



# **ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON AND THEIR EMPLOYMENT PROFILE**

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REFUGEES IN LEBANON AND THEIR  
EMPLOYMENT PROFILE**

**2013**

**International Labour Organization  
Regional Office for the Arab States**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAS	Central Administration of Statistics
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
LBP	Lebanese Pounds
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
PRS	Palestinian Refugees from Syria
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Agency Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Syria as a result of the ongoing crisis has forced thousands of Syrians to flee and seek refuge in neighbouring countries, including Lebanon. According to UNHCR estimates, by early 2014 Lebanon was a host to 927,638 Syrian refugees in Lebanon, of whom 879,907 are registered with the UNHCR, representing around 21 per cent of the total population in the country. While Lebanon is neither a signatory to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees nor its 1967 Protocol, the government maintains an “open border” policy whereby registered Syrian refugees can live and work in Lebanon. This implies a significant social economic impact on Lebanon, including an impact on the labour market.

In order to assess this impact and identify the ramifications of an increasing number of Syrian refugees (many of whom will be seeking work) the ILO implemented an assessment of their impact and a survey of their employment status in four regions (Akkar, Tripoli, Beqaa, and the South). The objective was to provide a better understanding of the evolving situation of increasing numbers of Syrian refugees. The study focused on the employment profile of refugees and the potential impact of their economic participation on their host communities’ livelihoods.

For the current assessment, data was collected from 400 households, which included a total of 2,004 individuals. Semi-structured questionnaires were completed using personal interviews that covered all household members.

The assessment revealed a number of salient findings and confirmed, to a large extent, the anecdotal evidence about the living conditions of Syrian refugees and their effect on host communities. The majority of Syrian refugees are living in difficult socio-economic conditions with limited livelihood resources. Initially, many refugees settled with families or friends but, with the prolonged crisis, they have resorted to rented accommodation where they are mostly obliged to pay high prices for small shelters, or shared apartments with other families. The alternative is to move to Palestinian camps, abandoned buildings, or tented settlements.

The assessment shows that the majority of Syrian refugees are youth and children. More than half are below the age of 24. Educational attainment of the refugees is generally low; one out of three is either illiterate or never attended school, 40 per cent have a primary education, and only three per cent achieved university education. Males and females seem to have similar education levels. In terms of school attendance in Lebanon, a large share of Syrian school age children remain out of school, with the enrolment rate estimated at only 31 per cent. Syrian refugee students face multiple obstacles, including the inability to afford school fees, school accessibility, as well as curriculum and language differences.

In terms of employment, results indicate that around half of the working age refugees (47 per cent) are economically active, the majority of whom were active in Syria prior to the crisis. South Lebanon records the highest activity rate and Akkar the lowest. Syrian refugees are characterised by high unemployment levels, most notably amongst women at 68 per cent. Given the absence of male heads in most refugee households, there is an impetus for women to seek work. However, they still

face the additional burden of childcare, which impedes them from employment. In fact, out of all the Syrian refugee women aged above 15 years, only six per cent are currently working in Lebanon.

As workers, Syrians are mainly engaged in agriculture or in personal and domestic services and, on a smaller scale, in construction. These jobs provide little income and no security or protection, reflecting refugees' low skill capacities. The assessment shows that refugees tend to maintain the same kinds of jobs they used to occupy before the crisis. Most refugees work informally whereby 92 per cent have no work contract and over half (56 per cent) work on a seasonal, weekly or daily basis; only 23 per cent earn regular monthly wages.

Syrian refugees have an average monthly income of LBP418,000, with a median of LBP 450,000 a month. There is a significant gender gap, as females earn 40 per cent less than males. The lowest average monthly incomes were found in Akkar and Tripoli; the highest reported in the South. The low wages are somehow complimented with other sources of income; 36 per cent stated they have other sources of income –relying mainly on UNHCR assistance or personal savings.

The survey results show that, on average, refugees took 74 days to find work. While it would take 118 days for a refugee to find work in Tripoli and 97 days in Akkar, it takes around 30 days to find work in the South. Personal networking seems to be an important factor in job seeking as 40 per cent of working refugees found work through a Syrian acquaintance and 36 per cent through a Lebanese acquaintance.

Poor occupational health and safety takes its toll on Syrian refugees. The data show that many workers suffer from one or more work-related health conditions or are exposed to hazards at the workplace. One out of two workers reported suffering from back or joint pain or severe fatigue; 60 per cent are exposed to dust and fumes, and 49 per cent to extreme cold or heat. A low percentage (12 per cent) of workers have faced some sort of conflict at work, mainly a result of a personal clash; if a conflict took place, most stated they did not take any action.

Finally, very few workers (16 per cent) expressed a need for training to build capacity at work, while a larger number (50 per cent) required tools or equipment. Construction and agricultural tools were needed by males whereas females noted the need for sewing, hairdressing, and agricultural equipment.

According to various research and official figures, the Syrian crisis has had negative repercussions on the economy and the labour market. Economic growth has slowed, private investments reduced, the trade deficit has expanded, and real estate and tourism – the two most important sectors – have declined. The Syrian crisis and the influx of refugees into poor communities in the peripheral regions of Lebanon have imposed enormous challenges on the country in general and on host communities in particular.

The assessment also included focus group meetings with workers and employers in the North and Bekaa, which highlighted a number of repercussions of the continuous inflow of refugees:

- Syrian refugees are mainly concentrated in peripheral areas that are historically poor and deprived, thereby exacerbating their already difficult living conditions.
- Competition over job opportunities is one of the most, if not the most, urgent challenges facing host communities. The employment situation has worsened with the increase in

labour supply. Syrian workers are accepting lower incomes, work for longer hours and without social benefits; this has led to decreasing wages and a reduction of job opportunities. Lebanese employers and business owners are, however, benefiting from the availability of less costly labour.

In addition, a number of micro and small Syrian-owned businesses are opening up in the host regions. These enterprises sell goods (originating in Syria) at lower prices and thus pose a threat to equivalent Lebanese businesses.

- Prices of basic commodities and services have soared. The increase in demand for rented accommodation has raised rental prices drastically. This price inflation is attributed to an increase in demand due to population growth, the injection of cash and food/cash vouchers, and the reduced access to cheaper goods from Syria.
- Overcrowding in host communities is placing additional pressure on already deficient healthcare and education services, in terms of access and quality. Both sectors are under a great deal of pressure to cope with the huge emerging inflow of refugees.

A number of guiding recommendations have been made that address the above challenges and aim to contribute to improving the employment and livelihood opportunities of both Syrian refugees and their host communities. The main conclusion is that any support should address the needs of the Lebanese communities in parallel to the needs of the refugees. The types of support recommended include a focus on local job creation while also improving overall labour market governance in Lebanon in order to avoid further deteriorating working conditions. Such support could include job creation programmes and enhanced access to employment through cash-for-work programmes, financial support, local economic development and emergency employment centres. Other interventions could involve policy formulation while strengthening institutional capacity to protect Lebanese and Syrian workers from exploitation. There is a need to implement capacity building through skills enhancement programmes, extending labour market information and statistics, and developing special programmes that target women, youth and children.

## METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study was to measure the impact of Syrian refugees on host communities in order to provide a better understanding of their employment profile. The methodological approach was based on a literature review and previous knowledge relevant to the Syrian refugees in the country.

