502034/SameChannel>.

with the municipality. More recently, he issued a circular (see annex 1) prohibiting the establishment of any additional informal tented settlements and any move from one settlement to another. Most municipalities have not disputed such decisions.

The region's municipalities vary from one village to the other, in terms of capacities, sectarian composition, dynamics, and political affiliations, as witnessed during the latest elections. Thus, they have a different impact on conflicts and tension with Syrian refugees. Their role has become increasingly important, as they control different facets of refugees' livelihoods, security, mobility, shelter and economic activity and are aid recipients. At the same time, they are facing a significant burden in most villages due to density of population and overstretched capacity. Despite external donors' funding for development projects, they are struggling to manage public services such as waste management, electricity and sewage and do not coordinate much their management of refugee issues but replicate each other's interventions.

Several villages have been considering levying a charge on refugees (and at least one municipality has initiated this) while others plan on improving collection of municipal taxes form refugee and host community households alike to cover for these services. Occasionally, they serve as mediators or channels of conflict management, especially as they partner with organisations under the scope of social stability initiatives. However, they are also seen by some as a conflict party and as contributing to a patronage system.

B. The Lebanese Armed Forces and intelligence

The Lebanese Armed Forces are perceived as quite present in the Bekaa, as noted by interviewees met during the fieldwork for this report. According to most Lebanese interviewees, they remain the most neutral institution and most effective in terms of performance, especially in the Central and West Bekaa where they are perceived to be maintaining control. Nevertheless, within the national political divide, they are perceived by some as more inclined towards 8 March, specifically Hezbollah. The Syrian refugees fear them because of the regular violent raids conducted in settlements in search of militants or evictions perpetrated for security purposes. Their intelligence service is increasingly active and well networked in border areas, with the municipalities and the Shawishs in settlements. Although this practice is to an extent effective in ensuring security, it can create relationships of mistrust particularly in the settlements.

C. Future Movement

The largely Sunni population of the Central and West Bekaa is still allegiant to the Future Movement (FM), despite a relative decline in popularity. The FM has been working on recapturing the Sunni scene, amidst disappointments of its performance and competition locally, be it from the pro-Syrian regime political actors or fundamentalist Islamist groups. The last municipal elections reflect this trend, with even some conservative Sunnis leaning towards allegiance to Ashraf Rifi, the former minister from Tripoli who split from FM due to a more critical stance towards Hezbollah. FM made sure it was visibly present during the last municipal elections in areas where it felt weaker and intervened wherever it was at a risk of a loss. In villages where its popularity remained strong, it left competition to big families. In an attempt to capture some of its lure, FM appointed in the recently formed cabinet a Bekaa minister from the village of Marj.

D. Abdel Rahim Murad and Al Itihad party

Abdel Rahim Murad is an ex-minister and political Sunni leader close to the Syrian regime. He founded a number of social institutions, most important of which is the Lebanese International University, and is popular because of the services he offers to the locals. He competes with the Future Movement in the Bekaa, even though in the last municipal elections, they reached agreements in certain villages. His mediation role at the community level has been instrumental in certain cases due to the constituency he has.

E. Religious authorities and Sunni Islamic groups

Dar al Fatwa, the official religious authority, is present in the region and either directly intervenes in service provision for the refugees or provides religious guidance. It can also play a political role – for example Khalil el-Mais, the mufti of Zahle and the Bekaa, was vocal in his criticism of Hezbollah's role in Syria. In parallel, some villages have a strong presence of Salafists who also loudly oppose Hezbollah's intervention in Syria, with a more radical discourse than the Dar Al Fatwa. The Salafists have their own networks of mosques, services provision and sheikhs. Although the Salafists have been in conflict with the Lebanese army since a series of clashes between 2012 and 2014, several interviewees highlighted that after the 2014 Arsal events the LAF appears to have brokered agreements with cooperating Salafi leadership. This has allowed some to continue political operation while side-lining more extremist fundamentalist activists. The role of the Committee of Islamic Scholars, which appeared prominent in 2014 is today barely noticeable, as FM and Dar al-Fatwa take on a greater role. However, the fact that some Sunni political actors resort to a sectarian discourse to mobilize support among their constituencies, might end up benefitting more radical groups that have been trying to foster sectarian sentiments for longer[18].

F. Lebanese Resistance Brigades and Hezbollah

At the local level, Hezbollah's presence in the region is limited to a few villages, essentially Taalbaya that witnessed violent conflicts with its neighbouring Sunni villages in 2008. Its role is more influential through the Lebanese Resistance Brigades present in some of the large Sunni villages like Qab Elias. The Brigades, originally formed to resist the Israeli occupation in coordination with Hezbollah, are made up by non-Shiite strongmen who inform and support Hezbollah in areas where it has little influence. Some locals would therefore perceive them as troublemakers or mercenaries. They are usually controlled when family and kinship networks mediate. Beyond internal village dynamics, Hezbollah is an important player in the whole of the Bekaa area (and nationally), particularly in ensuring unobstructed access to the Baalbeck-Hermel governorate, the Damascus highway and the borders.

G. UN agencies, donors' community and international NGOs

The aid community (UN agencies, donor community and international NGOs) is quite active in the region, yet works mainly through local partners. It plays a role in providing additional resources to refugees while supporting the development of the host community. Thus, they stimulate local economic activity and create short-term jobs through development projects, in addition to the provision of humanitarian

[18] For example, Salafi Leader Imama had used such a discourse addressing Hariri: "you represent the Sunni Street today and need to be up to the expectations" in a message implying criticism of inadequate sectarian representation and stressed that he would support whoever caters for the "interests of the Sunni sect". See: Afif Diab, 'إمامة ضد حمل سنّة لبنان السلاح في سوريا', Al-Akhbar, 11 November 2012 <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/169201> [accessed 10 March 2017].

aid. However, perceptions communicated to researchers by refugees and host community of these organisations are not favourable. Many refugees interviewed expressed their view that aid is not being effectively and fairly distributed, while the Lebanese are sceptical about aid motives, even though they are benefitting from it. In their opinion, there is a lack of clarity on aid policy and limited knowledge of complaints mechanisms that can be used to reach donor agencies[19].

H. Syrian NGOs and local civil society organisations

They are closer to the refugee and local communities. Some of them, especially the Syrian NGOs, have managed to cut layers of corruption and deal directly with the refugees and the latter feel at ease with them. This is not to say that they are not perceived by some as corrupt and unfair in terms of aid distribution. Beneficiaries often do not know how to complain if a problem occurs or whether their complaint will be heard. Among the Lebanese civil society organisations, several are affiliated to a religious group or political party and thus are associated with a conflict side.

I. Shawish

The Shawish role consists of supplying labour to the Lebanese farm operators, allocating work, guaranteeing the workers a place to live, and generally serving as the link between the local farm operator and the daily workers. Before the Syrian refugees' influx, many of the Bekaa lands were farms employing seasonal migrant workers from Syria that lived, for the work period, in tents on the land under the management of intermediaries known as "Shawish", commonly a Syrian. The system of living in tents and on agricultural land developed gradually and the Shawish practically makes money from this intermediary role, while also ensuring competitive wages so that employers make a profit margin. The patronage role played by the Shawish has significant impact on the lives of refugees living and places him in a position of authority that could facilitate the exploitation of refugees living in a settlement he manages (see sections IV.D and IV.E).

