REPORT

SAFERWORLD
PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT, BUILDING SAFER LIVES

LCPS
المركز اللبناني للدراسات
The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies

Building peace into refugee responses

Syrian refugees in Lebanon

April 2018

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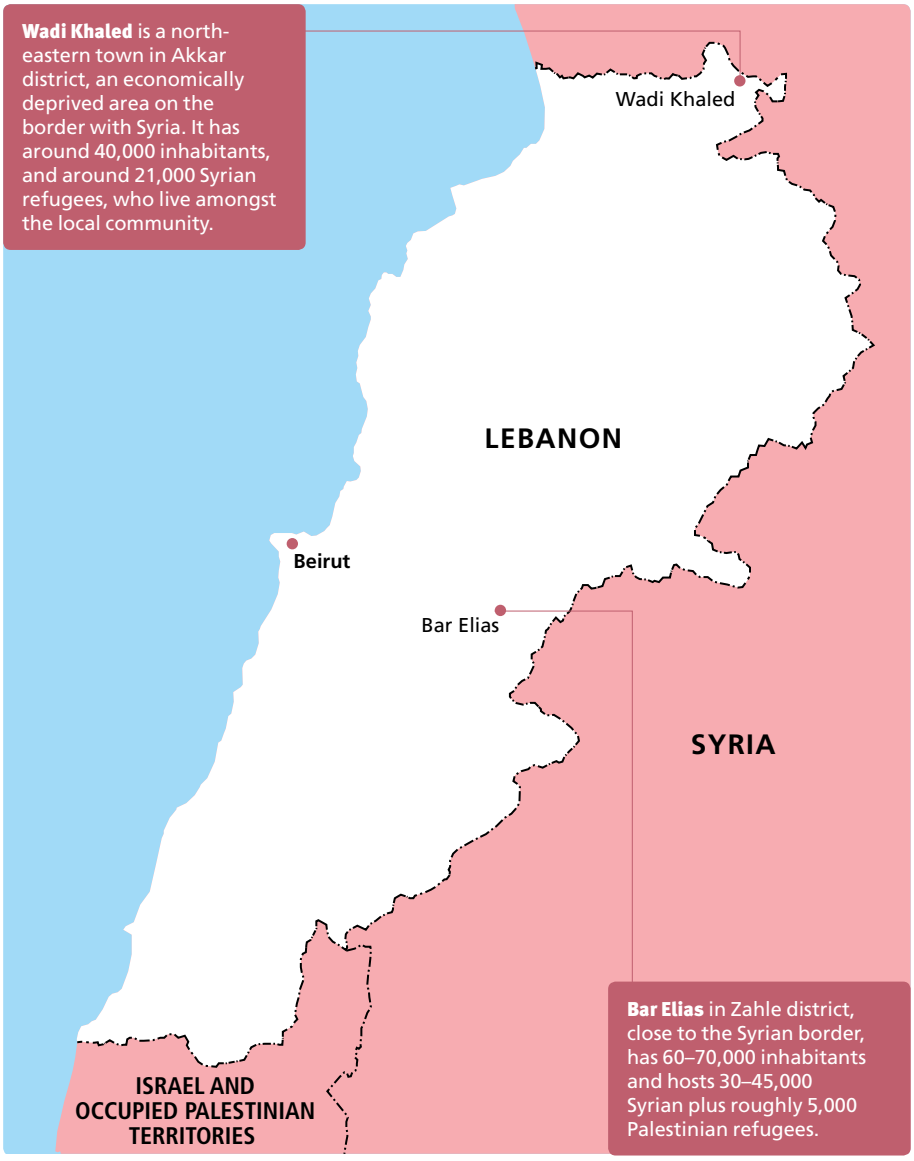

Introduction

SEVEN YEARS INTO THE WAR IN SYRIA, fears that the conflict would lead to renewed fighting in Lebanon have not been realised. Although Lebanon has been impacted by the events in Syria, including through the influx of refugees and a small number of serious incidents of armed conflict (such as in Tripoli,[1] Ain El Helweh Palestinian refugee camp[2] in South Lebanon, and Arsal[3]), conflict has mostly remained localised and infrequent. Despite Lebanon hosting an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees,[4] approximately a quarter of the country's population, fears concerning the potential for large-scale conflict between refugees and host communities has not materialised to date.

As the crisis enters its eighth year, however, Syrian refugees find themselves more vulnerable, with their livelihood opportunities diminishing and public goodwill in increasingly short supply, even in areas that were initially welcoming. Results from a 2017 survey commissioned by the UNDP[5] showed that nearly half of Syrians consider inter-community relations as positive, whereas only 28 per cent of Lebanese do – with only two per cent of Lebanese respondents saying there is 'no tension' between refugee and host communities in their area.

With these challenges in mind, Saferworld and the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) conducted research to better understand how tensions between Syrian refugees and host communities are affected by various developments and initiatives in two localities in North Lebanon and Bekaa Valley, respectively Wadi Khaled and Bar Elias. The aim of the research was to better understand the character of the undercurrents at play and ways to address them through exploring how and why initiatives have impacted local dynamics. The research is intended to inform future international programmes in Lebanon, to encourage them to help sustain peace and avoid aggravating local sensitivities and tensions that can escalate into violence.

While our research sheds light on a number of tensions between Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities, it also highlights a general sense of Lebanese solidarity towards Syrian refugees. This is reflected in feelings of empathy towards Syrian suffering

1 Civil Society Knowledge Centre and Lebanon Support (2016), 'Tripoli clashes (starting June 20, 2014)', January, http://civilsociety-centre.org/timelines/28671

2 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2017), 'South Lebanon: Ein El Hilweh camp profile 2017', Reliefweb, 7 December, https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/south-lebanon-ein-el-hilweh-camp-profile-2017

3 Samya Kullab (2014), 'Clashes displace residents of Lebanon's Arsal', Al Jazeera, 4 August, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/lebanon-arsal-clashes-syria-20148411950553349.html

4 The number '1.5 million' is the Government of Lebanon's own estimation, according to the 2017-2020 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan. However, official figures by the UNHCR place the number of registered refugees at 1,001,051 as of September 2017 [2017–2020 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan]. The discrepancy is likely an estimation of the number of refugees who are unregistered with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as the UNHCR stopped registering new arrivals in May 2015, and since then only 'records' rather than 'registers' new arrivals. In fact, because of this discrepancy between 'registered' and 'actual' refugees, the number of registered Syrian refugees has actually, officially, dropped from 1.017 million in 2016 to 1.001 million in 2017 (2017, VASyR).

5 ARK (2017), 'Narrative report: Regular perception surveys on social tensions throughout Lebanon: Wave I', July.

caused by the war and instances of generosity shown towards Syrian refugees by Lebanese neighbours. At the same time, frustration is palpable, due to the protracted nature of the Syrian crisis and the challenges that have accrued with the passing of time.

A number of tensions between Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities are based on a lack of mutual understanding and are reinforced by the propagation of negative stereotypes. They are also linked to vulnerabilities, which are at the core of people's grievances. However, response strategies do not always play a positive role in responding to those grievances, as security interventions, in particular, rather appear as a source of insecurity and tension.

This report therefore seeks to highlight ways to sustain peace in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. Key elements for this include enhancing the conflict sensitivity of interventions and refraining from framing the Syrian refugee crisis as a security threat. Placing peace at the centre of response strategies can support more sustainable efforts while making solidarity resilient in communities.

Key findings

Experiences of Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities and relations between them

- In line with existing research, key sources of tensions centre on jobs, weak local infrastructure, access to healthcare and education. However, the economic strain on the Lebanese population is not only caused by the demographic shift resulting from the influx of Syrian refugees; it is also the direct consequence of the closure of the Syrian borders, across which trade used to flourish.
- Some tensions also arise from changing social and cultural norms, particularly those around youth and women. For interventions to be conflict sensitive, they must recognise the plurality and diversity of the groups they target and tackle the dividers within them, in particular generational and gender dynamics.
- Feelings of insecurity are a key element of tensions. While some Lebanese call for more security presence, the behaviour of security actors is a major cause of Syrians' feeling of insecurity. Some Lebanese also note increased sensitivity over security matters in the context of the 'war on terror', leading to restrictions on their freedom of expression. Security provision must be revisited in light of communities' concerns and the risk of exacerbating tensions and instability.
- Tensions and vulnerabilities are linked and reinforce each other. In many cases, vulnerabilities pre-date the arrival of Syrian refugees, and are reflections of long-term development challenges, caused by structural governance issues. If interventions are to support sustaining peace in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, they must address vulnerabilities and their causes, as a way to prevent grievances from consolidating further.
- Legal status is central to refugees' vulnerability in Lebanon. Their uncertain status affects (and sometimes drives) other sources of vulnerability, and leads to an overall feeling of insecurity for Syrian refugees. Ensuring more legal protection for refugees will have a conflict mitigating impact, and could help improve working conditions for both Syrians and Lebanese.
- Socio-economic class affects inter- and intra-community cohesion. Interactions between Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees are strongly determined by class. Also, the effect of the Syrian refugee presence on host communities has been uneven: while some Lebanese have profited from the influx of refugees, others have seen their conditions worsen as a consequence.

- Especially where interaction is limited, Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities fall back on unfavourable stereotypes of the other community, undermining empathy and the potential for solidarity. This lack of exposure and understanding is at risk of manipulation by wider political interests in Lebanon, including through divisive political and media discourses. While not a solution to addressing underlying causes of conflict, bringing Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities together can (re)build bridges of understanding and solidarity.

Responses to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon

- The lack of a clear rights-based, national government-led response to the crisis has played a role in stoking tensions between Syrian refugees and host communities, as it has led to ad hoc local responses, thus creating an unpredictable environment for Syrian refugees, which in turn has increased their sense of insecurity.
- International aid is a source of tension between Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities. This is particularly due to the opacity with which it is allocated and distributed. To have a more positive impact on conflict dynamics, there is a need for more transparent, inclusive and accountable aid.
- The categorisation of beneficiaries as 'refugee' and 'host community' in aid provision does not always help aid to reach the most vulnerable. The use of these categories by international agencies can also entrench divisions and resentment. On the other hand, simply allocating aid to the most vulnerable may not account for tensions regarding aid. More inclusive and conflict-sensitive approaches are needed to overcome this, as communities will find aid allocation decisions fairer if they can be involved and identify with the reasons behind them.
- The initial crisis response focused on short-term humanitarian aid to refugees, without sufficiently addressing long-standing development and governance issues. Increasingly, the response has become securitised – in the context of deteriorating security among refugee and host communities, harsh security measures, and limited rights for refugees. This is detrimental to those in need of assistance and contributes to intensifying divisions. In the context of the war on terror, the securitisation of the refugee issue is dangerous, reinforcing a binary 'with-the-army-or-with-the-terrorists' narrative. This compounds the sense of insecurity felt by refugees and host communities, and limits Lebanese communities' freedom of expression while making it difficult to defend and speak for the rights of Syrian refugees.
- The international security element of the global refugee crisis may unwittingly incentivise the portrayal of the Syrian refugee crisis as a security threat in Lebanon. This detracts from the international focus on human rights in the global refugee crisis and puts the success of response efforts at risk.
- Some of the main factors that contribute to strengthening positive relationships between Syrian refugee and Lebanese host communities are organic. External actors can therefore play a constructive role in enabling those positive dynamics to develop locally. Importantly, however, external actors must ensure that they do not strengthen negative dynamics that counter these organic factors for peace, as happens with securitised approaches that reinforce fears and mistrust within communities. Moreover, they can also directly help to address sources of tension and human insecurity in their efforts as a contribution to sustaining peace in future.

Methodology

Between August and September 2017, in Wadi Khaled and Bar Elias, the research team conducted six focus group discussions (FGDs) to capture a diverse set of first-hand local views, and between six and eight key informant interviews (KIIs) to capture local leaders' and experts' perspectives. The FGDs included men and women from the Syrian refugee community and from the Lebanese host community, and were conducted

separately along gender and nationality lines, apart from two groups in each location – one composed of young[6] Syrian and Lebanese men and women, and one composed of Syrian and Lebanese civil society actors – that were mixed.[7] These findings were then analysed by Saferworld and the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) in a workshop in September 2017.

The research was supplemented by a literature review and 17 interviews conducted in Beirut (July and September 2017), with representatives of: international donor organisations; international NGOs (INGOs); Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian NGOs; and the Lebanese government.

Due to limited resources and scope, this research could not consult Palestinian refugees as a distinct group. However, some Palestinian views were gathered, and the Palestinian refugee experience in Lebanon was discussed and taken into account to inform the findings of this research.

Terminology

This research recognises the limitations of terminology, and seeks to highlight the need for nuance when referring to group types. In particular, it is important to note that an estimated 500,000 Syrians who fled the war and are now in Lebanon are not registered as refugees with UNHCR,[8] and therefore do not benefit from legal protections granted under refugee law. We nevertheless refer to them as 'refugees' throughout this piece, without distinguishing between those who are and are not registered, as both groups effectively share similar conditions, while their different administrative statuses imply important differences where noted.

Categorisation *within* communities is complex, and a Syrian living in Lebanon could be classified under a number of labels: refugee, migrant worker, foreigner, visitor. Each of these contains "its own set of implications for what a Syrian may do, how her presence is understood by others in the community, and what type of rights and protections she may have access to."[9] The blurriness of categorisation affects not just entitlement to certain rights, but also impacts policy, as exemplified by divergent estimates of Syrian refugee numbers in Lebanon.

The binary 'host community'–'Syrian refugee' distinction is also problematic, as it does not capture diversity within these groups. In particular, host community and refugee groups are socio-economically diverse, and class, gender, age and religion, in particular, play an important role in determining the experience each individual within these groups has. In addition, vulnerability in one respect increases the likelihood of being vulnerable in another. This binary division can also exclude other groups in Lebanon, notably Palestinian refugees – both those who had been living in Lebanon as well as those arriving from Syria – and migrant workers, particularly domestic workers. Palestinian refugees who were living in Lebanon before the Syrian crisis, despite their special status, are de facto part of the 'host community' in our understanding. Importantly, also, the distinction between Lebanese and Syrians requires nuance, as many Lebanese citizens are of plural heritage – including Syrian, as well as Palestinian heritage, *inter alia*.

While we use 'Lebanese host communities' and 'Syrian refugees' as the two group types in this research for clarity purposes, we also question this division and seek to highlight ways in which the population could be categorised in more conflict sensitive ways.