The assessment adopted the following methodology:

- Desk review of available literature and recent studies on Syrian refugees.
- A semi-structured questionnaire was developed. It included questions on household composition, education, employment, wages, working conditions and other sources of income covering all members of households.
- Field survey covering 400 Syrian refugee households in four regions: Akkar, Bekaa, Tripoli and South Lebanon. A “convenience sampling” technique was adopted whereby probable Syrian congregation in the targeted geographical areas was identified, and then expanded using a snowball approach. Questionnaires were completed through one-to-one interviews with head of households (mostly men).
- Four focus group discussions were held with Lebanese employers and Lebanese workers in both Akkar and Bekaa. Around 15 interviews were conducted with concerned stakeholders (experts in the field, workers in development and humanitarian organizations, mayors and representatives of local governance institutions, etc.)

Prior to data collection, the findings of the literature review were compiled and used to guide the design of the questionnaire, the fieldwork and the qualitative aspect of the study. Following the design of the questionnaire, it was pre tested on the sample population in field. Data collection was completed in May 2013.

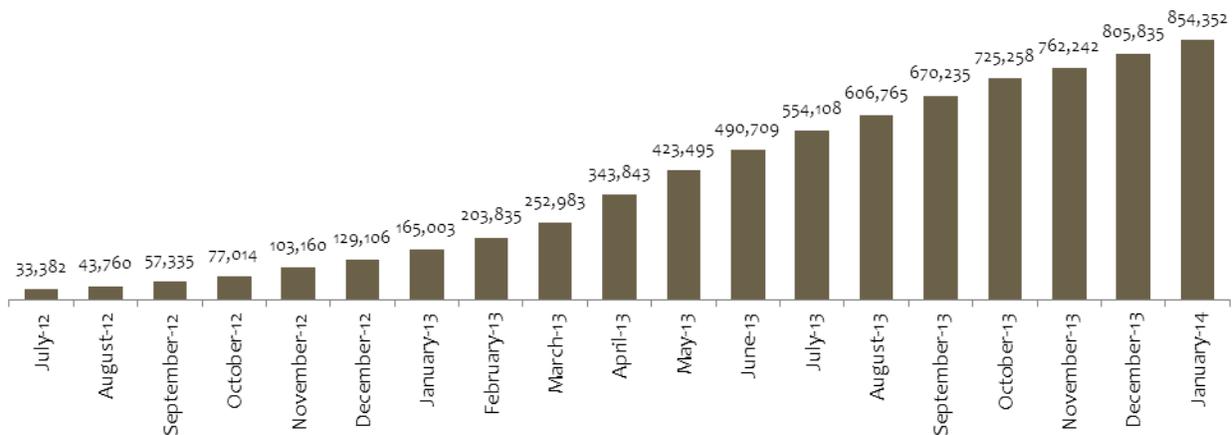
**Despite the valuable results the study was able to offer, the figures and indicators need to be treated with some caution. The sample size and design is too small to make reliable generalisations about the entire population of Syrian refugees; the data provide for a basic situation analysis only.**

## I. OVERVIEW OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS IN LEBANON

### SYRIAN REFUGEES INFLUX

With the beginning of the Syrian crisis in March 2011, Syrian citizens were displaced and the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon started to rise. According to estimates of the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are 927,638 Syrian refugees in Lebanon of whom 879,907 are registered and around 47,731 are awaiting registration. The Lebanese government estimate for Syrian refugees is around one million<sup>1</sup>. With the growing influx of Syrian refugees, local communities are under rising pressure in terms of livelihood resources, such as food, education, health services, and employment. The impact of these refugees challenges the already precarious stability of the country in general and host communities in particular.

Figure 1: Number of registered Syrian refugees between July 2012 and January 2014



Source: UNHCR (2013) *Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal*, Date of Access: 17 February 2014.

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR (2013) *Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal* <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>. Date of access: February, 2014.

Regions such as North Lebanon (28 per cent) and the Bekaa (34 per cent) have witnessed the highest concentration of Syrian refugees. Beirut and Mount Lebanon governorates both host 26 per cent of registered Syrians, while 12 per cent are settled in the governorate of South of Lebanon<sup>2</sup>.

More than half of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon are below 18 years of age. The predominance of children and adolescents among the Syrian refugee population is likely due to the fact that many men remained in Syria either to protect their businesses and houses or, in some instances, join the fighting forces. The lack of adult males exacerbates the vulnerability of Syrian women and children, who are facing an insecure environment subject to risks of sexual violence, child marriage, child labour, and illicit activities.

**Table 1: Registered Syrian refugees by sex and age (%)**

Age	Females	Males
0 - 4	9	10
5 - 11	10	11
12 - 17	6	6
18 - 59	25	20
60 and above	2	1
<b>Total</b>	52	48

Source: UNHCR (2014).

In addition to displaced Syrians in Lebanon, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) declared that more than 63,000 Palestinian Refugees from Syria have also fled to Lebanon, and reside mainly in the various Palestinian Camps in the country<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR (2013) *Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Daily Statistics*, February 2014.

<sup>3</sup> UNRWA (2013) *Syria Crisis Situation Update Issue 53* (July 9, 2013) Last accessed at: <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=1815>

### Box 1: Palestinian refugees from Syria

Since March 2011, most of the Palestinian camps and gatherings in Lebanon have been hosting an increasing number of Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) escaping the Syrian conflict. To date, more than 60,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria are registered with UNRWA and settled in and around the Palestinian camps in the country. Half of them are concentrated between Saida (30 per cent) and Beqaa (23 per cent). Palestinian families in the camps have taken on the burden of hosting an estimated 45 per cent of the PRS into their already overcrowded homes. The remaining households pay rent for shelter, which they perceive as very expensive. The majority of PRS live in overcrowded conditions (46 per cent of households inhabited by more than 10 persons and 27 per cent by more than 15), particularly in the Ain el-Helwe camp. A needs assessment by ANERA reveals that 28 per cent of PRS households (approximately 8,500 persons) are housed in substandard conditions that are not designed for residence.

The PRS population is economically vulnerable. Their livelihood status differs from the general Syrian refugees. By law, Palestinian refugees from Syria do not enjoy the same rights to employment as Syrians. Moreover, unlike Syrians, Palestinians from Syria “lack the informal social networks related to employment” that Syrians have managed to build as foreign labourers. Unemployment rates among the Palestinian refugees from Syria is very high (around 90 per cent) with strict legal restrictions imposed on their employment and mobility. The majority have no Lebanese income and the very few who are employed (10 per cent) work as labourers, with wages typically ranging between USD 100 and USD 300 per month. Women make up only 10 per cent of those employed. Food and rent impose a heavy toll on the PRS household budget. Finally, and most importantly, PRS are not served by the UNHCR but rather by UNRWA, which suffers from prolonged under-funding and poor resources.

Source: American Near East Refugee Aid, ANERA (2013) *Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon: A Needs Assessment*.

### LEGAL STATUS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

Lebanon lacks specific legislation or regulations pertaining to the status and rights of refugees. While Lebanon is a signatory to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Government did not sign the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees nor its 1967 Protocol. Nevertheless, it is generally recognized that all countries have an obligation under the principle of ‘*non-refoulement*’ to refrain from forcibly returning refugees to their country of origin if freedom would be threatened. The said principle “is part of customary law, a set of rules which are binding on all states, even if a country has not signed a specific convention outlining this law.” Consequently, “the legal status of

those fleeing Syria is mostly governed by the host countries' national laws concerning foreign nationals"<sup>4</sup>.