IV. Conflict Issues

Political tensions mirroring national level conflicts are strongly present locally, as competition between groups pro and against Hezbollah and the Syrian regime continues. While Lebanese-Lebanese conflict issues are significant, they are overshadowed by Syrian-Lebanese tension, partially because of their actual prevalence, but also, in the authors' opinion, because political and media discourse brings these issues to the forefront to divert attention from political failure.

For the Lebanese, tensions are high on the social, economic and environmental fronts, due to both real and perceived issues emanating from pressures on public services and inability of municipalities alone to deal with growing needs.

A key issue of Lebanese Syrian-Lebanese tension is economic competition, which reflects the limited job and economic opportunities locally and nationally for all. Syrians face intense problems to meet basic needs, mainly shelter, work and education. Such problems combined with the growth of networks of corruption and patronage related to managing Syrian needs contributes to their perceptions of exploitation and antagonism towards their hosts.

[19] According to UNHCR, UN agencies have undertaken recent initiatives to improve information sharing and accountability to beneficiaries, such as a yearly participatory assessment, as well as the creation of an inter-agency task force to improve information and accountability to beneficiaries.

Before further analysing these issues, the legal and policy context under which refugees are living will be briefly introduced. Overall, refugees express a feeling of vulnerability, compounded in the last two years, because of additional restrictions on their legal residency documents, limited shelter possibilities and work opportunities, dwindling aid, and frequent raids by the Lebanese armed forces in search for militants. Since 2015, legal requirements imposed on Syrian refugees to regulate their stay and work in Lebanon have become more complicated and costly. This, along with misinformation and unsystematic enforcement, made it difficult for Syrians to have valid official papers and increased their vulnerability[20]. Consequently, more than 70% of Syrians in Lebanon do not have legal residence, and the number is as high as 90% in the Bekaa[21]. As the majority has not been able to renew official papers, a "large undocumented population" is "pushed underground"[22] with fewer births and deaths being registered. In addition, the lack of official documents has negatively affected children education, women's protection, freedom of movement and livelihoods and the Syrians' social networks have weakened[23]. Having valid papers continues to be a priority issue for Syrian refugees, as earlier reports have indicated[24]. Syrians interviewed for this report expressed a feeling of despair concerning the possibility of legalizing their stay as well as fear of being numbed to accept this as the status quo.

From a conflict analysis perspective, aside from the implications of the above restrictions on Syrian refugees rights, these perceptions of vulnerability and lack of opportunities over a long period could contribute to further the antagonism towards the Lebanese individuals or authorities.

A. Political tensions mirroring the countrywide regional divisions

Political tensions between different Lebanese groups exist, because of the countrywide political divisions between what was once called the March 8 and March 14 camps and over the position vis-à-vis the Syrian regime. While these divisions sometimes take on a Sunni-Shiite character, they are not sectarian conflicts. These issues are the remnants of the May 2008 clashes that primarily affected some villages of the region, particularly Saadnayel and Taalabaya, and are often tied to strategic geopolitical concerns related to Hezbollah's access to the Syrian-Lebanese border and/or the main roads and international Highway.

The majority of the Sunnis in the Central and West Bekaa are predominantly affiliated to the March 14 bloc (with a significant minority on the opposite side), which can lead to disputes with the supporters of Hezbollah and the Syrian regime in some villages. These frictions are particularly pronounced in Taalbaya, which has a minority Shiite population from the village or those who have moved into the village recently form villages in the Baalbek and Hermel areas. Clashes took place within the village of

[20] The regulation governing Syrian refugees residency have recently been changed to exempt most Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR from paying the 200USD fee to renew their residence permits. Syrians renewing their residency based on sponsorship still need to pay the fees but their family members do not.

[21] As reported by Legal agenda based on UNHCR figures: Ghida Frangieh, 'Denying Syrian Refugees Status: Helping or Harming Lebanon?', 2017 <http://legal-agenda.com/en/article.php?id=3355> [accessed 15 February 2017].

[22] Haley Bobseine, 'I Just Wanted to Be Treated like a Person': How Lebanon's Residency Rules Facilitate Abuse of Syrian Refugees (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2016).

[23] See for example: Frangieh; NRC and IRC, Legal Status of Refugees from Syria: Challenges and Consequences of Maintaining Legal Stay in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, June 2014; HRW, 'I Just Wanted to Be Treated like a Person': How Lebanon's Residency Rules Facilitate Abuse of Syrian Refugees, 2016; Jihad Nammour and Carole Alsharabti, Survey on Perceptions of Syrian Refugees (Political Science Institute - USJ, 2017).

[24] Muzna Al-Masri, Local and Regional Entanglements: The Social Stability Context in Sahel Akkar (Beirut: UNDP, August 2016); Muzna Al-Masri, The Social Stability Context in the Nabatieh & Bint Jbeil Qazas: Conflict Analysis Report (Beirut: UNDP, March 2016); Nammour and Alsharabti.

Taalabaya and with members of neighbouring Saadnayel in May 2008, and continued sporadically after the Doha agreement that ended the 2008 clashes. Minor conflict re-emerged after the start of the Syrian crisis, particularly after the Arsal clashes and around the public commemoration of Hezbollah fighters killed in Syria. While these are sometimes incidents with minimal political background, the village has strategic geopolitical importance as fights often lead to blocking the main Chtoura-Baalbeck road as a way of exerting political pressure.

Power relations related to families and kinship still prevail in most Sunni- majority villages, but national tension between the pro-March 14 actors and those who support Hezbollah remains. Many Lebanese interviewees highlighted that any individual critical of the March 14 camp or showing some support to Hezbollah tends to be systematically associated with the Lebanese Resistance Brigades even if they do not belong to the brigades. For example, in one of the Sunni villages, a Sunni sheikh with a moderate discourse was accused of being pro-Hezbollah and was forced to relocate to another mosque outside of the village because of his "mild" position.

In some cases, national actors directly accentuate divisions to avoid a loss in control, as it was the case with Haouch el Harimi, a Sunni village in West Bekaa which was not allowed to hold municipal elections because of a fierce conflict between two of its large families. According to one of the activists of the village, local mediators tried to intervene but failed repeatedly, because of interferences by national level political actors. The conflict in the village is perceived to have been fuelled by national politics to avoid weakening the image of the Sunni leadership of the Future Movement that is indirectly backing one of the local families against another Sunni pro-Syrian regime local leader.

However, in general, the situation remains contained and violence has subsided/decreased, because of intervention of local notables and political party representatives. In one village for example, a show of force between a young supporter of March 14 and a Hezbollah convoy was promptly contained by a relative of the young man, who not only calmed his relative, but also escorted Hezbollah's members outside of the village to reduce the possibility of escalation. However, the overall atmosphere is still tense, and prone to hostility toward other groups and/or Syrian refugees. Many individuals are easily susceptible to political provocations and mobilization. In short, as one activist in the region put it "political leaders have an interest in keeping issues boiling, but not erupting, restraining group violence."

This particularly applies to the Christian communities who were considered by interviewees as strongly identifying with their sect, feeling threatened by their surroundings in the context of the large influx of mostly Sunni refugees. The municipal elections dynamics and results in Zahle, the largest catholic city, and Qab Elias that has a large Christian minority, reflect the Christians' prioritization of their religious identity over other political identifications at the moment.