6 The youth focus group included people between 18 and 29 years old.

7 The rationale for mixing men and women in the youth focus group was that young people would be less restricted by gender norms, as they are more accustomed to mixing than other age groups. The rationale for the group mixing Syrians and Lebanese was to observe interactions and relationship dynamics between the two nationality groups. In addition, the civil society group was mixed along both gender and nationality lines, as it was expected that civil society actors would be accustomed to interacting across them.

8 HRW (2017), 'The gaps in Lebanon's new refugee policy', 14 March. https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/14/gaps-lebanons-new-refugee-policy

9 Janmyr M, Mourad L (2018), 'Modes of ordering: Labelling, classification and categorization in Lebanon's refugee response', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 8 January. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/advance-article/doi/10.1093/jrs/fex042/4792968

Location overview

Wadi Khaled

Wadi Khaled is a north-eastern town in the district of Akkar, bordering with Syria. Due to its proximity to some of Syria's most conflict-affected areas, the town was host to early influxes of refugees from Syria in 2011.[10] Home to approximately 40,000 individuals, and now an additional 21,000 Syrian refugees, who live among the local community, Wadi Khaled is considered an economically deprived area, which suffers from sewage problems, polluted drinking water, poor roads, and extensive power cuts.

The majority of its inhabitants were naturalised in 1994, despite having lived in Lebanon for decades. Before being naturalised, those without ID cards were unable to access education, healthcare, or civil registration, and even after naturalisation, many only became eligible to work in the civil service from the mid-2000s.

Wadi Khaled has long-standing familial, social, and economic ties to Syria, due to territorial proximity and because the lack of ID cards for Lebanese residents meant that the distinctions between 'Syrian' and 'Lebanese' citizens was often weak. Also, many in Wadi Khaled relied on illicit trade and smuggling with Syria; this included drugs and weapons, but more commonly cigarettes and fuel. Following the 2014 closure of the northern border between Lebanon and Syria, cross-border trade trickled to a halt, leading to rising unemployment among the host community. Many locals also used to rely on affordable medical treatment and medicine from Syria, so the closure of the border affected their access to healthcare.

The research team selected Wadi Khaled both because of the challenges it faces and because of its potential to illustrate ways in which peaceful coexistence had proved possible.

Bar Elias

Bar Elias is a town located in the governorate of Bekaa in the district of Zahle, close to the border with Syria. It is the second largest town after Zahle, and is home to approximately 60–70,000 inhabitants. Located along the Litani river, it is an agricultural and touristic town, which used to export fruits and vegetables into Syria. During the Lebanese civil war, Bar Elias also developed into a trading hub. It includes a small community of Syrians who were naturalised in 1994.

Before the Syria conflict, the town hosted large numbers of seasonal Syrian labourers who worked in the local agricultural sector. In some cases, these labourers have returned as 'refugees', bringing their families with them. Refugees in Bar Elias live among the host community as well as in informal tented settlements (ITSs) on the outskirts of the town. Currently, Bar Elias hosts one of the largest numbers of Syrian refugees in the Bekaa – 30–45,000 according to a 2016 assessment.[11] In addition, the town also hosts roughly 5,000 Palestinian refugees.

The municipality of Bar Elias has been described as having adopted a positive approach towards supporting Syrian refugees and working towards local development.[12] It was therefore chosen for its potential to illustrate ways in which peaceful coexistence can be promoted.

10 MSF (2017), 'Lebanon: Refugees and host community bound by suffering', 7 August. http://www.msf.org/en/article/lebanon-refugees-and-host-community-bound-suffering

11 El Naggar, Mona (2017) 'Syrian refugees in Lebanon – a desire to know and search for prospects', DW, 11 February, http://www.dw.com/ar/لاجئون-سوريون-في-لبنان-رغبة-في-المعرفة-وبحث-عن-آفاق/a-37455353

12 LCPS, 'Law and Politics of "Safer Zones" and Forced Returns to Syria: Refugee Politics in Lebanon' (https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf), p 35.

1

Community-level vulnerabilities and tensions

A woman from Homs, Syria, hangs clothes on the roof of a chicken farm turned refugee residence that houses 40 families. Kherbet Dawood, North Lebanon.
Diego Ibarra Sánchez/ Saferworld

THIS SECTION PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW of emerging tensions in Wadi Khaled and Bar Elias and analyses some key themes that stood out in both locations. While it is not possible to draw countrywide conclusions from an analysis informed primarily by two locations, an in-depth look into some of these emerging themes may provide insights for other locations in Lebanon.

It is important to note that despite tensions, there was a general sense of solidarity between Lebanese and Syrian respondents in both locations. This could partly be response bias, given Lebanese culture's strong emphasis on hospitality. Still, Syrian and Lebanese participants felt that while the situation was difficult, Lebanese communities were on the whole welcoming to refugees. As one Syrian woman in Wadi Khaled said: "There are good and bad guys in every community but this does not change that the Lebanese have been very good."[13]

13 LCPS key informant interview with Syrian activist, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.

Solidarity is mostly expressed as a sense of empathy that some Lebanese have towards Syrian suffering caused by the war. The Lebanon civil war is fresh in people's minds, which helps some Lebanese feel for what the Syrians are going through. Anecdotal evidence gathered through this research shows how some Lebanese landlords and neighbours have housed Syrian families for free, paid for their healthcare, or provided them with food. Despite these examples, however, a number of tensions persist around the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Overview of tensions in Wadi Khaled

In Wadi Khaled, it was clear that Syrian refugee and Lebanese host communities regularly interacted. This is partly due to the town's unique history and close proximity to Syria: the community has historical bonds with Syrians as people connect across the border through social, economic, and family ties.[14] Many refugees in Wadi Khaled had previous familial links with the host community, including through inter-marriage.[15] Consequently, when the first influx of refugees arrived, they were warmly welcomed by the community, many of whom invited them to stay in their houses.[16]

Nonetheless, after six years, resentment has increased towards refugees. While the refugee influx has boosted the economy through the opening of restaurants and shops and increased consumers for goods, it has also placed a heavy burden on infrastructure and jobs.[17] Some of the primary challenges highlighted by inhabitants were lack of job opportunities and access to healthcare and education, bad infrastructure (waste management, electricity), and tensions arising from changing social and cultural norms – particularly along generation and gender lines.[18]

These factors have contributed to resentment from some host community members towards Syrian refugees. The director of a local school noted an increase in tensions between Syrian and Lebanese students over nationality issues.[19] In FGDs, Syrian men confirmed a rise in racism. One man reported the following story involving his son:

"My son was standing on the road and young Lebanese men said some racist slurs to him because he is Syrian. I told my son to go back inside the house, because we did not want to cause problems."[20]

However, historical ties and regular interaction between the two communities have kept tensions from developing into larger problems, as will be detailed in section 3. This strong bond was noticeable in the open manner with which Syrian respondents in Wadi Khaled spoke about these tensions, compared with Syrians living in Bar Elias who were more hesitant.

Overview of tensions in Bar Elias

In Bar Elias the situation was uneven, and interactions between Syrian and Lebanese communities appeared to be less frequent compared to Wadi Khaled – especially for Syrians living in the ITS on the outskirts of the city. Initially many Lebanese in Bar Elias opened their homes to Syrians, particularly since many had previously come to Bar Elias for seasonal agricultural employment, but now their presence is increasingly seen as a burden and a source of tension,[21] often concerning everyday issues, such as noisy children or complaints about unpaid work.[22]

In FGDs, a number of Lebanese community members made xenophobic comments, alluding to their lack of trust and their fear of Syrians, with one woman saying that

14 LCPS key informant interview with army, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
15 LCPS key informant interview with local authority, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
16 LCPS key informant interview with local authority, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
17 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian and Lebanese civil society, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
18 LCPS key informant interview with local NGO, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
19 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
20 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
21 LCPS key informant interview with local authority, Bar Elias, September 2017.
22 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.

'respectable' companies such as KFC and McDonalds would never hire Syrians.[23] In mixed FGDs with Syrians and Lebanese, Syrian respondents were much more hesitant and apprehensive about speaking than their Lebanese counterparts, while Lebanese youth were more aggressive and resentful.

There was a noticeable difference between the experiences of refugees living in ITSs, who are more isolated, and those – usually with more income – living among the host population. For the latter group, interactions occurred during holidays, weddings, and funerals; but for those living in the ITS, interactions were much less common, and tended to be more negative. One Syrian man living in the ITS said:

"A Lebanese guy entered the camp with a gun and started shouting at us and insulting people. We couldn't do anything about it, we had to shut up otherwise he could have killed us."[24]

At the same time, Syrian refugees in Bar Elias also reported instances of kindness and generosity from the host community. As one Syrian man commented:

"Some [Lebanese] *stood by us and were supportive. My son was sick and I took him to the hospital… my Lebanese neighbour paid for my son's treatment and he was good to us."*[25]

Another refugee living in the ITS reported that the landlord (who owns the land where the settlement has been built) does not charge him rent because he knows he cannot afford to pay: "He says that as long as the crisis is in Syria, we do not pay a dime."[26]

Sources of tension

Underlying most of the tensions between refugees and host communities in both locations are socio-economic issues related to livelihoods and economic security, with tensions and vulnerabilities linked and reinforcing each other. In FGDs, questions around tensions quickly morphed into discussions about vulnerability, as Lebanese community members discussed their resentment towards refugees in ways that underlined their own fears around their ability to support their families.

When discussing sources of tensions, Lebanese and Syrian communities referred to jobs, health and education services, traffic congestion, and waste management. In many cases, these concerns pre-date the arrival of Syrian refugees, and are reflections of long-term development challenges, caused by structural governance issues related to mismanagement, underdevelopment, and corruption.[27] Naturally, the arrival of a large influx of refugees in these conditions further aggravated these problems. Infrastructure pressures contributed to worsening service delivery, exacerbating pre-existing socio-economic and governance challenges. This contributed to increased resentment – not just between refugee and host communities, but within each community as well. As one local NGO worker interviewed in Beirut explained, "When needs are not met, any small thing can trigger violence."[28]

a) Access to jobs

Employment and access to jobs were by far the most common reasons for hostility and resentment towards Syrian refugees by Lebanese host communities in both research locations; in other parts of the country, there have been some small-scale labour protests by Lebanese workers against the hiring of Syrians.[29] This parallels other

23 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017.
24 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
25 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
26 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
27 al Masri M, Abla Z (2017), 'The burden of scarce opportunities: The social stability context in Central and West Bekaa'.
28 Saferworld interview with a local NGO representative, Beirut, July 2017.
29 See, for example, *Albawaba* (2017), 'Girls just wanna work: Lebanese women protest Syrian competition for work in Beirut suburb', 24 January. https://www.albawaba.com/editorchoice/girls-just-wanna-work-lebanese-women-protest-syrian-competition-work-beirut-suburb-9288.

research showing that employment is the most consistent source of conflict between refugees and host communities in Lebanon.[30]

Most competition for jobs is in low-skill sectors: cleaning, domestic work, construction, and agriculture.[31] Interviews conducted in Beirut[32] indicate that this competition mostly exists between Syrians, Palestinians, and other migrant workers, rather than with Lebanese. Still, poorer, low-skilled Lebanese workers are affected, as in both locations Lebanese men expressed the fear of losing their jobs to Syrians who would work for less, leaving them unable to support their families.

Tensions over employment took on slightly different dimensions in each location. In Wadi Khaled, local authorities and communities discussed the economic strain of the Syrian conflict according to: (i) increased competition for jobs with Syrians, and (ii) the closure of the Syrian border, which effectively cut off the main source of income for many Lebanese Wadi Khaled inhabitants. In Bar Elias, tensions over livelihood and employment took on a strong socio-economic class dimension: some Lebanese respondents expressed resentment towards Syrian refugees who were opening businesses, citing this as a sign that Syrians were not as economically disadvantaged as they appear. In other parts of the country, resentment towards Syrian refugees who are financially able to start businesses has contributed to forced closures and attacks on Syrian businesses and shops.[33]

While the pressure around jobs existed before the refugee crisis, when Syrian workers would migrate to Lebanon for employment,[34] it is now much more prominently discussed in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis as a criticism against Syrians and an illustration of the 'threat' they pose to the Lebanese.

A group of Syrian women work in a field on the outskirts of Rawda, Bekaa.
Diego Ibarra Sánchez/ Saferworld

30 Mercy Corps (2017), 'From tension to violence: Understanding and preventing violence between refugees and host communities in Lebanon.'

31 For a variety of reasons, it has been estimated that approximately 92 per cent of economically active Syrian refugees search for work in the informal labour market. Before 2013, labour regulations between Syria and Lebanon were based on a set of bilateral trade agreements signed between 1991 and 1994 which effectively allowed the free movement of persons between both countries. However, since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria, the Lebanese government issued a number of legislative changes around employment for Syrians: in February 2013, the Ministry of Labour issued a circular that allowed Syrians to work in construction, agriculture and cleaning jobs (though many Syrians had already been working in these sectors without a legal permit). However, more recently the government has placed several restrictions on Syrian workers, including a decree stipulating that Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR are not allowed to work unless they have a work permit, even though acquiring a permit could jeopardize their registration with UNHCR. This, along with the high cost of permits for residence (US$ 200) and work (US$ 30) has forced the majority of Syrians seeking work to focus on the informal labour market. More information on these restrictions can be found at Asylum Access, 2017, 'Refugee Work Rights Report: The Syrian Crisis and refugee access to lawful work in Greece, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey,' http://asylumaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Middle-East-Refugee-Work-Rights-Syrian-Crisis.pdf..

32 Saferworld interview with a donor government representative, Beirut, July 2017, for example.

33 LCPS (2017), 'Law and politics of "Safer Zones" and forced returns to Syria: Refugee politics in Lebanon,' October. (https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf)

34 Estimates from the early 2000s described Syrian economic migrants as accounting for 20 to 40 per cent of the Lebanese labour force. Chalcraft J (2009), *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*. London: Stanford University Press.