The 1993 bilateral agreement made by Lebanon and Syria for Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination have granted freedom of stay, work, employment and practice of economic activity for nationals of both countries. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Lebanon has maintained an "open border" policy, so that registered Syrian refugees can work in Lebanon. It has also shown lenience towards those who have not regulated their stay in Lebanon as required by law or those who are working without permits and tolerance towards the opening and operating of unlicensed businesses in the country. Syrian nationals have the right to work in Lebanon during the first six months following their arrival to Lebanon. However they do not have access to full coverage under the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) – like other foreign workers – even if full contributions to the NSSF are made. As non-nationals, Syrians require a work permit. The cost of work permits for foreign workers in Lebanon depends on the work category. For example, Syrian workers pay only 25 percent of the work permit fee, amounting to LBP 120,000 (instead of LBP 480,000), for third category jobs<sup>5</sup>. However, according to the most recent figures from the CAS yearly statistical book, in 2011 only 390 Syrian workers applied for a work permit for the first time and 571 work permits were renewed<sup>6</sup>. It should be noted that the low number of permits issued for Syrians is attributed mainly to the fact that the majority work in the informal economy, with unregistered enterprises or without a work contract.

As for property ownership Syrians, like other foreigners (except Palestinian refugees), have the right to own constructed or non-constructed properties less than 3000 m<sup>2</sup> without prior permission in Lebanon. In practice, though, there is a great deal of confusion surrounding the implementation of the laws and regulations applying to Syrians in relation to their entry, stay, employment, property ownership, and the like in Lebanon.

#### LIVING CONDITIONS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

The majority of Syrian refugees are living in hard socio-economic conditions with limited livelihood options and few connections or acquaintances; they have scant means of self-reliance, especially female-headed households who make up a good share of the refugee population. Refugees' limited financial resources are usually spent on accommodation, often in poor conditions<sup>7</sup>. Wealthier Syrians have responded to the crisis, in many cases, by transferring capital or relocating businesses to

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<sup>4</sup> Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) – Syria Needs Analysis Project (2013) *Legal Status of Individuals Fleeing Syria*.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Labour.

<sup>6</sup> Central Administration of Statistics (2012) *Statistical Year Book 2011*.

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR (2013) *Syria Regional Response Plan*, Beirut.

Lebanon. As for Syrian migrant workers already in Lebanon prior to the Syrian crisis, many have now brought their families and are striving to accommodate increased living costs.

## SHELTER

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At the beginning of the Syrian crisis, many refugees settled with families or friends in various host communities, especially in North Lebanon and the Bekaa governorates. As the Syrian crisis prolonged, displaced Syrians resorted to rented accommodation. However, with limited job opportunities and low wages, they have experienced limited capacity to afford rent. By the end of 2012, more than 6,000 households benefited from housing assistance from international organizations and local charities, including access to collective centres, the rehabilitation of empty houses or cash assistance. Refugees have also resorted to illegal occupation of houses and land, which are sometimes unsuitable for housing<sup>8</sup>.

Statistics show that most Syrian households who are settled in the North reside with relatives, while in the Bekaa they mostly rent apartments. However, as more refugees arrive, living conditions are shifting, and those who have already settled are depleting their savings. Unable to cover the high rents in Lebanon, these refugees are erecting tented settlements in different parts of the Bekaa and South Lebanon<sup>9</sup>.

Syrian refugees are obliged to pay high prices for small shelters, share apartments with more families or, for those who cannot afford the rents, move to Palestinian camps, abandoned buildings or tented settlements. Symptomatically, the rise of infectious diseases and scabies indicate the kind of sub-par living conditions that certain segments of the Syrian refugee population have been forced to endure.

It is important to note that the central Government prohibited any intervention for the enhancement of tent settlements across the country under a policy that hinders the creation of camps for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. As a result, the demand for shelter has exceeded supply in many parts of the country with more than 60 per cent of Syrian refugees living in rented accommodation<sup>10</sup>.

## EDUCATION

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The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) facilitated access to education for Syrian refugees to all public schools; however, both students and schools continue to face significant challenges. Although classrooms in the public Government schools in Lebanon are generally not overcrowded and the ratio of students to teachers is the lowest in public schools, the high

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> International Rescue Committee and Save the Children (2012) *Livelihoods Assessment - Syrian Refugees in Lebanon in Bekaa Valley and North Governorates in Lebanon*.

<sup>10</sup> International Rescue Committee (2013) *Briefing Note on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, June 2013.

concentration of Syrian refugees in host communities in North and Bekaa has led to the overcrowding of schools that were previously under-populated. Syrian refugee students face several obstacles that not only hinder their access to education (for example, transportation costs and discrimination), but also affect their ability to learn in school, such as differences between the curricula and language (French or English are the languages of instruction for most school subjects)<sup>11</sup>.

## HEALTHCARE

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Syrian refugees have access to primary healthcare services that are provided for free by public dispensaries of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), in addition to services provided by humanitarian international organizations and local NGOs. However, these services seem to be insufficient and are unable to accommodate the additional significant increase of demand – especially in terms of reproductive health. Syrian refugee children in Lebanon can also obtain vaccination against several diseases, such as measles and polio, provided at national primary health care facilities and through vaccination campaigns organized by the MoPH with other partners like UNICEF<sup>12</sup>. UNICEF and UNHCR mobile medical units are also made available in most host communities. These services, however, are generally limited to registered refugees, rendering unregistered refugees with very limited healthcare support. Even though other healthcare costs, such as hospitalization, are subsidised by international agencies (mainly UNHCR), a large number of refugees are still unable to afford the remaining costs.

Water and sanitation remains a challenging matter for Syrian refugees given the deficient living conditions they are enduring. As a result, many are highly prone to water-related diseases, such as diarrhea, skin disease and Hepatitis<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, with the high influx of Syrian refugees since 2011, water, sanitation and hygiene conditions are failing. An assessment of these conditions in the Bekaa and the North showed high levels of contamination of drinking water, inadequate sanitation facilities, as well as poor hygiene.

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<sup>11</sup> UNICEF and Save the Children (2012) *Education Rapid Needs Assessment for Displaced Syrian Children in Schools, Community and Safe Spaces*, Beirut.

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF (2013) *Syria Crisis Bi-weekly Humanitarian Situation Report*, July 12-25.

<sup>13</sup> UNHCR (2013) *Syria Regional Response Plan*, Beirut.

## II. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

### BASELINE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

This section depicts the results of the field survey and data collected from 400 Syrian refugee households in the regions of Akkar, Tripoli, Bekaa and the South. In around 85 per cent of interviews the main respondent was the male head of household; 10 per cent were conducted with the female head of household. The majority of respondents (69 per cent) were registered with the UNHCR, while more than 20 per cent were not registered and around 10 per cent were in the process of being registered.