B. Limited municipal capacities and political infighting

In this context, municipalities are caught in between political divisions and pressure to address growing needs and demands for services. Their political composition (and homogeneity) is the first factor that affects their ability to mitigate local conflict. Second, their responsiveness to the needs of refugees and members of the host community can feed antagonistic relations, as explained earlier. Overall, most are grappling with additional functions and services and challenged in resolving problems related to demographic pressure. Some municipalities have been considering levying additional taxes on Lebanese and Syrian refugees alike for the extra services provided, which might ignite a sense of unfairness.

Case Study: Economic Interdependency and Competition in Majdal Anjar

In the border village of Majdal Anjar[25], tension over economic competition has been on the rise. Some owners of local small shops have recently organized together and raised complaints to the newly elected mayor and municipal council about competition from shops owned by Syrians now residing in the village. The village, which has a population of around 18,000 Lebanese residents[26], is also home to 15,000 registered Syrian refugees[27] and possibly three to four thousand more unregistered Syrians. The discontented business owners have staged demonstrations and threatened escalation, if the municipality does not protect Lebanese businesses. Their demands included regulating opening hours, enforcing a unified tariff for services provided in certain professions (tailors, barbers, etc…), requiring health certification for certain professions (barbers and butchers), imposing municipal taxes, and limiting trade to Syrians residing in the village (and exclusion of pedlars). According to them, the number of businesses in all fields has almost tripled, and Syrian shops are competing by providing cheaper services and by opening for longer hours.

Mohammad, a Lebanese owner of a grocery store, for example, claims that his turnover is 80% less since the start of the Syrian crisis and the influx of the refugees. He estimates, based on the number of shops to which soft drink distributors go to, that the number of grocery stores in the village's main street went up from 33 shops six years ago to 142 at the time of the interview. He says that he now can barely afford to cover the expenses of his family of four children, aged 3 to 18 years, and ensure they continue their education. A nearby barber voices similar concerns, claiming that many of the Syrian barbers who opened recently, charge for a haircut almost half of what he charges, are open till a late hour of the day, do not take the weekend off, and provide many additional services – like shoe shining – that a Lebanese is not willing to provide. Both men, and other dissatisfied locals complain that Syrian shops are selling mostly Syrian products, often bought or smuggled from Syria (be it fresh produce like poultry and vegetables or other consumer products) which lowers their cost. They also make the claim that many of the Syrians who own businesses are already receiving aid through WFP vouchers and fuel for heating, and are thus not as burdened by expenses as the Lebanese. They also complained that while Syrian customers would never buy from a Lebanese business, Lebanese customers are willing to buy from whichever shop is cheaper.

This attitude is not necessarily shared by all Lebanese shop owners. Sami, for example, owns a poultry and grocery store and claims that Lebanese and Syrian labour is complementary and that if it was not for the Syrian workers the Lebanese would have suffered. He admits that competition exists, and describes that he was negatively affected by the opening of a neighbouring grocery by a Syrian. Nevertheless, he refused to go to the same demonstrations as Mohammad above and questioned what alternatives are available for Syrians if they are not able to work, indicating that preventing Syrians from working would lead them to become thieves. He opened his shop a year and a half after retiring from a government job, and acknowledges that his relaxed attitude might be due to the fact that his children are older and do not need his financial support and that his income from the shop is only supplementary to his retirement income. He also believes that at least for his specialty product, that of poultry, he still does not face serious competition as there is no other close by similar shop and claims that his customers are both Syrian and Lebanese.

A few steps away is Ahmad's shop, a Syrian who has been in Lebanon for ten years. At the shop's entrance, he manifestly displays the name of his Lebanese wife as the owner, in a clear attempt to attract Lebanese customers and avoid stigmas attributed to Syrians. He goes on comparing his way of doing business to that of a Lebanese, claiming that the Lebanese often seek too high of a profit margin and do not make significant effort in securing their products from the cheapest distributor. The shop carries Lebanese as well as Syrian made products in addition to numerous imported products and Ahmad explains that to ensure lower prices, he buys in bulk and then distributes to three other smaller shops locally.

Yet, talking to other Syrian workers and shop owners illuminates the difficulties they are facing and further complicates the issue. Hisham, for example, who has been in Lebanon for fifteen months, has done all sorts of daily work for any kind of income but explains that he has been jobless for four months. During winter, work in the construction sector stagnates and the fact that he has been smuggled to Lebanon and thus has no official paper limits his movement to further away places because he has no legal residency. He worked as a butcher in Syria, and he got a job at a Syrian's butcher shop in the village where

[25] All names used in this case study have been changed.

[26] According to a municipal board member. The number appears reasonable knowing that the number o voters in the 2016 municipal elections was 6796 http://www.moim.gov.lb/AdsDetails.aspx?ida=245

[27] As of 30/9/2016 - UNHCR

he was paid LBP 100,000 (USD 66) per week for working daily from 8 am until 9 pm. This salary barely covered the expenses of his wife and two kids as well as that of the wife of his deceased brother and their four kids. He explains that many Syrian men are like himself responsible for the expenses of families of relatives who lost their breadwinner, including his previous employer who had the eight families of his jailed brothers to take care of. Hisham is late paying the monthly rent of $250, but the landlord has been patient and his brother's wife has recently started working in a local Syrian NGO and her salary is covering their expenses. Hisham left his job when general security investigated the papers of his employer and he feared that he too will be asked for papers.

Abu Hamed tells a different story. He has been in Lebanon since 2012 and was registered with UNHCR as a refugee, but two years ago was told that his name was removed from the list of refugees and he has received no further aid from them. For a salary of $300 per month he currently runs a small grocery store owned by the relative of his landlord and sponsor for the Lebanese residency. The store is off the main road and according to Abu Hamed makes little profit, and he believes the owner is keeping it as a favour so he, Abu Hamed, maintains a source of income to cover the expenses of his family of five.

Historically, the village benefitted financially from the nearby border, as many of its members opened shops to cater for travellers and worked in import and export and often were privileged by not having to pay customs. The Syrian crisis has tremendously decreased the traffic at the border, but was only the most recent in a series of economic and political crises. Around two years ago, the minister of health ordered the closure of a sugar factory which operated in the village since 1958 and at some point, in the past decade, had 300 employees[28]. The factory had faced ups and downs, mostly linked to agricultural subsidies for the planting of beetroot from which sugar is extracted in the factory, but the closure also reflects the wider marginalization of both agriculture and manufacturing in the post war Lebanese economic policy. That said, the crisis gave rise to new avenues for profit, not least smuggling through the increasingly impermeable border and benefit to the three big supermarkets that are cashing in WFP vouchers. These economic benefits, though, remain limited to a small group of people.

The good relations which the village has enjoyed for decades because of its position with members of the Syrian communities have been hampered by the current economic situation and political tensions since the assassination of Hariri in 2005. The daily interactions with Syrian neighbours and even relatives seem to change little about the situation in many cases. Rumours and mistrust on both sides abound. Some Lebanese make claims that most of the Syrians in the village are going back and forth to Syria and are cashing in their assistance despite having left the country. Some Lebanese interviewees complained that Syrians spend nothing and are just saving money, while others claimed that they have seen Syrian neighbours spend large sums of money which, according to them, proves that they received too much assistance. Rumours that are particularly harmful to Syrian-Lebanese relationships spread through mobile phones, some of which claim that a new residency policy for Syrians will be put in place at costs of thousands of dollars, while others insist that UNHCR will pay every Lebanese who marries a Syrian woman a monthly stipend!