These tensions are also caused by more than increased competition: in Wadi Khaled, the closure of the Syrian border effectively cut off employment opportunities for much of the local community, while in Bar Elias, a combination of environmental pollution, the loss of the Syrian market, and the presence of informal refugee settlements on agricultural land meant that agriculture was badly affected in recent years.[35]

In the eyes of the majority of Lebanese research participants, Syrians work for lower wages partly as they spend less money but mostly because they are 'subsidised' by international aid – and therefore are more likely to be hired. One Lebanese man in Wadi Khaled argued:

"Lebanese people worked for low pay already; Syrians came and they get international aid and they get housing and help from different sources. So they are able to work for lower pay than the Lebanese."[36]

In contrast, Syrians complained about exploitation and poor working conditions,[37] and occasionally not being paid for their work.[38] This exploitation is not just harmful to Syrians; it also has a knock-on effect on Lebanese workers being protected from exploitation, thus promoting a 'race to the bottom'. For example, a Lebanese man in Bar Elias complained about working conditions to his employer, who then threatened to fire him and employ two Syrians for his salary.[39] Among the Lebanese, many blame Syrians for this race to the bottom, rather than Lebanese employers.

b) Overstretched public services

Overstretched public services were highlighted as a source of tension, as was the degradation of the environment and an increase in pollution and traffic congestion. Municipalities in both locations cited budgetary constraints and not enough personnel to respond to the needs of all communities, leading to problems driven by weak infrastructure. One Bar Elias representative stated: "We need help in heating supplies, education and healthcare. The municipality does not have the means to provide all those services to the people."[40]

In Bar Elias, authorities and communities cited pollution of the Litani River as a cause of health problems and a reason for why agriculture was in decline.[41] Local authorities confirmed the strain on waste management systems and the worsening environmental conditions, seeing it as partly driven by the sudden increase in population,[42] with one local authority figure highlighting a number of new problems related to increased traffic and motorcycles on the road.[43]

Refugees living in the informal settlement on the outskirts of Bar Elias perhaps had the worst experiences of all those consulted: in addition to overpopulation in the camps and severe waste management issues, residents noted that the camp was also unsafe due to faulty electrical wiring, which exposed them to fire risks.[44]

In Wadi Khaled, local authorities noted that the town has historically been neglected by the Lebanese government, and has always struggled with access to water, electricity, jobs, education, and healthcare, even before the arrival of tens of thousands of refugees.[45]

Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees in both locations highlighted healthcare as both the most important need and a source of vulnerability. According to a community

35 LCPS key informant interview with local authority, Bar Elias, September 2017.
36 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
37 LCPS key informant interview with Syrian refugee activist, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
38 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
39 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017.
40 LCPS key informant interview with local authority, Bar Elias, September 2017.
41 LCPS key informant interview with local authority, Bar Elias, September 2017.
42 LCPS key informant interview with Lebanese activist, Bar Elias, September 2017.
43 LCPS key informant interview with municipal police, Bar Elias, September 2017.
44 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
45 LCPS key informant interview with army, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.

worker in Wadi Khaled, "When it comes to healthcare, Syrians and Lebanese have the same problems".[46] Participants cited the high costs of healthcare, and Lebanese citizens felt that Syrians were offered better (and free) access to healthcare by international organisations. A Lebanese woman in Bar Elias argued: "We need healthcare. It is really expensive to pay for medical exams and to see the doctors. There are no NGOs that might help Lebanese people."[47]

A Syrian boy and a Lebanese boy wait together for the school bus in Wadi Khaled, North Lebanon.
Diego Ibarra Sánchez/ Saferworld

Access to education was also mentioned: Lebanese community members complained about increasing school costs, while Syrian refugees felt that for Syrian children lucky enough to attend schools, the quality of afternoon classes in double-shift schools were of substantially lower quality than morning classes.[48] Civil society activists in Bar Elias echoed this concern, and also cited the dangers posed by the lack of regulation in informal and alternative education systems, which means less control and monitoring over the curriculum or quality of education,[49] escalating the risk that a generation of Syrian children will lose out on learning, storing up development challenges for the future.

c) Cultural and gender-specific tensions

In both Wadi Khaled and Bar Elias, gender roles consistently emerged as a source of tension between refugee and host communities, often framed as part of discussions about 'worsening community morals'.[50] In Wadi Khaled, a more traditional and conservative area, cultural and gender norms played a role in sowing tensions between the two communities. According to a local NGO worker:

"The value system has been influenced in Wadi Khaled. We are a conservative community. Girls here do not go out of the house, neither to coffee shops nor to neighbours. After the Syrian crisis, things have changed."[51]

46 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
47 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017.
48 Morning shifts are for Lebanese pupils and afternoon shifts for Syrian pupils.
49 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017.
50 For example, while gender dominated conversations around cultural issues, some Lebanese men in Bar Elias also raised the issue of increased drug use and alcohol consumption since the arrival of Syrians (LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017), and in Wadi Khaled respondents complained of a decrease in the culture of respect, particularly of young people no longer listening to, or respecting, their elders.
51 For their part, Lebanese women in Wadi Khaled complained about the rigid gender roles in their community, and said that they felt restricted and excluded from employment and public life. One woman complained: "Husbands sometimes don't let their wives work even if work is needed. Some of the Syrian women are able to work in their houses, in cooking and agriculture. And they are making money." Another said: "As a woman, you do not have the right to express your opinion."

A Syrian woman walks through the streets of Wadi Khaled, North Lebanon.
Diego Ibarra Sánchez/ Saferworld

In Bar Elias, Lebanese men and women raised the topic of Syrian women's 'loose morals'. In the Lebanese male FGD, some men expressed the view that Syrian women were eager to marry Lebanese men and often worked in brothels,[52] citing examples of the ways in which these women destroyed Lebanese families.[53] In the eyes of some Lebanese community members, Syrian women are altering family structures because they are less anxious about the sanctity of marriage and are therefore more likely to divorce. The rise in polygamy among both communities was also cited as a point of tension. One key informant interviewed in Bar Elias said:

"In Bar Elias, we did not marry two or three wives. This situation has changed in recent times.[…] *Now, there are a lot of Lebanese men marrying more than one wife."*[54]

More generally, Lebanese men and women raised the issue of Lebanese men marrying Syrian women as a point of tension. Participants reported stories of Lebanese men leaving their wives for Syrian women, or taking a second wife who was Syrian, though such cases are in reality rare.[55] In Wadi Khaled, Lebanese men felt that Syrian women were seen as more attractive to marry because they often accept less money and are more willing to live with in-laws, making them 'less demanding' than Lebanese women.[56] In this context, early marriages of Syrian girls to Lebanese men were also mentioned as a point of tension in Wadi Khaled and Bar Elias, and particularly in the latter.

Underlying these views, however, economic and legal vulnerabilities should be taken into account. Economic issues can have a social dimension: when it comes to early marriage, Syrian girls are often forced to marry Lebanese men out of economic necessity.[57]

Additionally, because they are viewed as a security threat, Syrian men are more likely than women to be checked and detained for their legal status. Due to these mobility restrictions, Syrian women are more likely to work to support the family, or even more likely to go to the markets and conduct everyday business.[58] This reinforces the perception that Syrian women have freer morals, are out in public more, and are less conservative than Lebanese women. Again, this is partly driven by the vulnerabilities faced by Syrian men due to their irregular legal status. Syrian women in Wadi Khaled

52 Upon further investigation, the owner of the brothel was allegedly not Syrian but rather Lebanese.
53 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017.
54 LCPS key informant interview with municipal police, Bar Elias, September 2017.
55 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017.
56 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
57 BI27 Saferworld interview with Lebanese government adviser, Beirut, September 2017, and in several focus group discussions.
58 Saferworld interview with local NGO representative, Beirut, September 2017, and throughout focus group discussions.

reported feeling judged by the host community for moving around, even though they often have no choice given the threat of detention facing Syrian men.[59]

d) Tensions over security

Lebanese participants in both locations highlighted the increasingly fraught security situation as a source of tension, and blamed it partly on the presence of refugees. According to some of them, Syrians were the reason for the increase in drugs, alcohol, and prostitution, they attacked Lebanese (and other Syrians) with knives, and were the cause of increased thefts. In Wadi Khaled, interviews with police confirmed an increase in thefts; however, the police noted that both Lebanese and Syrians have been responsible for this, and blamed the worsening economic situation for the rise in such crimes.[60]

In Wadi Khaled, participants cited the 2014 Tal Kalakh battles in Syria, where incursions by the Syrian army across the border spilled over into Wadi Khaled.[61] Community members and local authorities spoke about the stabilising role the Lebanese army played, and many reported that the security situation has improved considerably since then. Youth in Wadi Khaled also cited tensions around growing sympathy for violent fundamentalist groups, noting that some young people in the community joined ISIS – for financial rather than ideological reasons: "Some of the youth from here went to fight in Syria in exchange for money and salaries", one young person reported.[62]

Women also reported feeling an increased sense of insecurity. Both Lebanese and Syrian women mentioned fear of harassment, although they articulated these fears in different ways. For Lebanese women, Syrian men were largely responsible for the increase in harassment; in Wadi Khaled, for example, some no longer feel safe walking alone on the street.[63] Syrian women were largely more nuanced; a Syrian woman in Bar Elias reported that women were regularly harassed on public transport, saying that she felt that while Lebanese women also tended to be victims of such harassment, Syrian women tend to be more exposed to it.[64]

In both locations, Lebanese participants called for more security provision. In Wadi Khaled, interviews with police revealed that they do not feel enabled to play a security-maintaining role, not feeling secure enough themselves to stand guard on the roads at night as they do not have weapons.[65] Instead, they say it is the army, which entered Wadi Khaled in 2015, that plays a stabilising role.[66] Bar Elias does not have a police station, which is a source of concern for both local authorities and the community.

Syrian respondents shared significant concerns. Syrian refugees living in ITSs consistently expressed fears of police raids, of being evicted, or of having their houses or tents destroyed. They reported instances of rogue Lebanese individuals entering the camp to attack or threaten the communities. One Syrian woman explained: "In tents, the situation is not safe because they can set the tents on fire anytime they want. It is scary. We always have to be alert, we cannot sleep well."[67] Some Syrian refugees also reported occasional raids by Lebanese security forces, where some Syrian men were taken away.[68] They also mentioned their fear of being deported, and the consequential restrictions on their movement as they fear police checks when leaving and entering

59 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
60 LCPS key informant interview with municipal police, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
61 LCPS key informant interview with army, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
62 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
63 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
64 The Syrian woman in Bar Elias said: "Another incident [occurred], in an empty bus. The driver gave me his number and said that 'he will help me'. Most of these incidents happen because we are Syrian. I don't feel safe anymore, so I do not use public transportation alone anymore. Ninety per cent of the time, they try to take advantage of Syrian women because they think we are willing to do anything. But these problems also happen with Lebanese girls." LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
65 LCPS key informant interview with municipal police, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
66 LCPS key informant interview with local NGO representative, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
67 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
68 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.

ITSs. Some of those living in these informal settlements fear that such incidents will become increasingly common.

These findings highlight a number of fears among the Syrian refugee and Lebanese host communities. They show a perception among the Lebanese population that Syrians are associated with crime. Among the Syrian population, however, Lebanese security forces seem to be associated with insecurity and abuse.

e) Tensions over international aid

Initially the international response to the Syrian refugee crisis primarily focused on refugees. This made local communities feel that Syrians were receiving access to services that Lebanese themselves often did not have (such as water and sanitation, health services and medication, or vocational training). Some Lebanese community members expressed resentment towards international agencies for being interested in addressing long-standing issues in Lebanon, like health and infrastructural problems, only when the refugees arrived. "The aid only came when the Syrians came", reported a Lebanese woman in Wadi Khaled.[69]

Over time, international agencies corrected this oversight, and began to offer services to host communities as well as refugees. While UNDP research shows that 'unfair distribution of aid' as a source of tension has declined,[70] the idea that 'refugees receive more than us' was already formed in the minds of many host communities, and persists to this day. For example, a Lebanese man in Wadi Khaled told this anecdote:

"A Lebanese woman who had a miscarriage, and the hospital in Akkar would not take her in until her family paid LBP 800,000. If she was a Syrian woman, she would have [received care] *at the hospital immediately."*[71]

Partly as a response to this, there is a corresponding narrative among Syrian refugees suggesting that the Lebanese are only receiving this aid thanks to the Syrians who are there, and that they are – in essence – benefiting from the misfortune of Syrians. This is an important narrative to consider when thinking about future tensions that may arise. It may fuel a certain type of 'counter-resentment' towards the discourse of some Lebanese communities, politicians, and media around the socio-economic pressure of hosting refugees.

Another emerging conflict sensitivity issue concerns the distribution of aid according to categories of vulnerability, often defined in ways that are not communicated clearly to beneficiaries. Syrian refugees (and, to a lesser degree, Lebanese host communities) expressed confusion and resentment about unclear criteria for allocating aid. A prominent Syrian community member expressed this as:

"Some organisations do not know who to give to. If there is a tent where two families live, the organisations give to one of the two families living in the same space. It is not logical, since how come one family can eat and the other can't?"[72]

Tensions and underlying governance issues

Many sources of tension – including traffic congestion and pressure on public services – stem from persistent and underlying problems of governance, mismanagement, and corruption that existed before the arrival of refugees.[73] Even senior officials in both locations spoke of the lack of accountability and transparency in both local and

69 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
70 Saferworld interview with multilateral agency representative, Beirut, July 2017, referencing the upcoming publication: ARK and UNDP (forthcoming 2018), 'Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon: Wave III'.
71 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
72 LCPS key informant interview with Syrian activist, Bar Elias, September 2017.
73 Saferworld interview with donor government representative, Beirut, July 2017.

national-level governance mechanisms, and of the difficulties Lebanese citizens face in claiming their rights.[74]

Community members highlighted corruption as a source of many of the problems they face, including unfair aid distribution. "There is nepotism when it comes to reconstruction or aid. You need to know someone to be able to receive any help", said one Lebanese woman in Wadi Khaled when discussing the role of the municipality.[75] Local authorities in Wadi Khaled spoke about the need for greater accountability in the local municipality,[76] and blamed corruption on often being forced to operate through tribal networks and the patronage systems of power in the country.[77]

In Bar Elias, when discussing corruption, civil society complained about disorganisation and a lack of planning within the municipality,[78] but local representatives said that a lack of resources contributed to this mismanagement,[79] with one representative explaining, "We don't have the means to provide all those services to people".[80]

At the same time, governance problems are not just a local issue, and can be traced back to national-level political elites and the sectarian structure of the Lebanese state. Because corruption and governance issues underlie many sources of tensions between refugees and host communities, it is in the interest of political elites to blame Lebanon's development, security, economic, and governance challenges on refugees. While all the efforts of Lebanese authorities to help refugees in a very challenging context must be acknowledged, political elites and the Lebanese media have also been reinforcing a narrative that re-frames pre-existing problems as 'refugee problems'.