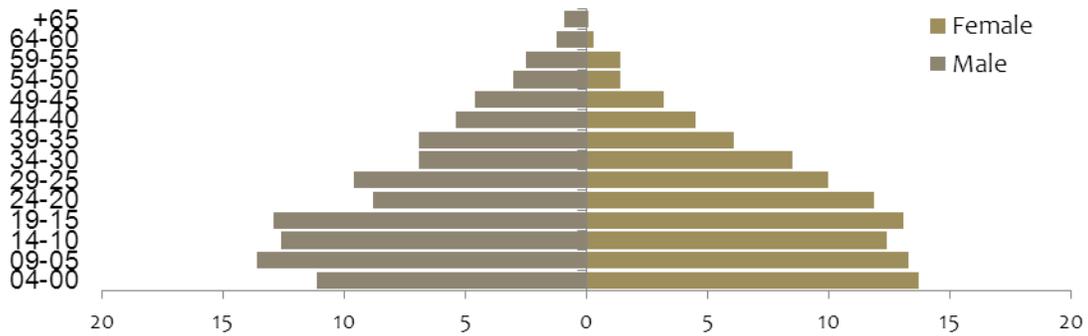
Overall, the distribution of refugees by sex shows relatively equal numbers of males and females (see Table 2), with no significant differences across regions. However, this balance hides significant discrepancies when crossed with the age distribution. Indeed, a reversal of the male to female ratio takes place at the juncture between the 20-24 and 30-34 age brackets, after which females begin to consistently outnumber males. This phenomenon may be due to the pre-crisis initial external migration of males for work or study purposes, which affects males to a larger degree. It might also be due to the conflict in Syria and the involvement of males, especially across these age categories, in fighting activities.

**Table 2: Distribution of Syrian refugees by region and sex (%)**

	Akkar	Tripoli	Bekaa	South	Total
<b>Male</b>	55	54	52	49	53
<b>Female</b>	45	47	48	51	47
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100

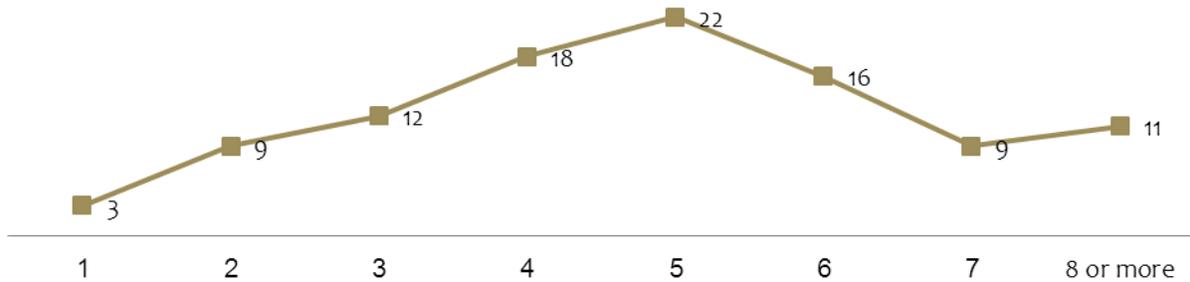
Overall, the Syrian refugee population is young for both males and females: 62 per cent are below the age of 24. The age pyramid represented in the figure below shows the age distribution for females and males.

**Figure 2: Age pyramid of Syrian refugees**



The survey found that the average Syrian refugee household size is comprised of five members. Most refugee families (56 per cent) are between four to six-member households, with 11 per cent of households comprising eight or more members.

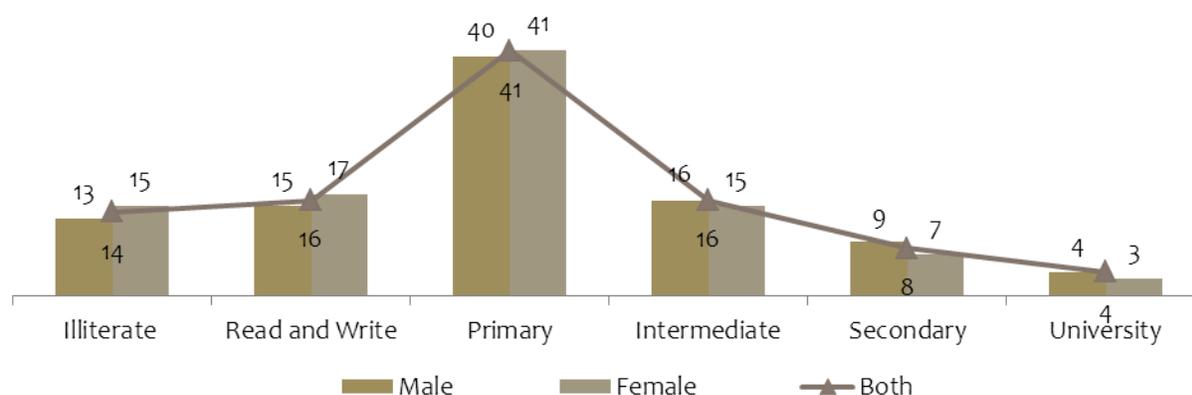
**Figure 3: Distribution of households by household size (%)**



**EDUCATION PROFILE OF SYRIAN REFUGEES**

The educational attainment of Syrian refugees is generally low with one out of three either illiterate or can read and write. Three quarters have primary education or below and only three per cent have obtained university education. Males and females seem to have similar educational levels, although slightly less females than males completed secondary or university education.

**Figure 4: Distribution of Syrian refugees by sex and educational attainment (%)**



As far as enrolment is concerned, several studies reveal that enrolment of Syrian students in Lebanese schools is low across all school levels. In fact, according to this study, only 31 per cent of surveyed children were actually attending schools in the school year 2012-2013, with no significant differences between males (31 per cent) and females (30 per cent).

While the Lebanese gross enrolment rate (GER)<sup>14</sup> at pre-school level in Lebanon was estimated at 81 per cent<sup>15</sup> in 2010, the GER for Syrian students is as low as 3 per cent for the academic year of 2012-2013. The situation is less critical at the primary level, where the GER is 55 per cent then decreases to 19 per cent for secondary students. Geographically, primary level enrolment rates were similar between Akkar, Tripoli and Bekaa (between 65 and 70 per cent); in the South the rate at the primary level was significantly lower (12 per cent). The South registered the lowest enrolment rates across almost all levels.

**Table 3: Gross enrolment rates of Syrian refugees by educational level and sex (%)**

Education level	Males	Females	Total
Kindergarten (0 to 5 years)	3	3	3
Primary (6 to 10 years)	56	54	55
Intermediate (11 to 15 years)	16	11	13
Secondary (16 to 18 years)	16	24	19

<sup>14</sup> The number of children enrolled in a level, regardless of age, divided by the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the same level.

<sup>15</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012) *Opportunities Lost: The Impact of Grade Repetition and Early School Leaving*, Paris.

Besides low enrolment rates, a high proportion of Syrian students at the primary level are aged above 11 years of age, which reflects a high repetition rate. Low enrolment and high repetition/failure demonstrate, again, the fact that many Syrian students are under significant strain. Table 4 displays the reasons given for non-enrolment.

**Table 4: Reasons for not being enrolled (%)**

Reason	Percentage
Cannot afford school fees	47
No places in schools or no schools nearby	27
Too late for school registration	25
Difficulty following the curriculum and the foreign language	19
Do not want to attend school	12
Consider school not safe or to avoid conflicts	9
Not registered with the UNHCR	8
Child is working	7
Other reasons, including convictions that school is not of value, work is more rewarding, or girls must not attend schools to take care of younger siblings.	5

The main reasons for low enrolment rates appear to be due to the lack of financial resources (47 per cent). Lack of places in schools or nearby schools (27 per cent), late school registration (25 per cent) and language or curriculum obstacles (19 per cent) were the three next most important factors standing in the way of school enrolment of Syrian children. It is worth noting that working was not a significant reason for not being enrolled among females, almost all those who noted work as an obstacle to education were males.