The attitude towards the Syrian refugee community is intertwined with individual political positions. As the calls for protests were raised, the Salafi sheikhs in the village issued calls for calm stressing that the Syrians were 'brothers and sisters' and affirming the duty to host them. Supporters of March 14 political camp – Hariri supporters who have lost a good part of their connections to Syria when they stood against the Syrian regime in 2005 - appear to find Future Movement's discourse in relation to the refugees too mellow. Some even voiced support for the Lebanese Forces – and at times even the Free Patriotic Movement – because of their stronger stand against the presence of refugees.

Members of the newly elected municipal board appear to be playing a positive mediating role and help to keep tensions to a minimum. Nevertheless, practically any form of regulation at the municipal level would be marginal given the overbearing economic conditions for both Syrians and Lebanese. Policies of taxation (which the municipality has started) or regulating working hours and tariffs are not easy to enforce given the precarious working conditions. Regulation to ensure hygienic and health standards is needed, but again requires technical capacity at the municipal level. Above all, the bottom line is that this border village, long neglected on national development agendas will continue to have limited resources and opportunities to cater for its 35,000 Lebanese and Syrian residents unless regional and national level interventions are implemented.

[28] For some background on the factory see Wedyan Othman, 'المدن - صناعة السكّر: ذكرى؟', Almodon, 2013 <http://www.almodon.com/print/3f92bc01-fe51-4be0-a318-fbbce8eb2c32/63728b6c-a3f8-4f38-9071-4637e298b564> [accessed 27 February 2017]; Adnan Karimeh, 'تطور الاقتصاد اللبناني خلال الحرب على طاولة صندوق النقد الدولي', Addiyar, 27 November 1989 <http://www.addiyar.com/article/787266-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%81%D8%AD%D8%A9-7-27111989> [accessed 27 February 2017].

The administrative capacities of Municipalities are also important in attracting aid to the refugees and the village and implementing developmental projects that could reduce tensions. When municipal administrative capacities or governance are weak, projects are either intentionally or unintentionally poorly coordinated and implemented, leaving room for corruption through the contracting of public services' provisioning. Intermediaries can seize opportunities for rent-seeking or personal favours. While service provision is enhanced due to high demand and additional resources flowing in, opportunities for corruption increase[29].

An NGO employee narrated the example of a large municipality that received a lump sum to prepare an informal settlement's land for shelter and allegedly did the work for one tenth of the disbursed fee. A year later, the tenants had to redo the work because it was not properly implemented. In general, when working with international partners, municipalities often highlight the high costs of international NGOs and their lack of understanding of the local context and dynamics. Nevertheless, municipal decisions are often primarily based on political factors. This tension leads to delaying services. For example, in one village where NGOs were contracting a supplier of water through tendering, the municipality refused the process and imposed its supplier. As a result, water provision to the refugees of the village stopped because of the dispute[30].

C. Labour and economic competition fuelling Syrian-Lebanese antagonism

Due to its proximity with Syria, the Bekaa economy has historically depended on trade and labour relationships with Syrians. The influx of refugees created a significant increase in demand for employment. However, overall economic conditions have been worsening, before hosting the large number of Syrian refugees. The regional conflict and deteriorating domestic political conditions are the root cause of the economic slowdown, followed by the significant refugee influx. As the International Monetary Fund clearly explained in a recent report, "there is a distinction between the broader costs of the regional conflict, versus the more specific cost of hosting the Syrian refugees […]. Sometimes the cost of hosting the refugees has been confused with Lebanon's conflict-related economic downturn. The two are linked, but conceptually, Lebanon would have faced lower confidence and activity, even if

[29] Corruption is not a concern for the Bekaa alone, but a national and persistent issue in post-war years. From 2003 until 2016 Lebanon's corruption rank averaged 111.64, and was at it highest in 2014 and 2016 at 136. See: Trading Economics, 'Lebanon Corruption Rank - 2003-2017' <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/lebanon/corruption-rank> [accessed 10 March 2017]. This corruption is perceived as a priority issue by 87% of the Lebanese as a recent IPSOS survey reported by LBCI indicates '87% of Lebanese People Say Corruption Main Issue Facing Country – Study', LBCI News, 2016 <https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/291105/report-87-of-lebanese-people-say-corruption-main-i/en> [accessed 10 March 2017].

[30] Although not raised clearly during the field work for this report because of seasonality (more an issue in the summer months), access to safe water has been a documented problem in the region, due to high demand, pollution and more generally the inadequate management of resources. Likewise, waste water and solid waste remain critical issues with varyng degrees from one settlement and from are to the other.

all refugees had been hosted elsewhere."31 At the same time, there is also ground to consider that the growth in population stimulated consumption and economic activity in certain sectors[32].

The refugee crisis in the Bekaa, however, is presenting economic opportunities for some and economic threats for others, depending on the sector and the nature of the job market. In terms of labour, Syrians are perceived as economic competition in three areas: first as skilled or semi-skilled labourers and employees, second as owners of small businesses, and third as fuelling an increase in cost of rent due to increase in demand.[33] Syrians have traditionally offered their services as semi-skilled labourers like painters, plumbers, etc. and unskilled labour in agriculture. With the influx of refugees, the supply of labour has increased, and some Syrians have also started doing other services as workers in small shops and restaurants among other businesses.

In agriculture, Lebanese-Syrian competition is minimal. The only group that interviewees indicated could be negatively affected by Syrian competition are Arab nomads, who obtained Lebanese nationality in 1995, and have been traditionally part of the local community working in farming since before the influx of the Syrians. Their daily wage rate and bargaining power to negotiate has weakened, as Syrian refugees increased the supply.

A main sector where Lebanese complained of competition is in construction, where Syrians work as skilled and semi-skilled labourers. According to one UN agency interviewee and several Syrian interviewees, the increase in supply not only affected the Lebanese, but also Syrians themselves who are forced to lower their wages to access increasingly scarce work opportunities (see case study at the end of the report for further details). A Syrian NGO employee claimed that Syrians are offering much needed labour in different sectors: agriculture, trade, manufacturing, and that without them, economic activity would stagnate[34]. He considered their labour participation as an economic opportunity for the Bekaa, and claimed that even though tensions exist, the Lebanese communities would suffer in their absence. The Lebanese employers, in particular, are benefitting from an increase in labour supply and consequently lower wages. However, some large businesses refrain from employing Syrians and forego additional profits from lower wages on nationalist or political grounds.

Another area of competition is where Syrians have opened small businesses, particularly in commercial hubs on the main roads and in the centre of villages hosting a large number of refugees. While officially these businesses cannot be operated by Syrians, they are often established under the patronage of a Lebanese who offers the legal infrastructure and receives a share of the profit. Given the willingness of the Syrians to lower prices, these shops compete with Lebanese shops attracting both Lebanese and Syrian costumers and thus have been subject of repeated complaints to the local authorities and to the media by several of the Lebanese shop owners interviewed.