Negative stereotypes undermine solidarity

A key thread emerging from the research is how each community's stereotypes about the other undermine empathy and solidarity. This is more marked in cases where there is less integration or contact (such as between Lebanese communities in Bar Elias and Syrians living in informal settlements). One civil society representative in Bar Elias summarised this as:

"There is no integration between Syrians and Lebanese. Lebanese people say that Syrians took their job opportunities; Syrians say that they are living in bad conditions and Lebanese people live happily."[81]

One common perception of Syrians is that they are able to accept low wages because they subsidise their income with international aid. All Lebanese groups affirmed this. One Lebanese man in Wadi Khaled said:

"Lebanese people worked for low pay already, Syrians came and they got international aid and they got housing and help from different sources. So Lebanese could not work for lower pay than the Syrians."[82]

Some even expressed the view that Syrians come to Lebanon only to receive aid and then return to Syria.[83] One Syrian woman living in the informal settlement near Bar Elias, explained that Lebanese citizens who say this often do not fully understand the wider context of Syrian suffering:

74 LCPS key informant interview with army, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
75 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
76 LCPS key informant interview with national ministry representative, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
77 Obtaining positions within the municipal council is very competitive in both locations. Participants noted incidents of violent conflict between two prominent tribes leading up to the municipal elections in Wadi Khaled. Syrian refugees avoided discussing municipal politics, and said that they purposefully stayed out of internal Lebanese political affairs.
78 LCPS key informant interview with Lebanese activist, Bar Elias, September 2017.
79 LCPS key informant interview with Syrian activist, Bar Elias, September 2017.
80 LCPS key informant interview with local authority, Bar Elias, September 2017.
81 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017.
82 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
83 Saferworld and LCPS analysis workshop, Beirut, September 2017.

"The Lebanese say that we have a better life, since we live in houses rent free and the UN gives us money to eat. But how can they understand that our country is at war and we are living in a foreign country, with no foreseeable future for our children?"[84]

The car of a Syrian taxi driver, displaying images of his son killed in Syria. Al Fares informal refugee settlement, Bekaa.
Diego Ibarra Sánchez/ Saferworld

For their part, Syrians often downplayed the challenges and vulnerabilities facing Lebanese citizens. "They probably have no problems", said one Syrian man living in an informal settlement in Bar Elias,[85] while another complained that Lebanese cities have flourished on the back of Syrian refugees, and that Lebanese citizens should not complain about the presence of refugees, since they are benefiting economically from the plight of Syrians.[86]

In addition, political history between Syrians and Lebanese, as well as sectarian dynamics between and within those populations, inform some of those prejudices. A number of old grievances about the Syrian occupation of Lebanon have re-emerged in the context of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Indeed, some describe the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon as a 'new occupation'.[87] That interpretation therefore attributes predatory characteristics to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and in turn feeds into ideas that Syrians only come to Lebanon in order to receive aid, and constitute a competitive working force to that of Lebanon, for instance.

Limited interaction between communities appears to be fertile ground for negative stereotypes, on the back of which grievances can easily emerge and be manipulated. This is important to note as part of the broader political context of Lebanon where a number of political figures have an interest in antagonising refugees, including through the media. (This is further developed in section 2 p 21).

Legal status as a source of tension and vulnerability

Legal status is key in affecting the vulnerability of Syrian - and Palestinian – refugees, including their ability to access key services, to be employed in various sectors, and to travel and move without restrictions or fear of being detained and possibly deported.

The 2017 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees survey noted that the percentage of refugees with legal residency has been declining over recent years, revealing that 74 per cent of surveyed Syrian refugees over the age of 15 did not have legal residency.[88]

84 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
85 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
86 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
87 Saferworld and LCPS analysis workshop, Beirut, September 2017.
88 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2017. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/VASyR%202017.compressed.pdf.

Additionally, only 0.5 per cent of refugees of working age in Lebanon have work permits.[89] Elsewhere, Syrians have reported that finding a local sponsor through the 'kafala' system can be complicated and exploitative.[90]

The irregular legal status of refugees is a crosscutting issue that affects (and in some cases is the driving force for) other sources of vulnerabilities, and builds towards an overall feeling of insecurity for Syrian refugees. Irregular legal status brings with it a number of other fears, and Syrians regularly cited the following concerns:

- **Restrictions on movement:** This particularly affects Syrian men, who are at greater risk of arrests, abuse, and deportation if found to be residing in Lebanon without legal permits. For this reason, many Syrian men living in ITSs do not leave the settlements for fear of being checked by the police when going in and out.[91]
- **Difficulty in accessing health and education** (linked to the fear of going to hospital due to lacking legal papers):[92] According to a *Médecins Sans Frontières* representative, the illegal status of many refugees "pushes patients underground and results in severe delays in their ability to access treatment".[93]
- **Threats of deportation:** Constant fear of deportation or 'being sent back' by Lebanese authorities. Syrian refugees are regularly checked by the police when leaving and entering ITSs, for instance.
- **Difficulty in accessing security and justice mechanisms:** Syrians in Bar Elias report fear of going to the police in case of conflict, and instead must keep a low profile and rely on informal security mechanisms.
- **Limited freedom of expression, and the need to avoid political discussion or mobilisation:** Syrian refugees report an imperative to stay discrete and not interfere in Lebanese political affairs, including raising opinions on Syrian politics. They fear reprisals in case of discussing politics, and feel particularly vulnerable as they struggle to access security and justice mechanisms. Syrian women report that they are freer to voice their opinion compared to Syrian men, because of a tendency to disregard women's opinions. As one woman explained, "Women can speak their minds more than men. Men are more subjected to danger if they say anything. If a woman expresses her opinion, they say that it is a woman talking, they don't take her opinion into consideration".[94] Effectively, both Syrian men and women are silenced, either due to legal status or gender norms.
- **Inability to register marriages and newborns:**[95] This adds to the informality in which people live and leads to further difficulties in keeping track of demographic changes. In particular, it exposes children, as unregistered children face difficulty accessing healthcare, education, employment, being able to travel, and are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.
- **Vulnerability to exploitation in the labour market:** Syrians in FGDs reported being exploited by employers, including not being paid for months.[96] Syrians who lack the correct legal papers have no avenues to express their grievances to authorities.[97]

89 UNDP, ILO and WFP (2017), 'Jobs make the difference: Expanding economic opportunities for Syrian refugees and host communities'.

90 The 'kafala' sponsorship system grants Syrian refugees the right to work on the condition that they have a Lebanese 'sponsor'. LCPS (2017), 'Law and politics of "Safer Zones" and forced returns to Syria: Refugee politics in Lebanon', October. (https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf).

91 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.

92 Saferworld interview with local NGO representative, Beirut, October 2017.

93 Whittall J (2016), 'Layers of siege: The chain of complicity from Syria to Europe', 2 June. http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/33325/Layers-of-Siege-The-Chain-of-Complicity-from-Syria-to-Europe.

94 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.

95 For more detail, see LCPS' report 'Law and politics of "Safer Zones" and forced returns to Syria: Refugee politics in Lebanon' (https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf) p.38.

96 Syrian woman in Bar Elias: "My husband works in construction. And he does not get paid. It has been 5 months." LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.

97 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.

The legal status of Syrian refugees in Lebanon remains a highly sensitive political issue and source of contention, due to sensitivities about the demographic balance of Lebanon and fears relating to the economic impact of the Syrian refugee influx in the country. At the outset of the conflict, the Lebanese government was hesitant to acknowledge the presence of Syrian refugees, and turned a blind eye to incoming Syrians. However, the government then ordered a stop to the registering of new refugees in May 2015, effectively closing the door to new refugees. While UNHCR continued to record new arrivals, it has not officially registered any refugees since then. This has not stopped assistance, but it does make it more difficult for UNHCR and other agencies to advocate for the protection of refugee rights from a legal perspective.[98]

At the start of 2017, the Lebanese government reduced residency fees, which was seen as a positive step forward given that many refugees had lost their legal status due to the high costs of renewal.[99] However, this only benefitted those who are registered with UNHCR, which according to Human Rights Watch excludes an estimated 500,000 Syrians in Lebanon,[100] as well as those who renewed their residency through sponsorship by a Lebanese national.

Legal status is also linked to socio-economic status: refugees with greater financial resources are able to 'buy' their legal status or circumvent legal restrictions around employment, property, and business ownership. Evidence also points to the fact that many of the discriminatory tactics employed against 'Syrian refugees' tend actually to target Syrians from a lower socio-economic background. For example, in municipalities that enforce curfews, individuals tend to be targeted based on their appearance.[101] As a Beirut-based Syrian civil society activist explained: "A Syrian driving a Range Rover and wearing Gucci wouldn't be stopped during the curfew."[102]

Class-based tensions

Socio-economic class also emerged as an important factor that affected inter- and intra-community cohesion. Discussions with both refugee and host communities demonstrated that the effect of the Syrian refugee presence on host communities has been uneven: while some Lebanese – especially land- and business-owners – have profited from the influx of refugees, those from lower socio-economic groups have seen their conditions worsen.[103] For the latter, resentment is expressed towards wealthier Syrians who are able to buy land, often bypassing legal requirements by marrying Lebanese women or else registering the land through a Lebanese partner.[104]

There are also class tensions *within* the two communities, and municipal police in Bar Elias reported tensions between the Lebanese who benefit economically from the presence of Syrian refugees, and those who are losing out.[105] Also, in Bar Elias, Syrian refugees living outside the community – in ITSs – are more vulnerable and excluded[106] than those within the host community.[107] Meanwhile, those living in the town, who tend (with exceptions) to have more money and education, are better integrated.[108]

Linked to this, interactions between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees in Bar Elias tend to have a clear class dimension. In the words of a Lebanese civil society activist in Bar Elias, for those refugees living in the community, "there are a lot of

98 Saferworld interview with a multilateral agency representative, Beirut, October 2017.
99 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2017. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/VASyR%202017.compressed.pdf.
100 HRW (2017), 'The gaps in Lebanon's new refugee policy', 14 March. https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/14/gaps-lebanons-new-refugee-policy
101 LCPS (2017), 'Law and politics of "Safer Zones" and forced returns to Syria: Refugee politics in Lebanon', October. (https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf), p 32.
102 Saferworld interview with an INGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.
103 LCPS key informant interview with local authority, Bar Elias, September 2017.
104 LCPS key informant interview with municipal police, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
105 LCPS key informant interview with municipal police, Bar Elias, September 2017.
106 In Bar Elias, the ITS is a five-minute drive outside the city, so its residents are excluded from the local community.
107 Saferworld and LCPS analysis workshop, Beirut, September 2017.
108 LCPS key informant interview with Lebanese activist, Bar Elias, September 2017.

friendships that are forming [with Lebanese] because they are of similar social status".[109] One Syrian refugee living in the ITS expressed a sense of exclusion when asked why Syrians do not interact with Lebanese host communities: "If they have an occasion why would they invite a person like me? They would rather invite a Syrian businessman or a well off person."[110] In fact, the 'motorcycles' that people commonly complain about in both Bar Elias and Wadi Khaled are a class marker, as motorcycles are more affordable than cars and therefore often used by those of lower socio-economic status.[111]

Interestingly, according to an INGO representative, restrictions such as curfews are more prevalent in areas of Lebanon that are more economically affluent, and where there are fewer refugees, such as Mount Lebanon.[112] This highlights how the measures put in place at a local level reflect perceptions that have a clear class-based dimension.

The multi-faceted nature of 'vulnerability' and the limits of categorisations

Because of the way factors such as socio-economic class and legal status affect vulnerability, the way international agencies categorise beneficiaries as 'refugee' and 'host community' may not always be the best method to target the most vulnerable. Furthermore, according to some local agencies, this distinction can entrench division and resentment.[113] For example, a local NGO interviewed in Beirut noted that while all children who attend public school tend to be vulnerable, regardless of their nationality, psychosocial support is only offered to 'Syrian refugee children', thereby excluding Lebanese children who may need such services too.[114]

Local NGOs reported that they try to respond to communities on a needs-based approach, rather than through the lens of 'host community' and 'refugee'.[115] However, donors often require implementing partners to provide numbers on the ratio of 'refugee' to 'host community' in beneficiary lists. This means that NGOs often feel pressured to select beneficiaries by nationality rather than by need. One local NGO interviewed in Beirut explained this as:

"Internationals ask if we work with both Syrians and Lebanese. We do, but we don't make this distinction. We work in vulnerable places, marginalised areas. The most vulnerable right now are Syrian refugees; so sometimes we do have more Syrian than Lebanese [beneficiaries]."[116]

Additionally, as some vulnerable communities are not accounted for in the categorisation of 'Syrian refugees' and 'Lebanese hosts', it is relevant to look beyond this binary division and consider other groups impacted by the Syrian refugee crisis, and take into account the ways in which they are vulnerable or part of conflict dynamics. For example, Palestinian refugees coming from Syria are seen as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)'s domain by other UN agencies, and as a result, they tend to fall through the inter-agency cracks.[117]

At the same time, both local and international agencies agreed that while not perfect, categories such as 'Syrian refugee' and 'Lebanese host community' might still be necessary. On the one hand, this ensures a focus on supporting vulnerable Lebanese, in light of the widespread Lebanese perception that Syrians are receiving all the aid. On the other, it also ensures that interventions are adapted to the specific realities of different groups of people.

109 LCPS key informant interview with Lebanese activist, Bar Elias, September 2017.
110 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
111 Janmyr M, Mourad L (2018), 'Modes of ordering: Labelling, classification and categorization in Lebanon's refugee response', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 8 January. https://academic.oup.com/jrs/advance-article/doi/10.1093/jrs/fex042/4792968
112 Saferworld interview with an INGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.
113 Saferworld and LCPS analysis workshop, Beirut, September 2017.
114 Saferworld interview with a local NGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.
115 Saferworld and LCPS analysis workshop, Beirut, September 2017.
116 Saferworld interview with a local NGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.
117 Saferworld interview with a local NGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.

International agencies are increasingly aware of the multi-faceted nature of vulnerability, and often undertake extensive vulnerability assessments to prioritise individuals deemed most vulnerable. However, in interviews with refugees in Bar Elias and Wadi Khaled, the ambiguity around who is considered 'vulnerable' can be a source of inter-community tension. A number of respondents expressed anxiety about being removed from aid distribution lists without an explanation,[118] and one Syrian man in Wadi Khaled expressed confusion and resentment about who receives aid:

"We were removed from international aid lists without knowing why. Some people also get aid more than they deserve. We cannot understand the criteria for who gets aid and who doesn't."[119]

His comments are indicative of the perceptions that people have of corruption and favouritism in aid distribution, which stem from the opacity of how vulnerability is assessed, classified, and also communicated.

118 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
119 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.

2

Frameworks for response

THIS SECTION EXAMINES TWO DIMENSIONS OF THE RESPONSE TO REFUGEES, and how the lack of a clear rights-based, national government-led response to the crisis has played a role in stoking tensions between refugees and host communities. The first dimension is how the initial crisis response focused on short-term humanitarian aid to refugees, without sufficiently addressing long-standing development and governance issues. The second dimension is the increasing tendency for the refugee crisis to be viewed primarily through the lens of security concerns, leading to a more securitised response to the crisis.