## Box 2: Syrian working children

Child labour in Lebanon has traditionally been concentrated in the informal sector, street trades, and family-based agriculture. While there are no reliable national estimates, recent findings from qualitative research and small-scale quantitative studies suggest that child labour is on the rise. Deteriorating socio-economic conditions and school non-attendance are important antecedent factors. The Government, though, is sensitive to the issue and has reinforced its legislation and policy on child labour. A planned national child labour survey will generate comprehensive and nationally representative data for the first time.

Child labour is further fuelled by the large number of refugee families fleeing the war in Syria. Findings from the current study show that 8 per cent of refugee children in the age group 10 to 14 are working and the majority of them do not attend school. These children are working mostly in agriculture and trade. Moreover, approximately 60 per cent of children of the same age group do not attend school and are thus vulnerable to future labour exploitation. More than half of the children within this age group stated that they are currently looking for work.

The principle reason for parents sending children to work is to provide essential financial support for the household; this was declared by all surveyed Syrian working children. The second reason given for working was the absence of a breadwinner (stated by 15 per cent of the Syrian working children).

Finally, it is worth noting that almost all the Syrian working children were young boys with few cases of girls. Moreover, given the prolonged duration of the crisis and worsening living conditions coupled with the sharp increase in the total number of Syrian refugees fleeing to Lebanon, it is expected that the number of working children will rise.

## EMPLOYMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SYRIAN WORKERS

### LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

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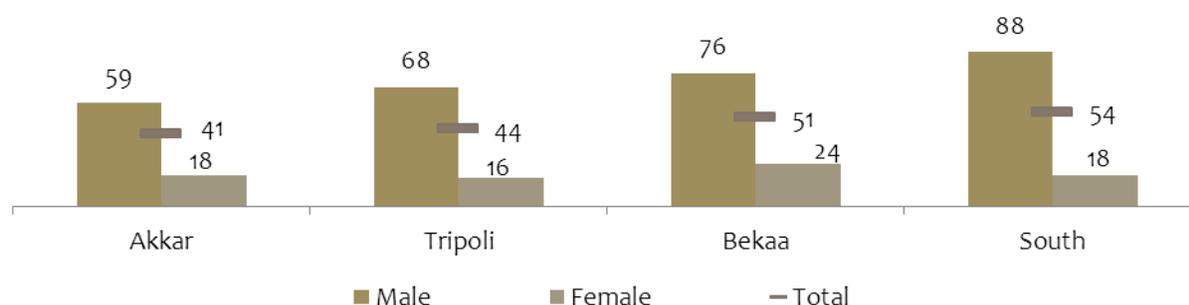
The survey data showed that less than half of the Syrian refugees surveyed are actually active (47 per cent) in Lebanon; with a female participation rate (19 per cent) similar to their Lebanese counterparts. This puts the activity rate among Syrian refugees at a roughly equal stance with both Lebanese and the Palestinian refugees as a result of generally high unemployment.

**Table 5: Economic activity rate for Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees and Lebanese population aged 15 and above (%)**

	Syrian refugees (2013)	Palestinian refugees (2011)	Lebanese (2007)
<b>Males</b>	70	71	67
<b>Females</b>	19	15	21
<b>Total</b>	47	42	43

The economic activity rates among Syrians varied somewhat across location; the highest percentage of economically active refugees was found in South Lebanon (61 per cent) and the lowest in Akkar (50 per cent). As far as age and education are concerned, participation was highest among the age groups 25–34 (57 per cent) and 35–54 (54 per cent). Activity rates appear to be correlated with educational level, and ranged from 41 per cent for the illiterates to 66 per cent for university graduates.

**Figure 5: Economic activity rate for Syrian refugees aged 15 and over, by region and sex (%)**



In terms of working status prior to the Syrian crisis, the study showed that around 70 per cent of the economically active (the employed and the unemployed) Syrian refugees were working in Syria just before the crisis; 20 per cent have also worked in Lebanon at some point. However, around half (52 per cent) of unemployed Syrian refugees had been working in Syria prior to their arrival to Lebanon.

Having been previously employed in Lebanon – before the crisis – increases the chance of finding a job. However, it is important to note that this category forms only 11 per cent of all surveyed refugees above 15 years of age. Therefore, having worked in Lebanon before does give a relative advantage to refugees in terms of finding work; however, the impact of this is not large when looking at the overall absolute number of refugees.

Remarkably, none of the unemployed females surveyed had worked back in Syria nor Lebanon before the crisis. This indicates that, as refugees, Syrian women are forced to enter into the labour market for the first time, presumably creating an additional stress.

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

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The high economic activity rate among the Syrians confirms their need for an income to sustain themselves. As a refugee population – vulnerable, unprotected and poorly educated – they cannot afford to stay unemployed and are likely to take any job available in order to survive.

Similar to patterns among the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, the Syrian refugees are characterised by high male employment and high female unemployment. Unemployment is quite high among the Syrian refugee population, estimated at 30 per cent; a high rate when compared to the latest national figures where unemployment was recorded at 6.4 per cent<sup>16</sup>. Unemployment rates peak at 68 per cent among Syrian women, which reflects the emerging needs for women to seek employment given the absence of male heads in most Syrian households.

Despite their need for work, only six per cent of refugee women above the age of 15 are currently employed in Lebanon. The rate does not vary much across regions, where seven per cent work in Akkar, six per cent in Bekaa and eight per cent in the South, with the lowest recorded in Tripoli (four per cent). The low share of working Syrian women can most likely be attributed to their housework and childcare obligations.

**Table 6: Employment and unemployment rates for Syrian refugees by sex**

	Male	Female	Total
<b>Employment</b>			
Number	368	36	404
Percentage	79%	32%	70%
<b>Unemployment</b>			
Number	96	75	171
Percentage	21%	68%	30%

The unemployed, on the other hand are divided almost equally between males (56 per cent) and females (44 per cent). Bekaa and Akkar host one third of the unemployed each while the South has a very small share. Similar to the employed, half of the unemployed have attained either primary (36 per cent) or intermediate (16 per cent) levels of education with a relatively lower share of unemployed illiterates and those who can read and write. Finally, very few unemployed refugees are above 55 years of age, which shows that after this age, the Syrians do not actively seek employment.

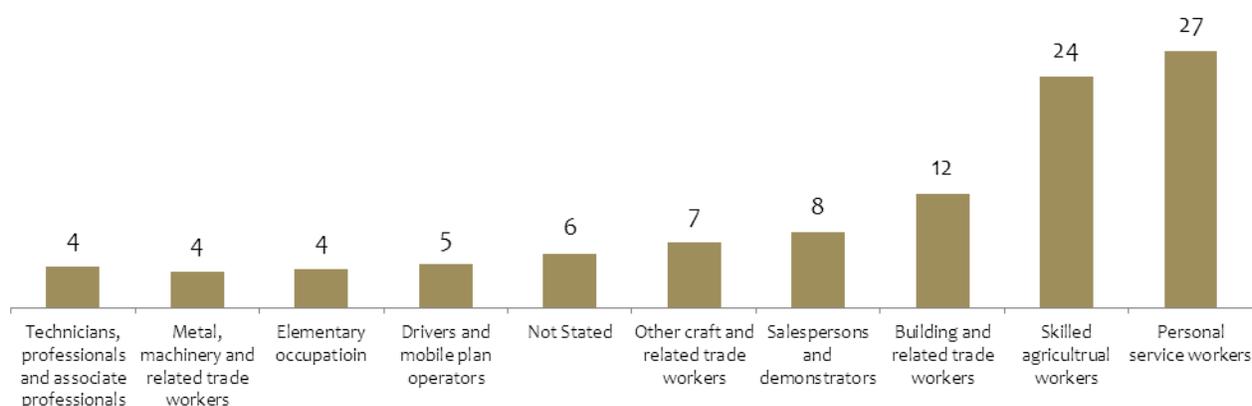
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<sup>16</sup> Central Administration of Statistics (2009), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey - MICS3  
<http://www.cas.gov.lb/index.php/en/key-indicators-en>

## OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF SYRIAN WORKERS

Agricultural activities (24 per cent) and domestic/personal services, such as driving or housekeeping, (27 per cent) provide most of the employment for Syrian refugee workers followed by construction (12 per cent). A small number of Syrian workers (4 per cent) are represented in occupations that require higher skill levels, such as technicians and professionals. Around 70 per cent of females work either in agriculture (crop and animal production) or in domestic help (i.e. as caretakers, housekeepers, etc.). Men work in a more varied range of occupations than women, such as construction and wholesale and retail trade.