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[31] International Monetary Fund, Lebanon Selected Issues (Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, January 2017).

[32] See for example: International Rescue Committee, Economic Impacts of Syrian Refugees Existing Research Review & Key Takeaways, January 2016 <https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/465/ircpolicybriefeconomicimpactsofsyrianrefugees.pdf>. and Mouhamad Wehbe, 'The Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Lebanon: Small Advantages, Huge Damage, and Overwhelming Racism', Al-Akhbar (Beirut, 5 January 2015) <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/23099>.

[33] The perceived competition is not by necessity indicative of the true levels to which this competition has real economic impact. For example, and while many Lebanese claim that the rise in cost of rent had a significant impact, some indicators show that Syrians have often rented spaces otherwise uninhabited. This would need an economic assessment that is beyond the scope of this report.

[34] Interview conducted on 9/1/2017 by Marianna Altabaa with a Syrian NGO employee in Saadnayel.

One area where this competition was a source of complaint is Bar Elias, as its market is particularly profitable because of its location on a main street. The municipality responded to complaints from Lebanese shop owners by enforcing a regulation stipulating the requirement of Lebanese sponsorship for Syrians to operate shops. As a result, the Syrians that ran the shops found a Lebanese 'sponsor' as a silent partner, paying them a fee to meet the requirement with no change in the shops' management. The same shops remained open, yet the Lebanese benefitted from the returns of a business partnership without making any investment.

This Syrian labour competition is generally perceived as unfair by the Lebanese[35]. The head of a large municipality in the West Bekaa, for example, argued that the entry of the Syrians to the same job market as the Lebanese is "illegitimate". He argued that before the influx, Syrians worked in farming where Lebanese did not work and were in limited numbers, whereas now they are competing in all sectors, especially with the self-employed. He further made the point that while Lebanese pay taxes, Syrians do not and that "they live on the job site, not paying for shelter nor other basic expenses like children schooling, making it an unfair competition".

A third level of economic competition is the increase in rent prices. Informal settlements have increased rent for farming land and have re-purposed agricultural lands for rental purposes. As for housing, many Syrians have rented substandard built spaces not intended for human dwelling, like garages and storage space allowing unforeseen profit for some landlords. Nevertheless, several interviewees claimed that the large number of Syrian refugees renting residential spaces made it expensive for the young locals to rent a house, marry, and start a family.

At the macro level, the significant humanitarian assistance to Lebanon has generally boosted aggregate consumption in addition to job creation[36]. Supermarkets and shops in the Bekaa that are contracted to accept aid payment cards of refugees are benefitting from a higher turnover of merchandise. Local NGOs and community service organisations are partnering with larger or international NGOs in the region to implement externally funded projects. Funding for development and infrastructure projects for host communities has also increased, supporting local economic activity and providing employment.

However, interviews conducted for this report indicate that the positive spill-over effects are not necessarily perceived favourably by Syrian refugees or by the Lebanese. In fact, Lebanese residents in Central Bekaa are sceptical of the broader impact of aid on the host community. An affluent Lebanese owner of large businesses in a Christian area in the Bekaa expressed that the increased consumption from refugees' presence is confined to cheap goods' markets that have low value added and little impact amidst the significant negative repercussions from trade routes closures on the macro economy[37]. The head of the municipality of a large village in the West Bekaa claimed that the only aim of the developmental projects is to reduce tensions between refugees and the host communities, amidst fears that the Syrian refugees would permanently settle.

[35] Several protests by Lebanese show owners or workers have taken place, including in the villages of Bar Elias and Majdal Anjar which we have visited, and more recently in Zahle see: 'East Lebanon Protesters Blame Syrian Refugees for Economic Conditions', The Daily Star <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2017/Mar-03/395943-east-lebanon-protesters-blame-syrian-refugees-for-economic-conditions.ashx> [accessed 9 March 2017]. That said, municipalities we visited have succeeded in quickly containing local anger and preventing it from escalating. The escalation and/or media coverage is sometimes performative to pressure for an interventions beyond (and possibly by) the municipality for action on the part of donor agencies or ministries.

[36] A study showed that an annual $800 million spending on aid in Lebanon drove economic growth rate up by 1.3% but did not mitigate the impact of other negative economic macro factors, such as the decline in tourism and exports. See:UNDP and UNHCR, Impact of Humanitarian Aid on the Lebanese Economy, June 2015.

[37] Interview conducted on 5/1/2017 by Ali Chahine and Marianna Altabaa in his house in the Zahle governorate.

D. The burden of managing daily life for Syrian refugees: Regulations of shelter and camp management as conflict catalysts[38]

Managing daily life and securing basic needs of a refugee's household is mired with obstacles and creates daily tensions with the host community. The key problematic issues – in addition to livelihood discussed above – are shelter and education. The vulnerability of Syrian refugees feeds a sense of being exploited or unjustly treated by some of their Lebanese hosts which, according to Syrian interviewees, feeds antagonism towards the host community.

In discussing shelter conditions of Syrian refugees, it is important to note that the system of shelter is complex and affected by a variety of factors not least the issue of land ownership, municipal regulations and shelter management. An IS which appears to constitute one community can actually be built on two plots of land with two owners or under various municipal jurisdictions.

To put the matter of camp management and land rental simply, the landlord has three ways of using the plot to shelter Syrian refugees: (1) by renting to an NGO that would manage the shelter arrangement and pay an agreed lump sum as rent, (2) by renting out or subcontracting a Shawish to manage the settlement and rent to Syrian families and individuals, (3) by renting directly to the refugees for monetary return or for labour time (in which case the landowner also becomes the employer). The living arrangements have significant impact on the lives of Syrian refugees, particularly as a large percentage of refugees in the Bekaa live in informal settlements. The most common form of renting and management of the settlement that we observed was renting out under the management of a Shawish. This rent arrangement does not entail official documents. The landowner can get a good deal with minimum management obligations, as management is centralized with the Shawish, who rents the plot and then sets the rate for each tent, offers services at his discretion, and potentially imposes additional fees on tenants. He could also be their employer, following his original role in farming before the crisis, as he used to be the link between farm operators and the casual farm workers. He also often distributes aid to the tents on his plot. As detailed below, patronage relationships exist between the Shawish and the Syrian refugees residing in settlements he manages, as he is responsible for both employment and shelter, which can facilitate exploitation of the refugees. The governor's policy preventing the moving of settlements makes it difficult for the Syrians to escape such exploitative relations if they exist. In addition, as one Shawish explained, the inability to move houses 'is not allowing people engaged in disputes to keep their distance.'[39]

Renting a land to the Shawish for shelter, just like in agriculture, does not have to take place directly from the owner, who could officially rent the land to a local from the village who, in turn, rents it for farming or sheltering the refugees. In one case we observed, refugees who thought they were dealing with the owner realized later they were renting from an intermediary who did not communicate the situation to the real owner. The latter did not want to rent the land for refugees' shelter and, ultimately, expelled them. The multiple layers in managing the land creates information gaps as well as opportunities for further exploitation, misunderstandings and conflict between Syrian refugees and the Shawish, or between the refugees and the land owner. In addition, some refugees interviewed argued that evictions had sectarian or political motives, further feeding tensions with the Lebanese.