The formal response to the refugee crisis has undergone several stages and adjustments over the past six years. Currently, funding is allocated and reported upon through the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), a multi-year plan developed jointly by the Lebanese government and international partners. The strategic objectives outlined in the 2017–2020 plan are:

(i) Ensure the protection of displaced Syrians, vulnerable Lebanese, and Palestinian refugees.

(ii) Provide immediate assistance to vulnerable populations.

(iii) Strengthen the capacity of national and local service delivery systems to expand access to and quality of basic public services.

(iv) Reinforce Lebanon's economic, social, and environmental stability.[120]

The LCRP sets out a national partnership framework for response, in which the Lebanese government is strongly invested. However, in practice, the national government has struggled to elaborate a detailed policy vision that enjoys strong cross-government support, or invested necessary capacity to provide strong leadership on the response in Lebanon. This has left the matter primarily in the hands of local-level authorities, particularly municipalities, leading to an uneven and ad hoc response, and in some cases to discriminatory policies such as curfews and evictions.[121]

Responding to needs: short-term fixes for long-term problems?

The lack of a strong national-level framework for responding to the influx of refugees has put the onus on local authorities – particularly municipalities – as well as local and international organisations. This has undermined coherence and coordination,

120 Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, 'Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017–2020'.

121 LCPS (2017), 'Law and politics of "Safer Zones" and forced returns to Syria: Refugee politics in Lebanon,' October 2017, https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf

and interviews with international agencies indicated an excess of certain types of programming and a shortage of others.[122] The absence of a clear national framework contributes to the overall environment of confusion and instability that feeds into local-level anxieties and tensions.

As noted, many internationally-driven response efforts initially focused on responding to refugees' needs, in some cases providing services to refugees that host communities had struggled with for years, (such as free healthcare services).[123] It was not until later that international organisations – many of whom had not worked in Lebanon before 2012 – became more cognisant of host communities' needs, and then adjusted their response plans to account for these needs, including, for example, cash assistance to the most vulnerable Lebanese.[124] Nonetheless, the initial perception that international aid favours Syrians over Lebanese remains a point of tension in many communities.

Another challenge is balancing between immediate humanitarian relief and long-term development programming. Given that many of the underlying tensions relate to pre-existing development and governance challenges, there is a need to address these issues in programming to tackle root causes of conflict. There has been some progress in shifting towards more long-term programming. For example, the Lebanon Host Community Support Programme (LHSP)[125] has moved towards more resilience programming, including a focus on building the capacity of local authorities and staff at the Ministry of Social Affairs.[126] The EU, among other donors, has also begun to re-orient its programming from emergency relief towards early recovery and development assistance.[127]

Still, interviews with international and local NGOs in Beirut in July 2017 reveal that livelihoods and social stability programming continues to be much less funded than humanitarian programming[128] – suggesting the relative neglect of programming that tackles the underlying causes of tensions. Relief modalities can remain even when they are less efficient: for example, water is still being trucked despite it being both expensive and unhelpful for Lebanese communities.[129]

While there unquestionably are immediate humanitarian needs among Palestinian and Syrian refugee communities, as well as among Lebanese citizens, local and international agencies need to keep working on the balance of their programming, and how it is perceived. This becomes increasingly important seven years into the Syrian conflict, as donor fatigue sets in and there are reduced funds for the response overall.

Turning a refugee crisis into a security threat: from global policy to local practice

This sub-section examines how the increasing tendency for the refugee crisis to be viewed as a security threat risks jeopardising efforts to sustain peace in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis.

As Saferworld and others have extensively documented,[130] in many contexts, the high priority attached by Western governments to the twin priorities of combating terrorism and stemming 'irregular' flows of migrants has normalised the provision of capacity assistance for counter-terror and border control to security forces whose behaviours

122 For example, agencies in Beirut pointed to an excess of education provision at the expense of other types of programming. This affects quality control over the curriculum and the education environment in schools.

123 Saferworld interview with an INGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.

124 Saferworld interview with multilateral agency representative, Beirut, October 2017.

125 LHSP is part of the framework of the UNDP response to the impact of the Syrian crisis in Lebanon. It targets the poorest communities with a higher risk of tension and conflict. It is integrated into the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2017–2020.

126 Saferworld interview with donor government representative, Beirut, July 2017.

127 Saferworld interview with multilateral agency representative, Beirut, July 2017.

128 Saferworld interview with multilateral agency representative, Beirut, October 2017.

129 Saferworld interview with multilateral agency representative, Beirut, October 2017.

130 For a critical study of the incentives created by current counter-migration approaches, see Ruben Andersson (2016) 'Europe's failed 'fight' against irregular migration: ethnographic notes on a counterproductive industry', Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 42:7, 1055–1075; on similar trends regarding counter-terrorism, see, for example, Keen D, Attree L (2015), 'Dilemmas of counter-terror, stabilisation and state-building' (Saferworld); Attree L (2016), 'Blown Back: lessons from counter-terror, stabilisation and statebuilding in Yemen'; Saferworld (2017), 'We need to talk about Egypt'; Aliaga L, Tricot O'Farrell K (2017), 'Tunisia: a road paved with good intentions' (Saferworld).

might in other circumstances be seen as problematic. The promise of such assistance, plus other financial and political support, can incentivise states to present themselves as indispensable allies prepared to take robust action to contain terrorism and uncontrolled migration.

This dynamic is problematic in a number of ways. National and international policy narratives that conflate refugees with terror threats can serve to reinforce one another; as a result, harsh security responses from national actors toward the public and refugees become normalised. At the same time, the necessity of pursuing security partnerships tends to lead to neglect of important governance and security reform priorities. And when such securitised approaches prove counter-productive, escalating instability can appear to warrant yet more robust security measures in response.

In turn, these dynamics can also trickle down to the local level and negatively impact the relationships between refugees and host communities, as divisive narratives generate fears and restrictive measures are presented as the only available solutions.

Lebanon's geographical location, bordering a highly militarised internationalised conflict, makes inevitable the existence of associated security concerns. The complexity of these security concerns are multiplied when considering the long and closely intertwined political, social and economic histories of the two countries. Indeed, since 2012 Lebanon has witnessed a number of incidents, including suicide bombings in Beirut and Tripoli, carried out by militants trained in Syria and affiliated with Syria's various rebels groups, including Jabhat al-Nusra.[131] For Lebanese security authorities, differentiating between individuals fleeing conflict and those who may pose a security risk is a difficult task. The long border between Syria and Lebanon remains porous, with armed groups, people, goods and weapons smuggling taking place in both directions.

Considering these challenges, Lebanese political elites have increasingly framed the issue of Syrian refugees as a security threat, in turn encouraging securitised responses. At the local level, this takes the form of evictions, intimidation of Syrian refugees who do not have legal status by security forces, curfews, as well as raids on camps. Beyond these measures undermining Syrian refugees' human rights and in some cases flouting international law,[132] the securitisation of the refugee issue weakens the bond of solidarity that refugees and host communities say exists in areas like Wadi Khaled in particular, and instead builds fears and mistrust between the two communities.

The Lebanese government is not alone in securitising the refugee issue. While Western actors recognise that refugees need their rights protected and also constitute an 'opportunity for human development',[133] in practice, Western policy has been importantly shaped by the desire to stem migration and refugee flows to Europe, driven in turn by a political and media narrative that portrays refugees as a potential source of terror and instability.[134] This has contributed to the development of a response that is primarily driven by a 'refugee management' approach through which migration controls have been outsourced to partner countries, potentially putting human rights and human security at risk.[135] This willingness to control people flows to Europe is explicit in the agreement reached between the EU and Turkey providing Turkey €6 billion in EU

131 For a more detailed analysis of the security risks posed by the Syrian conflict in Lebanon and the difficulties of finding the balance between maintaining security while also providing a safe route for refugees to escape harm, refer to Salhani J (2015), 'Lebanon's refugee dilemma', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/57735

132 While Lebanon is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it nonetheless has obligations to protect the human rights of Syrian refugees under international human rights law and customary international law.

133 Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament plenary session on the Progress on the UN Global Compact for safe, regular and orderly migration and UN Global Compact on refugees (13 March 2018), https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/41272/speech-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-european-parliament-plenary_en

134 See, for example, European Council on Foreign Relations, 'ECFR Views from the Capitals: European responses to terrorism' in particular the articles on Sofia and Warsaw, accessible at: http://www.ecfr.eu/debate/european_responses_to_terrorism6082; Saferworld (2016), 'EU foreign policy risks fuelling displacement and terror', 22 August, https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/203-eu-foreign-policy-will-fuel-displacement-and-terror-unless-it-focuses-on-what-is-driving-them

135 See Ruben Andersson (2016) op cit. Human Rights Watch (2016), The Impact of Externalization of Migration Controls on the Rights of Asylum Seekers and Other Migrants, 6 December, https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/06/impact-externalization-migration-controls-rights-asylum-seekers-and-other-migrants

assistance and and visa-free travel to Europe for its citizens, in exchange for letting Greece send back to Turkey any person 'irregularly' arriving to Greece by boat (including asylum seekers).[136] Such deals illustrate how rights-based refugee responses have given way to pragmatic arrangements born out of urgency and political compromise.

In Lebanon, the EU has spent approximately €1.2 billion over recent years to support Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities.[137] In November 2016, the EU and the Lebanese government adopted 'partnership priorities' and an accompanying 'compact' for the period 2016–2020,[138] which sets mutually agreed priorities for cooperation. Some Lebanese NGOs and think tanks have warned that, despite the EU's consistent emphasis on human rights in its previous cooperation agreements with Lebanon, the new partnership framework prioritises refugee management and national security over human rights and legal protection, which "risks contributing to a deterioration of the security and human rights situation in Lebanon".[139] This reflects the spirit of the 2015 review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which identified "the stabilisation of the neighbourhood" as the main political priority for the relations between the EU and its neighbouring countries.[140] Additionally, human rights and peacebuilding organisations highlight that the agreement was signed "with extremely limited input and consultation" from Lebanese and international civil society organisations,[141] who – along with municipalities – are at the forefront of the refugee crisis response.

In the context of this increased focus on containing the 'threat' posed by refugees and curbing their migration into Europe, the EU has been accused of putting refugees at risk and, in the context of the EU-Turkey deal or EU cooperation with the Libyan Government of National Accord, for instance, of violating refugee rights under international law.[142] The unwillingness of some EU member states to accommodate a greater number of Syrian refugees into their own territories has also lead to strong criticism of the EU's normative position. As such, it has found itself with less influence to advocate for better legal protection for refugees in host countries, and with far less negotiating power to drive a more conflict-sensitive response that prioritises the rights of refugees and host communities.

The increasingly securitised international response to the global refugee crisis has also contributed to normalising securitised national and local responses. Following the 2014 conflict in Arsal,[143] Lebanese public opinion has increasingly conflated the 'refugee issue' with Lebanon's security through a narrative, expressed by political elites and most of the media, which frames the presence of Syrian refugees as a security threat and the source of many of Lebanon's security problems. For instance, since his first speech as president, Michel Aoun highlighted the security threat posed by refugee camps,[144] and later described the refugee crisis as an "existential threat" for Lebanon,[145] insisting on the need to return Syrians to their country. The Lebanese media has also

136 Amnesty International (2017), 'The EU-Turkey deal: Europe's year of shame', 20 March. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/the-eu-turkey-deal-europes-year-of-shame/.

137 EU Observer (2017), 'Lebanon crisis overshadows EU aid for Syrian refugees,' 12 December. https://euobserver.com/migration/140227.

138 The EU-Lebanon Compact, guided by the Partnership Priorities, sets out some mutually agreed priority actions that the two parties intend to implement to support the stabilisation of Lebanon. EU Council, (2016) 'EU-Lebanon Association Council Decision agreeing on EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities', http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/24224/st03001en16docx.pdf; European Commission (2017), 'EU-Lebanon Partnership: The Compact'. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/lebanon-compact.pdf.

139 ALEF & PAX Policy Brief (2017), 'Reinforce human rights as an essential element in cooperation between the EU and Lebanon,' July. https://www.paxforpeace.nl/publications/all-publications/alef-pax-policy-brief-july-2017, p 1.

140 See European Commission, (2015), 'Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy', http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf; Schumacher T (2016), "Back to the Future: The 'New' ENP towards the Southern Neighbourhood and the End of Ambition", College of Europe Policy Brief (CEPOB) 1.16, January.

141 ALEF & PAX Policy Brief (2017), 'Reinforce human rights as an essential element in cooperation between the EU and Lebanon,' July. https://www.paxforpeace.nl/publications/all-publications/alef-pax-policy-brief-july-2017 , p. 3

142 https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/eu-turkey-refugee-deal-contravene-law-unhcr-160308160629966.html?xif=%20or%20this%20https:/www.hrw.org/news/2016/11/23/eu-policies-put-refugees-risk

143 In August 2014, militants affiliated with Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS took control of the border town of Arsal, which is host to a large number of Syrian refugees. The Lebanese military eventually seized back control of the town after five days of battle.

144 Chehayeb K (2017), 'Le Pen's visit confirms new political realities in Lebanon', *Alaraby*, 20 February. https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2017/2/24/le-pens-visit-confirms-new-political-realities-in-lebanon.

145 The Daily Star Lebanon (2017), 'Aoun: Refugee crisis an 'existential threat', 31 October, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2017/Oct-31/424548-aoun-refugee-crisis-an-existential-threat.ashx

regularly blamed Syrian refugees for everything from electricity cuts to air pollution.[146] This rhetoric mirrors that used and legitimised in Europe and North America, by popular nationalist and anti-immigration movements.

Specific attacks like the one on Arsal by Jabhat al-Nusra in 2014 played a major role in pushing local and national authorities to view the refugee crisis through the prism of security, and specifically through a sectarian lens of 'fighting terrorism', whereby (mainly Sunni) Syrian refugees were loosely associated with violent religious ideologies and groups.[147] More recently, on 30 June 2017, suicide bombers attacked Lebanese armed forces during a raid on two Syrian refugee settlements in Arsal, killing one young girl and injuring seven Lebanese soldiers.[148] During the raids, approximately 350 individuals were detained, allegedly including several Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) officials.[149]

Following the June 2017 Arsal incident, international organisations noted a rise in "general tension and hostile discourse" between host and refugee communities throughout the country,[150] which we corroborated during interviews and focus groups in both research locations. Events such as the fighting in Arsal have been used to paint a negative image of Syrian refugees in general. Our research suggests how this kind of narrative, which reverberates from international to national level, is in turn becoming a pretext for harsh security measures imposed on Syrian refugees, worsening insecurity, and the souring relationship between Syrian refugees and host communities at the local level.