**Figure 6: Distribution of Syrian refugees by type of occupation (%)**



The occupational distribution of Syrian workers reflects their low skill capacities and indicates that Syrians are mainly engaged in occupations that provide little income, social protection or job security.

Occupations varied geographically; in the South half were working in personal services while 29 per cent of agriculture workers are active in Akkar. The majority (70 per cent) of those working in agriculture were divided between Akkar (34 per cent) and Beqaa (36 per cent).

Syrian refugees seem to remain in the same sectors or occupations that they mostly occupied before the crisis. For example, 90 per cent of surveyed refugees currently working in agriculture stated that they used to work in agriculture prior to the crisis. In other words, there are a high proportion of people who occupied low to medium skilled jobs before the crisis and continue to work in similar jobs.

### Box 3: Skill level of working Syrian refugees

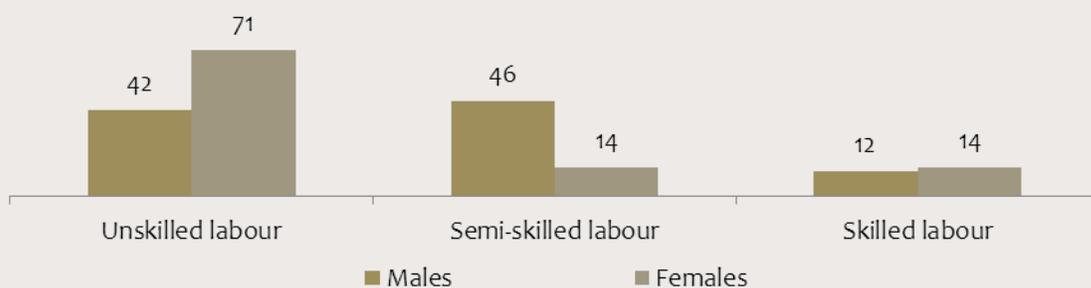
The figure below categorizes working refugees into three types of occupations. Skilled labour includes workers who hold positions that require a higher level of education, such as teachers, doctors and managers. Semi-skilled labour includes workers who work in manual crafts, such as carpentry, car mechanics, etc. Unskilled labourers are those who work in jobs that are mostly manual but which do not require craft skills or high education, and include such jobs in agricultural labour, housekeeping, or taxi driving. Overall, 45 per cent of Syrian refugee workers work in unskilled jobs, including a majority of agricultural workers, as well as building caretakers, drivers, and domestic workers. Around 43 per cent work in semi-skilled jobs, such as carpeting, metal works, and food processing. Skilled workers constitute the smallest share of Syrian refugee labour and occupy professional positions such as teaching, financial management, and trade. Among the regions, Tripoli has the most skilled workers, compared with the Bekaa, which has the highest share of unskilled workers.

Figure 7: Distribution of Syrian refugee workers by skill category in each region (%)



From a gender perspective, working women hold mostly unskilled types of jobs (71 per cent). They are equally distributed between semi-skilled and skilled types of jobs. Men, on the other hand, hold more semi-skilled occupations, and have a slightly lower share of the skilled type jobs.

**Figure 8: Distribution of Syrian refugee workers by skill category and sex (%)**



The type of occupation and level of education are related such that higher educational attainment is associated with more skilful jobs. While more than 70 per cent of unskilled workers are illiterate or have a primary education, most skilled workers are university graduates. Nevertheless, some university graduates have unskilled (2 per cent) or semi-skilled jobs (6 per cent). These cases might be due to the lack of job opportunities and work permits in specific economic activities. In conclusion, secondary, technical or university degrees increase the chances to find more skilful occupations.

**Figure 9: Distribution of Syrian refugee workers by skill category and educational attainment (%)**



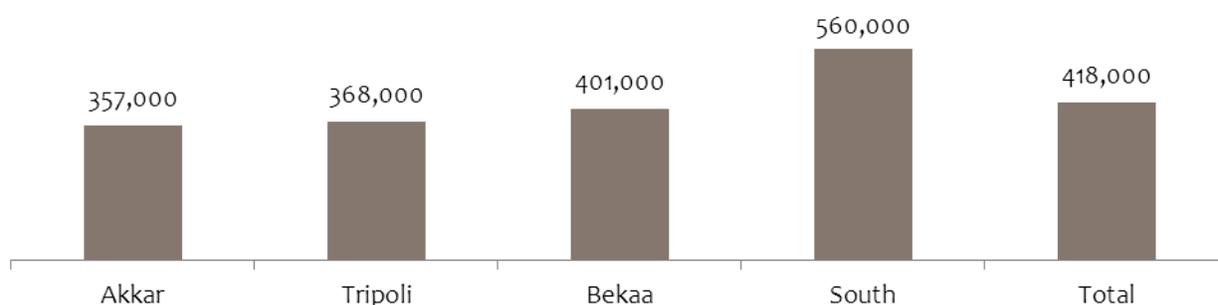
## WORKING CONDITIONS AND BENEFITS

### WAGES AND BENEFITS

Working Syrian refugees have an average monthly income of LBP 418,000 with a significant gender gap; the average income of females (LBP 248,000) is 43 per cent less than males (LBP 432,000). The average income of Syrian refugees is significantly lower than the minimum wage in Lebanon of LBP

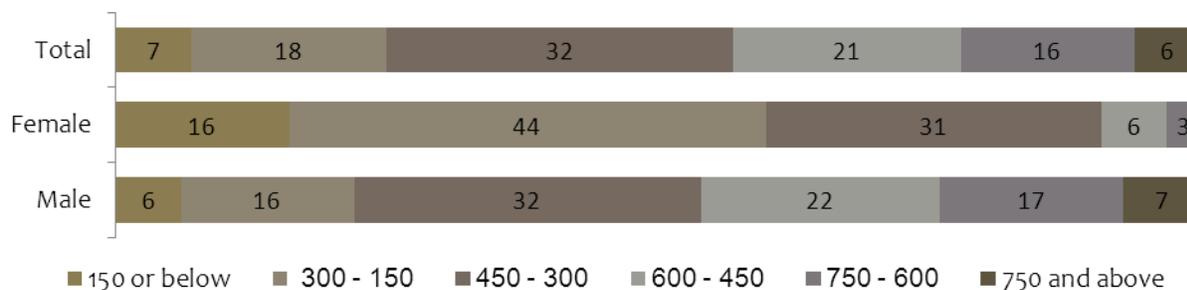
675,000 and less than the 2007 poverty line of USD 4.00 (LBP 6,000) per person per day<sup>17</sup>. Geographically, the lowest average monthly incomes were found in Akkar and Tripoli (respectively LBP 357,000 and LBP 368,000), followed by the Bekaa (LBP 401,000), while the highest monthly income was recorded in the South (LBP 560,000).