[38] This section describes the situation at the time of fieldwork though interviewees have shared information about evacuation that took place in the year 2015 before the governor's decision and described tension around the evacuation or escalation, to the extent of threatening with arms, to ensure timely evacuation.

[39] Interview conducted on 3/1/2017 by Marianna Altabaa with a Syrian Shawish in Majdel Anjar.

NGOs, on the other hand, usually set clear terms for the rent arrangement. They use official documents for the rent agreement that specify how they will use the plot. They manage to negotiate much lower rents than when Syrians are renting directly or through the Shawish. For example, a Syrian NGO, that managed twenty IS in villages of Central and Western Bekaa, rented one plot for a third of the rate of a neighbouring land directly rented to refugees. The NGOs manage the utilities, collect rents, and provide additional basic services, such as activities and education centres. In other words, NGOs' rental and management of camps is relatively developed, especially Islamic NGOs that are well organized and have ample financial resources.

Another key issue is education, particularly in public schools. Refugees spoke about problems and harassment they face from the registration phase all the way to clashes within school premises, ultimately leading to dropouts. Many Syrians in the area prefer to send their children to private Syrian educational initiatives, which operate like schools but do not provide their students with an officially recognized certification nor allow the opportunity for interactions between Syrian and Lebanese children. The problems in education have a long term negative impact on Syrian refugees, particularly youth who are most marginalized in this system.

Last but not least, it is worth mentioning the burials of the dead refugees as another emerging problem not on the agenda of the government or of international actors that could become a source of contention[40]. Not all villages are accepting to bury Syrians in their cemeteries which they justify in terms of limited capacities, which means that refugees are facing difficulties in finding cemeteries[41].

E. Growth of networks of patronage and corruption

Within a context of widespread illegal residency and the difficulty of securing livelihood, refugees have become increasingly entrapped in patronage relationships with the Lebanese or more networked non-refugee Syrians in Lebanon who can provide them with protection and services. While the authors already identified this phenomenon two years ago in the Bekaa,[42] it is expanding. A corrupt network of small-scale patrons and brokers has emerged with a strong stake in the continuation of the status quo. It is accentuated by structural factors, including the nationwide residency and labour policies, governorate level policies that restrict the moving of settlements, municipal policies which task the Shawish with security and organizational roles, and the reliance of some NGOs on the Shawish as an entry point for aid disbursement. The stake that individuals who are part of the patronage or corrupt networks have in the current condition locally could disrupt attempts of improving conditions for refugees or of mitigating the conflict issues identified above. In addition, as with the discussion on the management of livelihood, such networks nurture Syrian refugees' perceptions of being exploited by the host community, thereby making them more antagonistic towards it.

The Shawish is a key player in this system of patronage. The power of the Shawish emanates from the fact that refugees cannot easily move their shelter. Last year the governor of the Bekaa issued a circular prohibiting any municipality from establishing new settlements as well as from expanding or moving

[40] Some Syrian interviewees think that the only place where they can bury the dead is in the cemetery of al-Faour, a village with a large percentage of naturalized Lebanese, originally from Syria and/or strong connections with Syrian communities.

[41] This has been clearly expressed in interviews and was reported in one media article: 'امتلاء المدافن في بر إلياس .. وصعوبات في البحث عن أراضٍ خاوية لاجئون سوريون يفشلون في إيجاد مقابر لذويهم في لبنان', Al Sharq, 20 May 2016 <http://www.alsharq.net.sa/2016/05/20/1527121> [accessed 3 August 2017].

[42] For example see: Muzna Al-Masri, Between Local Patronage Relationships and Securitization: The Conflict Context in the Bekaa Region (Beirut: Lebanon Support / UNDP, January 2015).

any existing tented shelters. Any such move would require the approval from the municipalities that have jurisdiction over the area where the settlement exists (and if relevant, that to which it is to be moved) as well as from the Lebanese armed forces' intelligence services, and the State Security Forces. The municipalities also forbid any structural changes to tents, such as adding parts to expand the space. Any exception takes months for approval and goes through a complicated and costly process that involves mounting down and up tents and wood, preparing the land with a cement layer, transporting garbage and managing other utilities' set up, in addition to paying the rent. Among the examples we encountered of the Shawish power is the case of a widows' camp in a village of the central Bekaa where the Shawish opened a shop in the settlement and threatened the tenants to evict them, if they do not buy from it. In another camp, where refugees complained about the Shawish seizing aid, he raised the fees on providing them with electricity. The refugees could not complain anymore, worried that he could evict them.

The Shawish's role further developed because municipalities hold him accountable for security related to the camp. He is in charge of collecting information on refugees and managing their number and their tents. Some Shawishes also take measures to ensure the safety and security of the camp. For example, one Shawish erected a gate for a new camp to prevent intruders and ensure residents' safety following an incident that happened to him. One night, as he was staying late at the camp entrance, four Lebanese men insulted, threatened and attacked him. According to him, some Lebanese opposed the idea of building a gate while many Syrians welcomed it; "I am responsible here", he concluded. He expressed that the Lebanese consider every Syrian as a terrorist and explained that at night the situation is less safe, because of "strangers" moving around[43].

Within this context, and while the Shawish's role can in theory shield the refugees from exploitation, in practice it has become increasingly exploitative of Syrian refugees' vulnerabilities. A female head of household living in a camp managed by a Shawish explained that she is constantly indebted to him. To pay her debt, she works as his domestic servant and at the same time seeks his protection, without complaining. The Shawish is her employer as well and gives her farming daily work for a low daily wage that is not sufficient to pay her rent and other very basic utilities.

In a similar fashion, networks exist to manage refugees' livelihoods against the payment of bribes. Syrian refugees interviewed for this report indicated that these services are prevalent, claiming that any problems with legal requirements can be resolved if money is paid, whether related to land eviction or shelter moves from one settlement to the other, or other issues. For example, one Syrian refugee living in Majdal Anjar explained, when narrating the story of a camp's eviction: "If I want to erect a tent I can do it, if I pay money, even if it is illegal. People have keys." While one Syrian woman living in Jdita believed that Syrians have "taught the Lebanese that everything works with bribery", in reality these corrupt networks feed on pre-existing corrupt systems the Lebanese have grappled with before the Syrian crisis, and restrictive policy which is unresponsive to the needs of the Syrians and the Lebanese alike is further fuelling this corruption.

Likewise, there is a lack of trust in aid providers and processes of aid provision: Many refugees are wary of aid-funded services, because they think that corruption prevails and only those that are well connected receive aid or services. They also highlighted the harms of project duplication, lack of coordination, project delays or interruptions in disbursements.

[43] Interview with Syrian Shawish in Majdal Anjar on 3/1/2016. Interviewed by Mariann Altabaa.

V. Dynamics

The situation in the Bekaa is tense, whether between the Lebanese or between the Lebanese and Syrian refugees, yet conflicts remain latent so far. The dividers that stoke tensions are feeding negative perceptions and thus need to be addressed, especially given that the connectors are relatively limited in scope.