How the media and political elites frame the refugee crisis, including through sharing misleading or inaccurate information,[151] has had a trickledown effect on communities, and has impacted how the refugee response is conceptualised and responded to by municipalities and communities at the local level, as shown in section 1 'Negative stereotypes undermine solidarity'. It has also made it increasingly possible to claim that 'security operations' against refugees are justified, even where these undermine the human rights of Syrian refugees and in some cases flout international law.

Securitisation and its impact on aid response

In interviews conducted in Beirut in July and September 2017, international actors report that the increased securitisation of the refugee crisis by international donors as well as Lebanese political elites is having a knock-on effect on how international and national aid agencies respond to the refugee crisis in Lebanon. The UNHCR highlighted that following the Arsal conflict, they faced operational challenges in accessing and supporting Syrian refugees, explaining that "From that point you began to see more generalisations linking refugees to terrorists. This security aspect fuels calls for the return of refugees".[152]

Securitised discourse has also seeped into response plans. For example, in the 2017–2020 LCRP, the adverb 'temporary' has been added to the categorisation of 'displaced individuals'. The insistence on the temporary nature of the Syrian refugees' presence in Lebanon is linked to the idea that there are so-called 'safe zones' for Syrians to return to in Syria[153] – a claim which has come to the fore given the security threat associated with Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Similarly, the Lebanese government has, for example,

146 Saferworld interview with a local NGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.

147 Saferworld interview with donor government representative, Beirut, July 2017; Saferworld interview with multilateral agency representative, Beirut, July 2017; Saferworld interview with an INGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.

148 Reuters (2017), 'Five suicide bombers attack Lebanese army during raids', 30 June, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-security/five-suicide-bombers-attack-lebanese-army-during-raids-idUSKBN19L0E0

149 Reuters (2017), 'Five suicide bombers attack Lebanese army during raids', 30 June, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-security/five-suicide-bombers-attack-lebanese-army-during-raids-idUSKBN19L0E0

150 UNDP, National Social Stability Working Group Meeting Minutes, 13 December 2017, Beirut.

151 Atallah S, Mahdi D (2017), 'Law and politics of "Safe Zones" and forced returns to Syria: Refugee politics in Lebanon', The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, p 36; 39.

152 Saferworld interview with multilateral agency representative, Beirut, July 2017.

153 Janmyr M, Mourad L (2018), 'Modes of ordering: Labelling, classification and categorization in Lebanon's refugee response', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 8 January, https://academic.oup.com/jrs/advance-article/doi/10.1093/jrs/fex042/4792968

insisted on shifting the language around refugee–host community relations in the LCRP 2017–2020 from 'social cohesion' to 'social stability'.[154] The reason for this shift in discourse, according to an international donor,[155] is that 'social stability' sounds 'less permanent' than 'peacebuilding' or 'social cohesion'.

One civil society commentator raised concerns that even traditionally development-oriented programming – such as healthcare and education – were being approached less from a rights-based perspective and more from a security-based one, such as, for example, approaching education for Syrian children from a 'countering violent extremism' lens.[156]

Local-level impact of securitisation

This securitised discourse associating refugees with terrorism also emerged in FGDs in Bar Elias and Wadi Khaled. In interviews with local authorities in Wadi Khaled, the 2017 events in Arsal were mentioned a few times as having affected the 'psyche' of people,[157] as the local population has since become more fearful of the security situation.[158]

In both research locations, Lebanese host communities referred to a general break-down in security, which they blamed on Syrian refugees, for a variety of reasons as noted in section 1 (d) on page 13.

Such views expressed by Lebanese research participants illustrate the trickling down to the local level of the securitised discourse promoted in the media and by politicians about Syrian refugees. Lebanese citizens often expressed the desire for greater security force presence in their areas as a way to increase security and reduce tensions between communities, with some Lebanese identifying the need for greater security restrictions on Syrians. In reference to the security concerns of Syrian refugees presented earlier, such views do not show an understanding of why Syrians themselves feel insecure and other factors in insecurity that are not attributable to Syrians' presence in Lebanon.

Similarly, host communities suggested highly securitised and coercive measures to address local problems – the type of solutions propagated in public discourse, where ideas based on a broader and more constructive approach are rarely articulated. For instance, in Bar Elias, some felt that refugees should be placed under curfew and that those living in apartments should be evicted and placed in camps.[159] In Wadi Khaled, some also suggested placing refugees in camps (preferably in Syria) as a way to reduce tensions.[160]

Securitised discourse in the context of the 'war on terror' has also had an impact on the everyday life of Lebanese citizens. In FGDs, Lebanese host communities in Bar Elias and Wadi Khaled reported that while they have freedom of expression, criticism of the army is strictly off-limits, and can result in arrest or interrogation. One research participant reported that: "My son posted something on Facebook related to the Lebanese Army, they took him in for investigation, and I can't tell you what happened. He is hurt."[161] Others shared similar anecdotes. One said: "We have political rights of expression. But we cannot talk about the Lebanese Army, or else we will be considered terrorists." Another echoed this sentiment, saying: "If we talk about any security issue, we will be sent to interrogation. The security situation is scary."[162]

154 Saferworld interview with an INGO representative, Beirut, July 2017.
155 Saferworld interview with multilateral agency representative, Beirut, July 2017.
156 Saferworld interview with a local NGO representative, Beirut, July 2017.
157 LCPS key informant interview with army, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
158 LCPS key informant interview with national ministry representative, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
159 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017.
160 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
161 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017.
162 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.

At the same time, respondents in Wadi Khaled noted that the army's presence was a source of safety and stability in the area, and the army has historically been seen as a unifying force in Lebanon's divided politics. Nonetheless, interviews with Lebanese civil society activists in Beirut also describe an increasingly restrictive security environment, with Lebanese activists reporting rising difficulty to investigate alleged torture cases of Syrian refugees following the Arsal conflict, and a pervasive 'with-the-army-or-with-ISIS' narrative, which makes it difficult to defend and speak for the rights of Syrian refugees.[163]

Return to 'safe zones'

At the national level, political and media discourse around refugees has become increasingly hostile, and a narrative calling for the return of refugees to 'safe zones' inside Syria has gained popularity across Lebanon's political landscape.[164] In his first speech as president, Michel Aoun referred to the need for refugees to return to 'safe zones' as soon as possible.[165] This discourse was re-affirmed during far-right French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen's February 2017 visit to Lebanon. The option of 'safe zones' has also been supported by US President Donald Trump.[166] This has given the idea more credence, despite it being broadly rejected as a possible solution by UNHCR, Human Rights Watch, and other international organisations[167] – not least because it contravenes international law.[168]

Despite this, Hezbollah has already negotiated a number of 'refugee returns', where hundreds of Syrian refugees were sent back to Syria, in coordination with the Lebanese military, the Syrian government, and Syrian rebel groups.[169] Emboldened by increased discussions of 'safe zones' among Western actors, during his speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2017, President Aoun again cited the presence of terrorists among Syrian refugee communities in Lebanon, and called for the return of Syrian refugees back to Syria.[170]

The topic of 'safe zones' has also trickled down to the local level, and some Lebanese host community members in Bar Elias and Wadi Khaled referred to the idea of safe areas in Syria where refugees could go, instead of remaining in Lebanon. For example, one woman expressed the view that "We want Syrians to go back to their country. They should place them in camps in Syria and not here".[171] Over the course of 2017, a number of protests were held in some municipalities, calling for the removal of Syrians from the country.[172] This has impacted refugees' sense of safety, with many in FGDs in both locations expressing fears of being sent back to Syria.[173]

Evictions, raids and attacks on refugee settlements

While for some Lebanese in Bar Elias a solution to the 'refugee crisis' is to "put [Syrians] in camps",[174] many others – particularly security forces and local authorities – saw the presence of camps as a security risk. In this context, disbanding informal settlements is increasingly seen as legitimate counter-terror (CT) strategy – partly due to the

163 Saferworld interview with a local NGO representative, Beirut, July 2017.

164 Saferworld interview with multinational agency representative, Beirut, July 2017.

165 Chehayeb K (2017), 'Le Pen's visit confirms new political realities in Lebanon', *Alaraby*, 20 February, https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2017/2/24/le-pens-visit-confirms-new-political-realities-in-lebanon.

166 Reuters (2017), 'Lebanese president calls for safe zones in Syria for refugees', 3 February, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aoun/lebanese-president-calls-for-safe-zones-in-syria-for-refugees-idUSKBN15I1WQ

167 Reuters (2017), 'UNHCR chief says safe zones would not work in Syria', 3 February, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-unhcr/unhcr-chief-says-safe-zones-would-not-work-in-syria-idUSKBN15I2CO

168 According to HRW: "Although Lebanon has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, it is bound by the customary international law principle of non-refoulement, and under human rights law, not to return anyone to a place where they would face a real risk of persecution, torture or other ill-treatment, or a threat to life. " [HRW (2017), 'The Gaps in Lebanon's New Refugee Policy', 14 March] https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/14/gaps-lebanons-new-refugee-policy

169 Reuters (2017), 'Refugees return to Syria from Lebanon in Hezbollah-mediated deal', 12 July, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-lebanon/refugees-return-to-syria-from-lebanon-in-hezbollah-mediated-deal-idUSKBN19X1Y6.

170 H.E. Mr. General Michel Aoun, President of Lebanon, Statement at General Debate of the 72nd Session, https://gadebate.un.org/en/72/lebanon.

171 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.

172 UNDP, National Social Stability Working Group Meeting Minutes, 13 December 2017, Beirut.

173 LCPS key informant interview with Lebanese activist, Bar Elias, September 2017; LCPS key informant interview with Syrian activist, Bar Elias, September 2017; LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.

174 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017.

historical legacy of refugee camps in Lebanon during the civil war (as Palestinian refugee camps became sites for mobilisation and, to this day, conflict). The strategy of evicting refugees from ITSs has been increasingly used during the last year, starting with instructions from the Lebanese army to evict up to 11,000 refugees from a settlement close to the Rayak air base in April 2017.[175] Worryingly, if these evictions are carried out in one municipality without any national or international outcry, other municipalities across the country could follow their example.

As noted in section 1 (d) on page 13, fears of raids, of being arrested, attacked or evicted, or of having their houses or camps destroyed was raised consistently by Syrian refugees living in the ITS outside Bar Elias, who highlighted their constant state of anxiety as a result of the 'scary' situation, and fears that it would get worse.

Movement restrictions, detention and abuse by security forces

Some Lebanese participants from both locations saw restricting Syrian refugees' movement through curfews as a way to reduce crime and tensions more generally.[176] This, combined with increased rhetoric by the Lebanese government about cracking down on, arresting and expelling Syrians who are not 'legally' registered in Lebanon or who violate Lebanese laws,[177] illustrates an increase in support for restricting Syrians' movement through both legal and practical means.

Local NGOs report an increase in arrests of Syrian men in camps, and a growing discourse around the detention of 'illegal' or 'outlawed' Syrian men.[178] In FGDs, Syrian refugees expressed fear and concern around their inability to move freely, and a fear of being caught by security forces.

One Syrian respondent told this story:

"My son is 14 years old and was in prison. He was going to see his aunt. The police officer stopped the car and told them to go down from the car. He asked who was Syrian and he asked my son if he was with or against the regime. My son told the officer that he was against the regime. So he threw him in jail. My son has scars on his body until today because he got beaten in prison by Lebanese officers."[179]

Another Syrian shared this anecdote: "I was passing by the police, and the policeman started mocking me. He told me to put my hands up, and then to turn around for no obvious reason."[180]

Syrian respondents in both research locations reported intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, and abuse at the hands of Lebanese internal security forces (ISF).[181]

As noted in concluding section 4, these findings suggest a situation of pervasive and worsening insecurity. The security response could well exacerbate rather than address the issues of primary concern to refugee and host communities in constructive ways. This suggests the need to rebalance approaches to security in response to the refugee crisis, and to find ways of restoring trust through more proportionate, inclusive and accountable efforts that puts people at its centre.

175 The New Arab (2017), 'Lebanese Army issues eviction orders to 10,000 Syrian refugees', 8 April, https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/4/8/lebanese-army-issues-eviction-orders-to-10-000-syrian-refugees
176 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Bar Elias, September 2017.
177 Saferworld interview with a local NGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.
178 Saferworld interview with a local NGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.
179 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
180 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.
181 LCPS focus group discussion with Lebanese host communities, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.

3

Sustaining peace

Towards a rights-based approach to 'social stability'

"In general in Lebanon, [Lebanese] *citizens lack awareness of their rights, and are not aware of who is responsible for delivering their rights. And Palestinians and Syrians* [living in Lebanon] *don't even feel able to say that they have rights."*

Lebanese civil society activist working for a local NGO

SECURITISED RESPONSES ARE NOT ONLY PROBLEMATIC in terms of their impact on human rights but also in prioritising coercive methods. These can easily exacerbate rather than address the underlying drivers of insecurity, aggravating the very problems they claim to contain. Instead, a more holistic approach to the security of both refugees and host communities should be taken, one that places greater emphasis on human security and the civil and political rights of both refugees and host communities.

Refugee rights as conflict prevention

Lebanese civil society activists are increasingly calling for a more rights-based approach to tackling the refugee crisis: this would look at security issues not in terms of the security threats posed by refugees, but rather through a holistic approach to security that encompasses the rights of refugees, local communities, and their ability to access accountable and responsive security and justice services. Advancing the human security of all communities is part of making Lebanon secure.

A man arrives at a refugee registration office in Tripoli district, North Lebanon.
Giada Connestari/Oxfam Italia

Beyond the need for Syrian refugees to access their civil rights as outlined by international refugee law, granting legal status to Syrian refugees in Lebanon would also have a long-term conflict mitigating impact, as it could reduce many points of tensions, particularly around employment. As it stands, issues of exploitation and low wages are primarily driven by the irregular legal status of many Syrian refugees, making them vulnerable to exploitation. Ensuring more legal protection for refugees could bring an improvement to working conditions for all workers in Lebanon, as it would curtail the current race to the bottom.

There are a number of challenges to encouraging a rights-based peacebuilding approach in Lebanon. Firstly, as noted by some Lebanese human rights organisations, the weak record of EU member states when it comes to respecting refugee rights, undermines their ability and credibility to make the case for more rights-based approaches in Lebanon.[182] In that sense, some feel that this gives the Lebanese government a lot of leeway to negotiate and push back on demands from European partners.[183]

Also, the Lebanese government has consistently avoided using particular terminology to avoid acknowledging its responsibilities to refugees under international law, resulting in different Syrian refugees falling under a number of unclear and complicated legal statuses. This lack of clarity has not only made their lives more insecure but also undermined the security and livelihoods of local communities. As previously explained, forcing Syrian workers into exploitative working environments in the informal labour market has lowered wages and worsened working conditions for all, including Lebanese workers.