**Figure 10: Average monthly income of Syrian refugees by region (LBP)**



Looking at the wages from a different perspective, the study results show that more than half of the surveyed Syrian workers (57 per cent) earn LBP 450,000 or less a month; while 91 per cent of working females earn equivalent or below that amount.

**Figure 11: Distribution of Syrian refugee workers by monthly income brackets and sex (Thousand LBP) (%)**



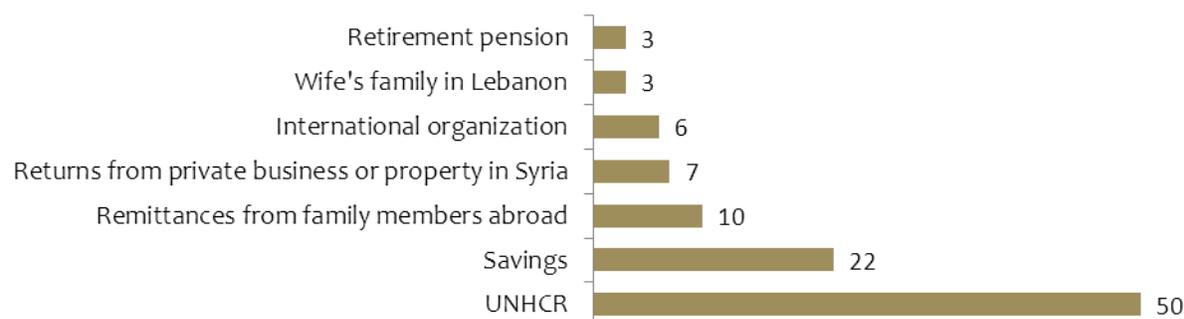
However, it is important to note that many Lebanese residents of the regions of the Bekaa, North Lebanon, and South Lebanon earn almost double that of the Syrian refugees, but still below the Lebanese minimum wage. The average income of residents in North Lebanon, for example, is around

<sup>17</sup> Based on the estimate that the average Syrian household size is five members, an average income of 418,000 LBP per month for one household is equivalent to less than USD 2.00 per day for each individual; an amount barely sufficient to fulfil food needs.

LBP 696,000<sup>18</sup>. Similarly, the average monthly income for Lebanese workers in the Bekaa is around LBP 778,000 and LBP 679,000 in the South.

The low wages of Syrians are often complimented with alternative sources of support. Around 36 per cent of respondents stated that they have sources of income other than the wages of a household member. The figure below shows that the main sources of alternative income are assistance from the UNHCR (50 per cent) and personal savings (22 per cent).

**Figure 12: Percentage of households receiving additional income by source of income**



## EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND BENEFITS

Most Syrian refugees work as informal labourers, whereby 92 per cent of workers do not have a contract. Around 72 per cent are hired on an hourly, daily, weekly or seasonal basis; only 23 per cent are paid a regular monthly salary. The highest share of monthly workers was found in Bekaa and the lowest in Tripoli.

**Table 7: Distribution of Syrian workers by employment status and region (%)**

	Akkar	Tripoli	Bekaa	South	Total
<b>Hourly</b>	6	10	2	-	4
<b>Daily</b>	54	54	52	65	56
<b>Weekly</b>	11	-	-	4	5
<b>Monthly</b>	19	9	33	25	23
<b>Seasonal</b>	5	15	11	-	7
<b>Other (includes no fixed time or not stated)</b>	5	12	2	6	5
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100

<sup>18</sup> Muhanna Actuaries (2011), *White paper on the economic and social implications of the requested minimum wage increase*.

As a consequence, the majority of Syrian refugees are working with negligible working benefits or protection. The results show that benefits are mainly restricted to paid sick leave and weekends (9 per cent). Health insurance is practically non-existent among Syrian workers with only 1 per cent benefitting.

**Table 8: Distribution of workers by work benefits received (%)**

	Percentage
<b>No benefit</b>	86
<b>Health insurance</b>	1
<b>Transportation</b>	2
<b>Accommodation</b>	2
<b>Days off / sick leave</b>	9
<b>Total</b>	100

#### WORKING HOURS

On average, males worked 50 hours per week and females 30 hours per week. The longest working hours per week were found in Tripoli (60 hours per week) followed by the Bekaa (54 hours per week), the South (47 hours per week) and finally Akkar (45 hours per week). Those with intermediate (55 hours per week) or secondary (57 hours per week) education suffer the longest working hours, compared with illiterates (42 hours per week) and university graduates (47 hours per week).

For Lebanese workers, national statistics show that the mean (and the median) is 48 hours per week; 25 per cent work more than 60 hours a week<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, compared to their Lebanese counterparts, Syrians are working slightly longer hours.

#### JOB SEARCH

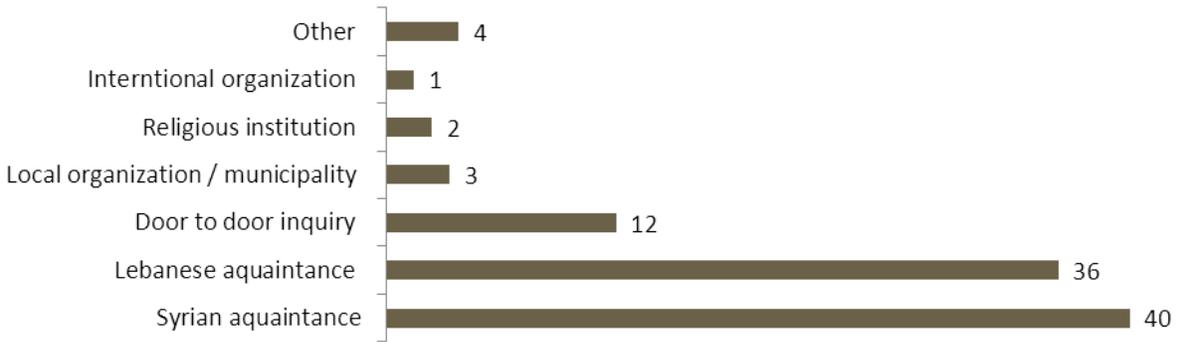
The survey results show that on average, refugees take about 74 days to find work. However, there are large differences between regions. While it would take 118 days for a refugee to find work in Tripoli, it takes around 30 days in the South, 64 in the Bekaa and 97 in Akkar. Although Bekaa and Tripoli have a similar concentration of refugees, it seems easier to find work in the Bekaa because of the high labour demand in the agricultural sector. However, in Tripoli – a city with a large amount of urban poverty – Syrian refugees are competing for jobs in a very small and limited labour market.

Personal networking was noted as the most common means of job-seeking among respondents. Around 40 per cent of working refugees found work through a Syrian acquaintance and 36 per cent

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

through a Lebanese acquaintance. Only 1 per cent found work through international organizations, and 5 per cent through local or religious organizations.