A. Dividers

Army raids in search of militants contributing to the perception of Syrian refugees as security threat

Lebanese armed forces regularly raid informal settlements, especially after terrorist events such as that of Al Qaa in the summer of 2016. As reported by members of the refugee community, the army often uses excessive and performative force during the raids. The raids often result in arrests of individuals who do not have legal residencies, and the number of these arrests is often shared in the media. Though these arrests are short in duration, the information about the release of those individuals soon afterwards is not publicized. As reported by interviewees, these raids are sometimes the result of false information reported by local residents about a certain settlement in order to either encourage the refugees to leave or to cause harm to the landowner who is benefitting from renting out to refugees. In one example reported by an employee of an international organization, one landowner complained to the governor about one settlement and tried to evict it with the aim of moving the residents of this settlement to his land for financial gain[44]. For the Syrian refugees, these local Lebanese dynamics are not entirely clear, but ambiguity as to the motives of raids, evictions and arrests contributes to their perception of victimization. One Syrian woman for example reported stories of arrests of men she knew which she thought where because "one Lebanese would report him as a terrorist". According to her, such reports could be because of personal disputes, or because the Lebanese owes the Syrian money for work he did and does not want to pay him[45]. In some of the cases above, local Lebanese conflict dynamics have an indirect impact on the refugees. The raids translate into feelings of resentment and humiliation amongst refugees and feed Lebanese perceptions that the IS form breeding grounds for terrorism.

Repeated evictions with no shelter alternatives

The common evictions of settlements keep the refugees under the threat of losing their shelters, deprive them of negotiation power for better shelter conditions, and hold them at the mercy of the Shawish. An old woman refugee residing in one of Qab Elias's small camps explained: "the country is their country and we are Syrian refugees, they can do with us whatever they want as we are staying on their land. If they want to be mean, they can burn or destroy our tents."[46] Evictions could be the result of the host communities raising security concerns, either real or perceived, and cooperating with the municipality to get the refugees out. If the municipality follows it through, any land plot can be easily evacuated, as long as it is framed as a security threat. Landowners are another cause of evictions, either by using security forces to increase rent, or because of disputes between different landowners (or between the landowner and the Shawish) of the same settlement. While it is usually

[44] Interview conducted on 21/12/2016 by Muzna Al-Masri and Ali Chahine in Zahle.

[45] Interview conducted on 9/1/2017 by Marianna Altabaa in an informal tented settlement in Nabi Eila village.

[46] Interview conducted on 5/1/2017 by Marianna Altabaa in an informal tented settlement around Qab Elias village.

the Lebanese Armed Forces which are implementing the evictions – at times by force, which is offensive to the refugees - sometimes this responsibility is delegated to the municipalities, which are reluctant to take on that role given the sensitivity of the issue.

Media instigation and conflict amplification to influence aid

In addition to its role in accentuating the Lebanese and Syrian-Lebanese divisions particularly the Shia - Sunni divide, the media is quite active in the central and West Bekaa in covering aid distribution, given the large number of ISs and the media-attractive landscape. Some municipalities, local NGOs and IS use the media to attract donors. In some cases, interviewees for this report even suggested that conflicts are being artificially triggered to draw aid[47]. The refugees are typically portrayed as victims, criminals or terrorists and municipalities use the situation to show that they are in control of a critical situation and/or merit assistance.

While this effectively could attract funding, it is also shaping perceptions about refugees and increasing the hostile sentiments against them. In contrast, Syrian refugees are seeing aid distribution as unfair, because of media coverage. Watching and listening to the news, refugees perceive that aid secured is much more than what they are actually receiving and that humanitarian organisations are not distributing it equitably, prioritising those that are better connected.

Rise and instrumentalisation of Lebanese stereotyping and mistrust of Syrians

Over time, the Lebanese perception of the Syrian refugees has shifted from victims of war, to that of the cause of insecurity at home. As one Lebanese interviewee mentioned, the memory of Arsal incidents remains alive and locals worry that terrorist activity could emerge from the settlements and thus tend to excessively perceive refugees as a potential threat. For example, a Lebanese Sunni interviewee working with the municipality of a large village of the West Bekaa drew a picture of perceptions that drive this fear, by stating: "refugees tend to form mobs… they communicate in Whatsapp groups and so as soon as anything happens to one of them, they immediately gather a crowd…. they carry knives…etc." She admitted that the fear exists even though no criminal acts or terrorist attacks took place in the region. The complete separation of the settlements from the villages further reinforces these perceptions as well as the suspicion against Islamic NGOs that manage some of the settlements[48]. The same feeling was reported by the head of a big municipality in the West Bekaa who thought that despite the control of the municipality, "no one knows who goes in and out" of informal settlements, and considered that a Shawish could be conspiring with militants.

However, prejudice also prevails in villages where interaction exists such as in Majdal Anjar where, despite family and work relations, some Lebanese interviewees expressed strong stereotypes against Syrian refugees. The Lebanese highlight socio-cultural differences with the Syrian refugee community. They complained about second marriages, without indication as to whether this is a substantial phenomenon or not. They mentioned differences in social gatherings' customs and the use of public space for celebrations (weddings, playing music and hubbubs in social gatherings …etc.). Even other

[47] For an elaboration of the unintended consequences of aid policies of 'incentivizing local authorities and communities to, at minimum, display grievances, and, even more dangerously, to encourage conflict, with the aim of attracting development funding' see Lama Mourad, 'From Conflict-Insensitive to Conflict-Driven Aid: Responding to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon', 2016 <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/conflict-insensitive-conflict-driven-aid> [accessed 14 February 2017].

[48] During the field work for this report, researchers heard from one interviewee that there is a pre-empted drive to spread the use of drugs in certain settlements to create a market and a business for dealers.

small habits on the streets like the way the refugees use motorcycles and walk on the streets show, according to the Lebanese, how different they are. Even when it comes to economic competition, cultural difference comes in as a factor: some interviewees expressed discontent that the market of Bar Elias looks more like a local Syrian market than a Lebanese one because of the way products are displayed in shops owned by Syrians. This was another reason that the locals explicitly used to push the municipality to take action against the Syrian shops, through a regulation stipulating the requirement of Lebanese sponsorship for Syrians to operate a shop.

These prejudices are used politically, at both local level come municipal elections for example, or at the national level, building on concerns that Syrians will permanently settle in Lebanon. In a predominantly Sunni village, for example, the president of the municipality clearly stated, "it is better if they erect their tents next to their houses on their own land" in Syria. In one village, around twenty Syrians were relocated to another village, and in yet another, the settlements were confined to the outskirts of the village.

Migration of active, educated Syrian youths who could be partners in supporting social stability

Many of the active, educated Syrians who have managed to build positive relationships with their Lebanese surroundings and/or were active in civil actions or in dialogues and social cohesion activities have since emigrated from Lebanon. Tempted by relocation offers from European or north American countries or pushed out by the lack of opportunities in Lebanon, the departure of such individuals weakens peacebuilding efforts as investments made in them are lost and other such partners in joint efforts are increasing difficult to identify.

B. Connectors

Aid funding of social stability and infrastructure development projects contributing to reduction of refugee and host community tensions

Aid distribution using cash limits visibility and contributes to reducing the tensions with the Lebanese. At the same time, infrastructure development projects, despite all the associated challenges, are supporting municipalities in containing tensions. In fact, the Bekaa has the lion's share in terms of number of projects and budget provided to municipalities to 'strengthen their capacity to mitigate tensions created by the socio-economic shock of the crisis' - the budget for such projects amounted in 2016 alone to USD 7,682,905[49]. In addition, social stability projects in municipalities such as the establishment of dialogue committees or the hiring of a municipality support assistant to work on social stability could have positive results, though at varying rates from one place to the other. In some areas, such openings are used as another position of influence and power that might not be sustainable once funding dries up.