Research also indicates that Syrian refugees have contributed to economic growth, demand for consumer goods, and job creation in host communities. With attention to the fact that not all Lebanese communities may benefit from this economic growth, and making the necessary efforts to redistribute it fairly, refugees having greater economic and legal security would likely increase their spending power, thereby amplifying these positive gains.[184]

Therefore, adopting a rights-based approach is important not just because it is right according to international law but also because it can help avert potential conflict and contribute to greater social peace. In the words of Georges Ghali, the executive director for the Lebanese human rights group ALEF:

"The rigid policies implemented on Syrian nationals in Lebanon, in addition to curfews, raids, arrests, and violations to the presumption of innocence, have generated a strong perception among Lebanese [seeing] *refugees as a security threat. The latter perception generates further segregation of communities and discrimination, leading to weaker social cohesion."*[185]

Civil rights and accountability for host communities

Syrians consulted in FGDs expressed the view that, unlike them, Lebanese citizens have access to the state as a source of protection.[186] The reality is more complicated, and interviews with civil society activists and Lebanese community members in Bar Elias and Wadi Khaled show that Lebanese citizens also suffer from unaccountable or unresponsive security and governance systems. Because of this, a rights-based approach to programming that works to reduce tensions between refugees and host communities cannot stop at the rights of refugees, but must engage with governance

182 ALEF & PAX (2017), 'Reinforce human rights as an essential element in cooperation between the EU and Lebanon: Policy Brief', July.

183 Saferworld interview with a representative of a multilateral agency, July 2017.

184 IRC (2016), 'Economic impacts of Syrian refugees: Existing research review and key takeaways', https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/465/ircpolicybriefeconomicimpactsofsyrianrefugees.pdf

185 Ghali G (2017), 'Protection and language: Preventing refugees from falling through the cracks', *The Peacebuilding in Lebanon*, Issue no. 17, December, http://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/Rights17.html

186 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.

and accountability issues that obstruct the political and civil rights of Lebanese citizens as well. As mentioned previously, Lebanese communities are seeing their civil and political rights diminished as a consequence of the prominence of hard security in the context of the 'war on terror'.

The US and UK governments have provided considerable support to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), specifically to protect Lebanon's border with Syria. In December 2017, the US ambassador to Lebanon announced plans for the US government to give the LAF infrastructure and systems worth more than US$120 million "to conduct border security and counter-terrorism operations".[187] This comes in addition to more than US$1.5 billion provided by the US government to Lebanon in security assistance since 2006.[188] The UK government, meanwhile, also recently pledged an additional US$29 million for training the LAF, with the intention to train 11,000 troops by 2019.[189] The EU has also been a major supporter of the Lebanese security sector, with a €50 million package announced in March 2018 to support the LAF and the ISF).[190]

CT partnerships and security sector reform programmes have a poor track record of success in many contexts, because they often fail to focus on transformative reforms and lack credible theories of change. With a range of international actors prioritising and providing CT and border security assistance, it is important to question whether security assistance strategies in Lebanon are oriented to fixing some of the shortcomings and concerns raised in this research.

Security assistance may not help address underlying causes of conflict in Lebanon. While supporting security actors in Lebanon responds to a number of real needs, it requires attentive tailoring, and balancing, in order not to unwittingly promote dynamics that drive conflict. For security cooperation to be beneficial and to mitigate tensions, it must work to create an environment that protects citizens' rights and enforces the rule of law, while safeguarding the rights of refugees. Such efforts must also go beyond simply shifting to more development-oriented programming, but rather work to address structural development challenges, including advancing responsive, inclusive, and accountable local and national governance, security and justice mechanisms. According to a UN representative in Beirut: "If people trust their municipalities they are less likely to take matters into their own hands."

Some local NGO respondents expressed a desire to re-orient some of their programming towards civic education and human rights work, which they saw as integral to refugee programming, particularly around the issue of the civil and political rights of refugees and host communities.[191] However, they explained that donor priorities often do not conceptualise the refugee response in this way. Rather, local NGOs described international funds as quite prescriptive, and restrictive in their focus on immediate relief rather than on long-term efforts to sustain peace, which would include civic education and political participation projects, for instance. The types of aid and security assistance currently on offer thus make it difficult to develop a holistic approach to security and core issues related to it.

187 Kelly F (2017), 'Lebanon to get $120 million in US military aid including ScanEagle drones and helicopters', https://thedefensepost.com/2017/12/13/lebanon-120-million-us-military-aid/

188 Kelly F (2017), 'Lebanon to get $120 million in US military aid including ScanEagle drones and helicopters', https://thedefensepost.com/2017/12/13/lebanon-120-million-us-military-aid/

189 Reuters (2016), 'Lebanese military gets U.S., British aid for defending border with Syria', 31 March, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-military-aid/lebanese-military-gets-u-s-british-aid-for-defending-border-with-syria-idUSKCN0WX1HY

190 European Union External Action Service (2018), 'Speech by High Representative/ Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Rome II Ministerial Meeting to support the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces', 15 March, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/41450/speech-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-rome-ii-ministerial-meeting_en

191 Saferworld interview with a local NGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.

Local factors that affect social cohesion

A number of factors can be drawn from this research that play a role in enhancing social cohesion between refugees and host communities at the local level. These considerations ought to inform the conflict sensitivity of various interventions in Lebanon in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis.

In Wadi Khaled, the main factors for social cohesion were organic, linked to the **long shared history and interconnectedness of the communities** through inter-marriages, tribal systems, and historical linkages.[192] The close historical ties with Syrian communities helped to reduce tensions. Similar situations have been reported in other areas in Lebanon: towns that used to receive a large number of Syrian seasonal workers are reported to be more welcoming than others.[193] Linked to this, the cohesiveness of the host community also influences refugee-host community relations. However, this can work both ways: in some cases, community cohesion can result in rejection and mistreatment of refugees, while in other cases, a cohesive community can be more welcoming to refugees.[194]

Class issues also affect cohesion. In Bar Elias, Syrians who were living among the community seemed to be better integrated than those living in the more isolated ITS on the outskirts of the city. For those Syrians living in informal settlements, it was evident that they were more excluded and looked down upon. This could be the result of increased interaction between Lebanese citizens and refugees living in their neighbourhoods. On the other hand, it may be that Syrian and Lebanese individuals are more likely to get along if they are of a similar socio-economic background. In FGDs, some of those living in informal settlements attributed their exclusion to the fact that they were poorer than refugees living among the host community. These different experiences of integration can be a source of resentment.

Based on the views of a number of research participants, a key factor in enhancing social cohesion could be promoting economic cohesion; specifically, economic partnerships between refugee and host communities that can work to change the perception that refugees are a drain on, or are in competition with, host communities. **Promoting economic partnerships**, if done inclusively, can thus be a part of peacebuilding efforts. The Bar Elias municipality requires Syrians who open shops to employ Lebanese workers, in order to ensure that these businesses present a source of economic growth and opportunity for Lebanese communities too. Lebanese businesses in Bar Elias are also reportedly hiring Syrian employees to bring in Syrian customers.[195] Joint economic activities currently form part of a dysfunctional system whereby Syrians are required to hire Lebanese workers in order to be allowed to open their shops, or need a Lebanese person to register their shops on their behalf in order to receive authorisation. However, the possibility to promote economic partnerships that would put Lebanese and Syrian partners on an equal footing could be beneficial in reducing tensions around job opportunities and promoting growth for both communities.[196]

Municipalities and other local authorities, as well as local NGOs, also stressed the importance of investing in conflict-sensitive **infrastructure and rehabilitation projects**, as they are seen as indirectly useful in reducing tensions if both communities benefit from the projects. For example, they might play a constructive role in addressing congestion issues. In that sense, some multilateral agencies suggested that WASH programming, when oriented towards longer-term development assistance, such as extending water networks, could contribute to social cohesion.[197] A project run by the Norwegian Refugee Council in Wadi Khaled, which involved rehabilitating Lebanese homes on the condition that they support and house Syrians, was seen as a positive

192 LCPS key informant interview with municipal police, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.
193 Saferworld interview with an INGO representative, Beirut, 2017.
194 Saferworld interview with a local NGO representative, Beirut, September 2017.
195 Saferworld and LCPS analysis workshop, Beirut, September 2017.
196 LCPS key informant interview with local authority, Bar Elias, September 2017; Saferworld and LCPS analysis workshop, Beirut, September 2017.
197 Saferworld interview with a multilateral agency representative, Beirut, October 2017.

step, and was mentioned by Lebanese community members and local authorities for its role in reducing tensions.[198] These examples highlight the value in framing development interventions conflict-sensitively and grounding them in their local context, maximising their potential to transform local dynamics in support for peace.

Generally, while not a solution to addressing underlying causes of tension, **providing opportunities and space for communities to meet and come together** can be a positive first step in breaking down barriers and building bridges between communities. Evidence already exists about the importance of such opportunities for positive interaction between the different communities.[199] In Wadi Khaled, Syrian and Lebanese communities live among each other and relations between the two remain strong despite daily socio-economic struggles. In Bar Elias, a number of Syrian and Lebanese individuals mentioned a project that brought together Syrian and Lebanese women to cook together (though some felt this project did not have any impact on mutual perceptions). In Wadi Khaled, respondents mentioned the football pitch as a space that enables Syrian and Lebanese youth to interact and develop relationships.

A group of Syrian and Lebanese children play football together for the first time inside Al Wadi football field. Wadi Khaled, North Lebanon.
Diego Ibarra Sánchez/ Saferworld

Such activities have the potential for communities to clear up negative prejudices they have about each other, exchange experiences and build personal ties. As one local NGO respondent explained:

"Sometimes projects create a space for people from different backgrounds to meet and interact when they wouldn't have had the chance to do so otherwise. There is a prejudice but they realise their similarities and see that discrimination has no basis after sharing experiences through these activities."[200]

When it comes to managing conflicts and protecting their rights, Syrians living among the community in Wadi Khaled and Bar Elias said they **resort to informal authorities such as tribes or family elders to mitigate tensions**. They explained that tribal leaders generally kept individuals in line, were quick to step in to solve problems, and the threat of being shunned or expelled from the community kept conflicts to a minimum. Similarly, those living in the informal settlement in Bar Elias said that the '*shawish*' (the informal coordinator of a camp or tented settlement) is usually involved in

198 LCPS key informant interview with national ministry representative, Wadi Khaled, August 2017; LCPS key informant interview with municipality police, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.

199 See, for example, Search for Common Ground (2016), 'Social cohesion programming in a context of a major refugee influx crisis', https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Search-Lebanon_Case-Study_Social-Cohesion_Dialogue-and-Joint-Initiatives-2016.pdf

200 Saferworld interview with local NGO representative, Beirut, October 2017.

addressing conflicts that arise in the camp, as well as in the distribution of aid.[201] Additionally, many noted the important role the landlord of the informal settlement plays in conflict management and protection. As one Syrian man living in the Bar Elias informal settlement explained:

"The landlord defends us and solves the problems either between Syrians or between Syrians and Lebanese. If it comes to a big problem, the landlord tells the Syrians living in the camp that they will be kicked out if they cause more problems. When this problem occurs, the police and elders from the region interfere to make peace between the Syrians and Lebanese."[202]

While those roles are ambivalent as they can also create systems of dependence, those informal leaders are key actors in conflict mitigation at the local level, and must be engaged constructively as part of efforts to sustain peace.

Deterrence: Respecting 'red lines'

Political differences did not emerge as a source of tension between Syrians and Lebanese in either research location.[203] This may partly be due to self-censoring, with both sides quickly shutting down any discussion about the political differences that may exist with (or within) the other community. Syrians themselves expressed a strong desire not to discuss politics: some said that they had so many other immediate concerns that politics took a back seat; others felt that participating in political discussions given their unstable status in Lebanon was best avoided. Related to this, Syrians were wary about interfering in the politics of Lebanese host communities. For example, in Wadi Khaled, Syrian refugees acknowledged the existence of political differences within the Lebanese host community, but said that they were not aware of the details, and stayed at home during tense periods such as elections.

Another conflict deterrent is the warlike perception each community has of the other: Syrian refugees in Bar Elias and Wadi Khaled made regular references to the idea that most Lebanese citizens were armed, and therefore they were very careful not to cross any lines.[204] Meanwhile, Lebanese host communities regularly referred to Syrian strength and experience in combat; in Bar Elias, a Lebanese civil society worker expressed concern that Syrians could easily overpower Lebanese people given their military training:[205] "Syrians know that Lebanese people have weapons, and we can defend ourselves. But, if Syrians have the chance to take over the country, they won't say no."[206]

While such perceptions – which analysts believe do not reflect reality[207] – were mentioned as reasons why conflict is contained, stereotypes that depict the other community as violent could prove incendiary and feed into dangerous escalations. They highlight the tenuous nature of social peace in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, and the importance of sustaining peace proactively – building on the capacities for peace that remain – to prevent more problematic trends from taking hold.

201 KIN5. However, the role of the *shawish* is complicated, and others have pointed to the emergence of the *shawish* and other informal authorities, such as ITSs landlords, as symptomatic of the mismanagement of the refugee crisis in Lebanon. A critique of the *shawish* role is available in Ghaddar, S (2018), 'Lebanon treats refugees as a security problem – and it doesn't work', The Century Foundation, https://tcf.org/content/commentary/lebanon-treats-refugees-security-problem-doesnt-work/

202 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian refugees, Bar Elias, September 2017.

203 The one point of tension that emerged in a small number of interviews and FGDs, and which might be categorised as 'political', centred around the 2014 Syrian presidential elections, when many Syrian citizens residing in Lebanon allegedly voted for President Bashar Al-Assad. For many Lebanese who are against the Assad regime, this show of support for Al-Assad was a point of frustration; others, however, expressed an understanding of the difficult situation many Syrians in Lebanon found themselves in, and some Lebanese respondents said they believed that many Syrians felt they had to vote for Al-Assad to ensure they would be able to return to Syria if Al-Assad remained in power.