[49] The Projects could include 'implementing small (community support) and medium (basic services) projects to alleviate resource pressure and provide tangible benefits to local communities' – see: 'Social Stability Sector - Support to Municipalities: Basic Services and Community Support Projects Activities in 2014, 2015 & 2016' (Inter-Agency Coordination - Lebanon, 2017) <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=12929> [accessed 9 March 2017].

Close ties between Syrian NGOs and the refugee community weakening Shawish patronage and facilitating a prompt participatory response to conflicts and problems

Refugees tend to have more confidence in some Syrian NGOs than in international organisations. Some of these organisations have managed to overcome barriers to ensure more effective humanitarian aid distribution to refugees[50]. Many of them manage to bypass the relation with the Shawish by recruiting him to become an NGO staff member thus limiting his role. In return, they are renting the land and managing aid and services in camps thereby reducing the effect of patronage relationships. Some Syrian NGO staff members feel a strong responsibility for their compatriots and thus help far beyond their duties. Their response can be more effective in preventing problems from escalating such as the eviction of a camp in Marj, where they quickly engaged the host community and provided new shelters, managing a difficult situation in close consultation with both host communities and refugees.

The prevalence of family, clan and local allegiances with historical connections to Syria

The Bekaa amongst all regions in Lebanon has been the most related to the Syrians in terms of economic activity and social relations and this partly explains the high density of refugees there. This familiarity does help refugees in facilitating their access to work, basic services, or protection. Likewise, allegiance to clan and family remains strong enough to offset national political divides.

A social and municipal infrastructure which supports conflict mitigation locally

Many of the villages of the Bekaa have a long history of municipal action and a cultural heritage of mitigating conflict. Though families are not bound by tribal connections as in the north of Bekaa, strong ties still exist and notables continue to exert moral pressure when crisis or conflict emerges and have played a positive role in mitigating conflict and preventing the negative implications of minor incidents.

VI. Recommendations

The sharp decrease in economic opportunities available for central Bekaa's residents, the doubling of the population due to the refugee crisis, and the entanglements of national politics are weighing down the central Bekaa region. The conflict issues that the region grapples with transcend its geographic borders and thus recommendations focus on national level and structural interventions to support an area that has been severely hit by the Syrian crisis.

Lebanese governmental institutions

- Reconsider official procedures and regulations required from the refugees to regularize their stay and work, especially the sponsorship system. This would reduce their vulnerability to exploitation and cut out many of the corruption systems that have emerged around this issue.

- Facilitate the registration of deaths and births in order to ensure that they are documented; otherwise, any return to Syria or resettlement outside of Lebanon will be difficult if children of family members are unregistered.

- Take advantage of the opportunities provided by the influx of international aid to improve Lebanese governmental services in rural areas, particularly in education and infrastructure support

[50] This perception preclude perceptions or accusations of corruptions which are made against Syrian, Lebanese and international organizations alike, nor is it a blanket evaluation f these organizations.

to municipalities. Government institutions can provide strategic and planning support to ensure projects are coordinated and provide sustainable development in the communities where they are implemented.

Donor agencies

- Advocate for easing the official procedures and regulations that govern the residency of refugees in Lebanon and governorate policies that limit shelter options for refugees.
- Support strategic economic projects that provide work opportunities for both Syrians and Lebanese at the national and macroeconomic level, beyond support to SMEs and provision of micro-credit.
- Continue and improve the quality of funding and support livelihood and basic needs projects, including education and consider providing support for the establishment of or expansion of burial spaces to cater for Syrian refugees.
- Continue funding and developing the capacities of municipalities to improve living conditions and ensure refugees' protection by focusing on humanitarian principles and refugees' rights. Capacity building projects need to develop the institution's own resources and staff. While seconding Municipal Support Assistants to municipalities might be necessary, it is important to note that these posts are dependent on donors' funding and are not part of the municipal core organisational structure. As such, they risk being unsustainable.
- Consider supporting and funding projects in villages with no municipalities or municipalities that have weak capacities to implement local developmental projects for the host community and the refugees.
- Support active Syrian NGOs operating in the region, facilitating their development and increase in services to refugees.
- Make available, where possible, data on death rates as well as the dependency ratio (working member /household) among Syrian refugee population.
- Improve coordination between donors to limit duplication and ensure strategic programming which responds to evidence-based identification of needs and supports sustainable development.

Civil society, humanitarian and social stability actors

- Fund employment-generating projects of value-added in villages where both Lebanese and Syrian refugees would be interested to work. The participatory aspect in designing the project could build relations and ensure fairness while identifying possible interventions. One example could be community markets, i.e. souks that include both Syrian and Lebanese traders and could be under the auspices of the municipality. These projects would foster interactions as social spaces are created and thereby increase cohesion.
- Expand social cohesion projects for Lebanese youth from mixed political and sectarian backgrounds, as well as between Syrian and Lebanese youth and women through school education and make sure such projects are designed rather long term and involve frequent activities.

- Continue supporting local water, sanitation and solid waste management projects, while focusing on improved coordination locally and strategic design of interventions that ensure sustainable impact of such projects and not merely the appeasement of the local community.
- Support media to adopt a narrative and approach that reduces tensions rather than ignite them, stressing the importance of the objective portrayal of refugees.
- Consider alternative entry points to IS than the Shawish. One possibility is the approach adopted by Syrian NGOs.
- Improve complaints' mechanisms for Syrian refugees and ensure information is shared with refugees on the status of their complaints.
- Improve coordination at both the local and national levels of development projects, which respond to evidence-based identification of needs, including indicators on social tensions.

Annex I: Governor of the Bekaa's Circular on Informal Settlements

الجمهورية اللبنانية
وزارة الداخلية والبلديات
محافظة البقاع

تعميم رقم ٤٥/١/٢٠١٦

حيث ان ظاهرة نزوح اللاجئين السوريين تتفاقم بشكل مضطرد،

وتأكيدا" للتعميم رقم ٢٠١٤/١/٢١ تاريخ ٢٠١٤/٥/١٢ المبلغ أصولا"

وحيث ان البلديات واتحادات البلديات تلجأ الى تسهيل اقامة مخيمات للنازحين السوريين بالتنسيق مع بعض المنظمات المحلية او المنظمات الحكومية التي تتعامل مع جهات مختلفة داخل لبنان وخارجه، ولما كان مجلس الوزراء لم يقر حتى الأن اقامة مخيمات للاجئين السوريين،

لـذلـك

يطلب الى جميع البلديات واتحادات البلديات عدم السماح بإقامة ونقل مخيمات للاجئين السوريين ضمن نطاقها ، وابلاغنا عن اي مشروع بانشاء مخيم او اي طلب يقدم بهذا الخصوص وبالتالي عدم الترخيص بإقامة اي خيمة او تجمع خيم جديد%

يبلغ الى:
- قائمقامي البقاع الغربي وراشيا
- بلديات قضاء زحلة واتحاداتها
- المحفوظات

محافظ البقاع
القاضي انطوان سليمان

٢١ تشرين الثاني ٢٠١٦

٢١ تشرين الثاني ٢٠١٦

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