204 LCPS key informant interview with local activist, Bar Elias, September 2017.

205 Part of the reason why Syrians are partly perceived to be trained militarily is because of the forced conscription policy in Syria. LCPS, (2017), 'Law and politics of "Safer Zones" and forced returns to Syria: Refugee politics in Lebanon', October 2017, https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf

206 LCPS key informant interview with local activist, Bar Elias, September 2017.

207 Saferworld and LCPS analysis workshop, Beirut, September 2017.

4

Conclusion and recommendations

THIS RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THE WAYS IN WHICH COMMUNITIES in two localities in Lebanon experience the Syrian refugee crisis. In doing so, it has outlined the interaction between vulnerabilities and tensions, and the way these consolidate grievances that constitute conflict risks. In turn, these community perceptions have served to qualify some trends in national and international dynamics. In particular, community-level findings revealed a number of negative stereotypes based on a lack of understanding between Syrian refugee and Lebanese host communities, highlighting the risk for national-level anti-Syrian discourses to create division and animosity. Similarly, local-level perspectives on assistance and international aid helped identify avenues for further advancing the conflict sensitivity of those interventions, and making humanitarian and development support contribute to sustaining peace.

Local and national priorities for conflict-sensitive management of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon

Working with society to tackle national challenges: A wide range of local civil society actors are responding to the challenges of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. Some are formal civil society entities and others are informal groups of volunteers. These initiatives are run by Lebanese, Syrians, and other groups. They have a crucial role to play in addressing vulnerabilities and promoting the rights of refugees and host communities. They are also key to promoting an environment of trust and tolerance founded on more inclusive, responsive, fair and accountable relations between communities, refugees and local and national authorities. Local authorities therefore need to strengthen their feedback and accountability mechanisms, in order to engage meaningfully with all those actors, including those representing Syrian voices, and support them in their work.

A more inclusive approach to security and access to justice: Lebanon faces a number of security challenges, which should not only be viewed from the international or Lebanese national security perspective. Addressing insecurity effectively requires seeing security from communities' perspectives – responding to both Syrian refugees' and host communities' experiences and concerns. The research has shown that Syrians feel insecure and do not feel protected by security actors, which fuels mistrust and tensions at the local level. In addition, while many Lebanese see the army as a source of security, they also face challenges speaking out about their security concerns in the context of the war on terror. In that sense, national actors must pay particular attention to upholding the rule of law and accountability of state actors, especially security services, to avoid fuelling resentment in communities.

In Lebanon, most Syrians do not have access to formal security. They rely on informal actors, such as the *shawish*, their sponsors or landlords, to resolve social disputes and problems that arise. This reality calls for the need to engage those informal actors in any efforts to enhance security and access to justice at a local level. In that sense, supporting local actors on security provision should go beyond targeting municipalities and formal security actors exclusively. Local civil society and voluntary groups have a key role to play, based on their close ties with communities, their understanding of local dynamics and their access to informal actors. Enhancing local security provision requires interaction and dialogue between those different formal and informal actors, as well as enhanced efforts to ensure accountability of security actors. Community security initiatives could be an effective way to facilitate inclusive groups of refugees, host communities, civil society, informal actors and formal authorities to diagnose challenges and develop collaborative responses, boosting trust and confidence in the process.[208]

Building bridges between people: While not a solution to addressing underlying causes of conflict, it is important to encourage spaces and ventures (including economic ventures) that bring refugee and host communities together. This research shows that people in Wadi Khaled and Bar Elias tend to come together in organic ways, when celebrating marriages and funerals, as well as sharing common spaces and activities. They also build relationships through inter-marriages and business partnerships. While the value of these bonds lies to a great extent in their spontaneous nature, authorities and civil society can encourage the two communities to engage in shared events geared around sports, social or cultural activities. These efforts can build initial trust between people, and constitute an opportunity to nuance perceptions and overcome negative stereotypes that communities have about each other. In turn, human connections may prove a valuable mitigating factor in cases of tension or violence in the future.

The research suggested that efforts to encourage refugee and host communities to work together in economic ventures could prove particularly important. Economic integration of both communities through joint income-generating activities can change preconceptions and make people see their community's economic success as linked to that of the other. This can be particularly relevant in places where cross-border trade used to be a major source of income, which was hampered by the closing of the border. The efforts put in place by some municipalities in Lebanon to incentivise joint business activities between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees could be replicated and adapted in a more systematic way, and endorsed at the national policy level.

Supporting a constructive public discourse: Local civil society actors have a vital role in making the political discourse in Lebanon more conducive to peace, and their efforts should be highlighted and backed by parties and leaders at local and national levels. There are efforts to involve people in civic education and political participation programmes, to inform local governance and national level discourses and encourage more solidarity with Syrian refugees. As the research has shown, portraying Syrian refugees mainly as a security threat contributes to tensions and grievances. It is important to encourage society to speak out and put constructive pressure on leaders and officials to take action on their priorities. In turn, people having a stronger voice in public discourse can generate momentum for progress on the development, governance and security issues highlighted by communities as underpinning the challenging situation.

Addressing gender-related insecurity and sensitively encouraging progressive gender norms: Both Lebanese and Syrian women are afraid of harassment and aren't comfortable walking alone. Because of limitations to Syrian men's movements, gender norms are shifting and Syrian women are having to work to provide for the household, and move around unaccompanied. Syrian women also face a precarious economic and

208 See Saferworld (2014), 'Community security handbook', for more detail: https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/806-community-security-handbook

legal situation, exacerbated by the heightened insecurity facing male Syrian refugees. Because Syrian women have had to change their behaviour, this has brought them into conflict with dominant social and gender norms and increased their vulnerability.

At national and local levels, authorities and civil society need to explore ways to address women's security concerns constructively, improve socio-economic opportunities for both Syrian and host community women, and facilitate dialogue on shifting gender norms to safeguard women's rights while defusing the negative stereotypes and tensions that are arising with changing norms.

How can international responses help sustain peace?

Towards a rights-based, peacebuilding approach: An international response to the Syrian refugee crisis focused on containment of security threats and refugee flows could prove dangerous. The international response has been increasingly shaped by security concerns. While there are some significant security challenges that warrant a proportionate response, too much emphasis on security could prove detrimental and counterproductive – particularly if it ultimately undermines a focus on the rights and well-being of Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon, who are living through this crisis. Strengthening the wrong kind of security can exacerbate fears and grievances that lead in turn to greater insecurity, creating a vicious circle.

The EU's ability to promote human rights and legal protection in Lebanon is undermined by its members' determination not to allow more refugees into Europe. However, the denial of refugees' rights and legal status in Lebanon in turn feeds into tensions and security risks that should instead be reduced through a more conflict-sensitive, rights-focused and sustainable approach.

Recalibrating priorities to place more emphasis on sustaining peace through human rights would provide a more constructive path towards sustained management of tensions, and help address both systemic problems in Lebanon and wider stability in Syria's neighbourhood. This should be complemented by a more open policy towards Syrians seeking refuge in Europe – which would be more consistent with the values and normative framework upon which the EU is based.

Pivoting towards human security: It is important to assess the impact of the security cooperation provided by international actors against the local reality in Lebanon: does it support or undermine progress on social empowerment and institutional development? Does it contribute to reducing tensions or enflaming them? In particular, international actors should question the type of capacity-building support they provide to the security sector: security actors are sometimes responsible for creating a sense of insecurity in communities, and capacity building programmes are not generally effective in building momentum for the reform and behaviour change required to improve security. As recognised, for example, in the OECD Handbook on Security System Reform, such support can therefore send the wrong signal and result in increasing divisions, grievances and support for violent groups.[209]

Garissa County in Kenya has long hosted large numbers of Somali refugees, whilst facing the threat of al-Shabaab attacks in the context of Somalia's devastating war. In this context, Saferworld has documented how escalating violence was checked, and local trust restored, by changing the ethos and behaviour of security providers, and the way they interacted with the local population.[210] A more trust-building, community oriented approach to security provision might well be vital for sustaining peace in Lebanon, and security cooperation must be geared towards this in order to be conflict-sensitive. Supporting empowerment of refugee and host communities, including

209 OECD (2008), *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform*, – see in particular Chapter 5 on 'Strengthening national capacity', https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/the-oecd-dac-handbook-on-security-system-reform_9789264027862-en

210 Wakube C et al (2017), 'Inside Kenya's war on terror: breaking the cycle of violence in Garissa', Saferworld, https://saferworld-indepth.squarespace.com/inside-kenyas-war-on-terror-breaking-the-cycle-of-violence-in-garissa/

through community security programming,[211] can help to ensure stronger accountability for how security is provided and foster trust between communities, informal actors and authorities to solve security challenges together. Such approaches can prove highly effective even in contexts affected by hard security challenges.

"One of the important issues to relieve tensions is to give legal papers to Syrians who want to move around and who want to work and help their families."

Civil society representative in Wadi Khaled[212]

Legal status as a means for conflict prevention: This research highlights the vulnerability caused by the lack of legal status of many Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as well as its impact on insecurity. It also shows how the lack of legal status exacerbates a number of tensions between communities, including those relating to jobs and gender norms. In that sense, while acknowledging the challenges this poses for the Lebanese government, international actors, including INGOs, should redouble their efforts to encourage a viable policy solution that aligns with international law. They should also explore how they could further consider the impacts of legal status in conflict-sensitive and carefully targeted programming.

Genuinely supporting local expertise, capacity and ownership: While international efforts seek to support local civil society, a different type of engagement would make this support more meaningful and sustainable. Given civil society concerns with how prescriptive donor funding is, and noting global commitments towards localisation of humanitarian efforts,[213] donors need to step up support to locally driven civil society initiatives that look beyond relief towards tackling longer term structural issues underpinning tensions in the country.

Building on a greater use of context analysis that draws on local perspectives, new funding mechanisms should be designed that adopt a wider and longer-term vision for responding to the Syrian refugee crisis. Such mechanisms should be more responsive to the analysis of local civil society as to what types of responses are necessary and appropriate, including work to support human rights and civic education for example. They also need to support civil society in promoting a shift in the discourse on refugees, and in building momentum for progress in proactively addressing the governance, human security and development challenges facing the country. This might include encouraging the sharing in policy and media debates of research and evidence regarding the situation in communities, as a way to push back on the perpetuation of divisive stereotypes that drive a potentially counter-productive agenda.

Among the various responses to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, a number of actors are building municipalities' capacity, since they are often the front line in the response. For this engagement to contribute to sustainable improvement in local dynamics, international assistance programmes should encourage and assist municipalities to work in a more participatory and accountable way, responding to the needs and concerns of both host communities and refugees, and linking to civil society partners and informal actors.

Responding to needs while promoting peace through conflict-sensitive interventions: This research points to a number of ways in which interventions sometimes lack conflict sensitivity. Instead, efforts to respond to the needs of Syrian refugees and host communities are an opportunity for sustaining and reinforcing peace. Although it is challenging to assist people in a conflict-sensitive way, and the research notes some positive practices, interventions can go further in balancing between the priorities of different beneficiary groups while avoiding feeding division or exclusion, as when Palestinian refugees are left in the inter-agency cracks.

211 See, for example: Saferworld (2014), 'Community security handbook', https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/806-community-security-handbook; UNDP, 'Community Security', http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/democratic-governance-and-peacebuilding/rule-of-law--justice--security-and-human-rights/community-security.html

212 LCPS focus group discussion with Syrian and Lebanese civil society, Wadi Khaled, August 2017.

213 See World Humanitarian Summit (2016), 'The Grand Bargain - A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need', 23 May, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand_Bargain_final_22_May_FINAL-2.pdf

A more participatory approach to the provision of aid and other types of support will not only ensure stronger and better-tailored responses, but also create fora for Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities to discuss their respective needs and challenges together. This is valuable in a context where groups lack understanding of the challenges that others face. Not only would this help people relate to one another, but also find joint solutions. Indeed, participatory programming conducted through a rights-based approach can contribute to enhancing the rights of both refugees and Lebanese citizens.

In light of this, as many donors and agencies have learnt in insecure environments, participatory, accountable and well-communicated approaches to allocating aid – ensuring communities better understand decisions around aid allocation and have feedback and accountability mechanisms to query aid delivery – can help improve and sustain results. Similarly, engaging communities when designing interventions, developing criteria and deciding how to allocate resources could be an important antidote to resentment over aid allocation. In particular, representatives from Syrian refugee and Lebanese host communities should be included in inter-sectoral meetings and working groups at national, local and project levels, and input on plans to deliver aid.

Conflict sensitivity as aid effectiveness: As is widely recognised in the aid community, humanitarian and development programming needs to factor in the drivers of conflict and insecurity if it is to play a constructive role in sustaining peace, and support resilience to conflict (which can rapidly unravel development gains). It must also take account of relations communities have with each other, authorities and other actors. In that sense, international actors should be sure to implement their commitments to use conflict analysis in strategy development, address multiple sources of insecurity, and seek to improve relationships, building on what is already working. Initiatives in all sectors should ensure space for cooperation and interaction between communities, taking into account their plurality and making activities open to all groups.

The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon warrants a holistic response. Despite a recognition that structural issues such as governance, livelihoods, human security, human rights and social cohesion are crucial elements of a holistic, sustainable approach, there remains an imbalance between efforts to address such long term priorities and humanitarian relief. If donors agree that worsening instability could impact badly on relief and development outcomes in Lebanon and the region, they should make human security, human rights and conflict sensitivity a much greater priority across their assistance strategies and portfolios.

Addressing gender dimensions of vulnerability and insecurity: International actors are committed to gender mainstreaming, as well as to integrating gender dimensions into their peace and security efforts. In Lebanon, there is an opportunity to translate this into significant efforts to help women and men overcome the vulnerabilities that underlie gender-related tensions and insecurity, including by supporting programmes that generate socio-economic opportunities for both Syrian and host women, and that discuss and challenge gender norms. This could help improve women's security and well-being, while sustaining positive changes.

A just peace in Syria: Beyond pressing for the protection of refugees' rights in Lebanon, donor governments should also redouble efforts to work towards a just peace in Syria. According to previous Saferworld research, this requires international actors to: move from a 'war on terror' or anti-chemical weapons framework to a more comprehensive strategy for Syria; address resource scarcity by revisiting the role of aid and sanctions; redouble the search for a diplomatic solution, with the West investing real, consistent leverage; and support the emergence of new governance arrangements to address conflict drivers and enable reconciliation.[214]

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About Saferworld: **Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace.**
Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

About LCPS: **Founded in 1989, LCPS is a non-governmental, nonprofit think tank. Its mission is to produce independent, high quality research relevant to policymaking and to promote policy reform through advocacy and raising public awareness.**

COVER PHOTO: Two Lebanese brothers help their older sibling renovate their new apartment, which looks over Syrian settlements. Wadi Khaled, North Lebanon. © DIEGO IBARRA SÁNCHEZ/SAFERWORLD

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