**Figure 13: Distribution of currently working refugees by means of finding work (%)**



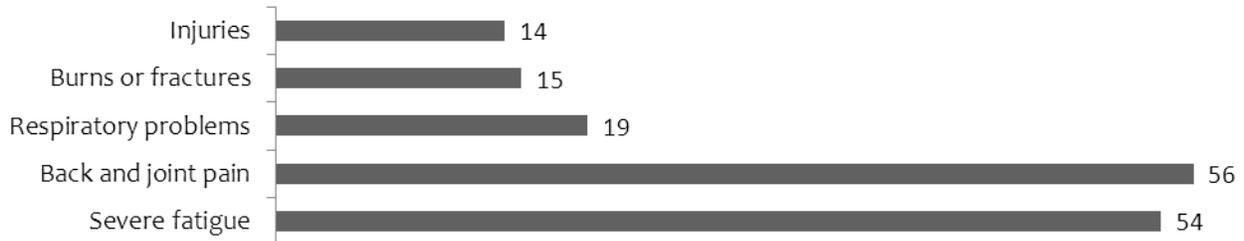
As for respondents who are currently not working, they were asked about their readiness to work. The response rate was low as 60 per cent did not provide an answer. Out of the 40 per cent who responded, 64 per cent stated that they are not in fact ready to work, and around 80 per cent of those not ready to work were women. The main reasons given were: occupied with housework (51 per cent); one of the family members disapproves (15 per cent); and health related reasons (11 per cent).

#### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, SAFETY AND CHALLENGES

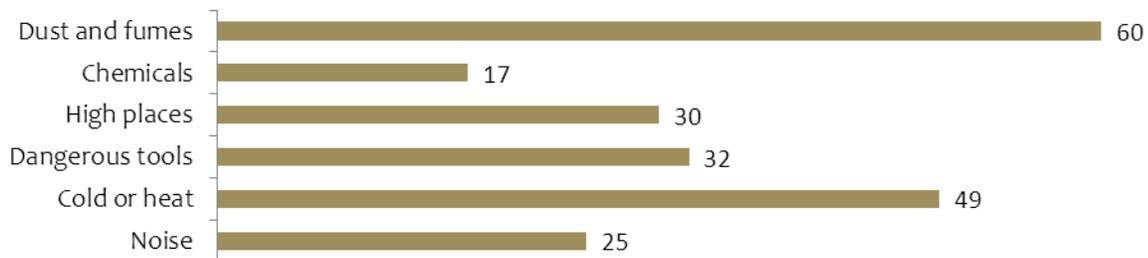
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Syrians often work in unsafe or unhealthy conditions and the majority suffers from one or more work-related health conditions or has been exposed to hazards at the work place. More than half of the Syrian workers reported back or joint pain (56 per cent) and severe fatigue (54 per cent); 60 per cent stated that they are exposed to dust and fumes; and 49 per cent are exposed to extreme heat or cold. Health-related problems and exposure to hazards varied between males and females due to the occupational differences between men and women. For example, 75 per cent of working women suffered from back or joint pain versus 55 per cent of men, while no women had to endure burns or fractures.

**Figure 14: Percentage of Syrian workers who suffer from one or more work-related health problems**

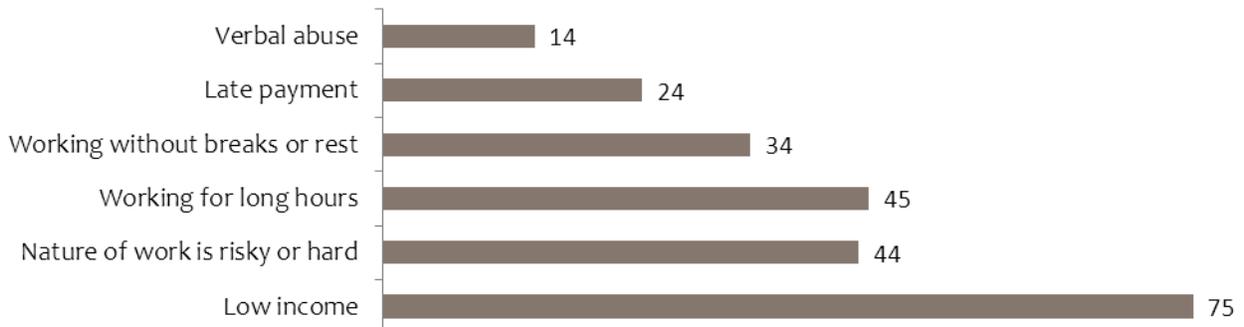


**Figure 15: Percentage of Syrian workers who are exposed (either always or sometimes) to work-related hazards**



In addition to health problems and exposure to risk at work, those surveyed reported a number of unfair job circumstances that they were forced to tolerate, including pressure to accept low income, long working hours, working without breaks, and late payment of wages. It should be noted that a very small number of cases have reported physical abuse at work.

**Figure 16: Percentage of Syrian workers who suffer from work-related issues**



According to the survey results, 12 per cent of workers have faced some sort of conflict at the work place, most of which (48 per cent) were the result of personal clashes and 34 per cent were wage-related. This relatively low incidence of conflict can be explained by the fact that Syrian workers have been present in Lebanon for several decades. On the means of support in case of conflict, more than half of the respondents (59 per cent) stated that they would not take any action, nine per cent would refer to a colleague, 17 per cent would refer to a friend, and 25 per cent to their work superior. Only three per cent of respondents would go to the police, and four per cent to NGOs. This shows that either conflict was not serious enough to require police intervention, or there is limited trust in the capacity of the police to take action, or perhaps fear from seeking police help so as not to face further problems. Overall, nevertheless it shows that Syrians are vulnerable at the work place and need to avoid conflict.

#### TRAINING AND PROVISION OF TOOLS

Of currently working refugees, very few (16 per cent) expressed a need for training; 22 per cent of whom required training on new agricultural methods, nine per cent on carpentry, and eight per cent on sewing. The need for training was basically in order to improve their job performance. The share of working women in need of training was higher (42 per cent), revealing a desire among the Syrian women to improve their working conditions and gain access better employment opportunities. Geographically, Bekaa had the highest share of workers who have stated a need for training and Tripoli the lowest.

As far as needs for tools and equipment was concerned, around half of the workers required tools and equipment. Out of these, 19 per cent required construction tools and seven per cent agricultural tools and equipment. Working women expressed a demand for sewing, hairdressing and agriculture-related tools. Working refugees in Akkar had the highest percentage of demand for tools (46 per cent) versus only 11 and 12 per cent in Bekaa and Tripoli, respectively.

Finally, it is worth noting that, generally, younger workers (below the age of 30) expressed a higher demand for both training and equipment compared with the very few older workers. With respect to educational attainment, the need for training decreased with higher education. Ironically, however, few illiterate workers expressed a need for training or for tools. Slightly less than half of the workers with primary education required training (47 per cent) or equipment (37 per cent).

### III. OVERALL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE SYRIAN CRISIS

The conflict in Syria – combined with internal political instability – has had negative repercussions on the economy and the labour market at different levels. All in all, economic growth has declined from around 8 per cent per annum over the period 2007-2010<sup>20</sup> to three per cent in 2011 to two per cent in 2012. An even lower rate is estimated for 2013. Given the fragility of the security situation, and the closure of Syrian borders – the only route exit trade for Lebanon, private investments have stalled and the trade deficit has largely expanded. The two most important sectors – tourism and real estate – have been especially affected. The already large fiscal deficit has widened even more due to lower revenues combined with rising government expenditures. Government expenditures have been rising in order to meet the increasing demand for public services, including education, health, electricity, water supply, solid waste management and transportation; revenues have decreased due to disturbed trade activity, lower economic activity and a loss in consumer confidence.

The tourism and hospitality industry is highly susceptible to crisis events as this industry is sensitive to visitors' perceptions and the impact of a decreased willingness to spend by both corporate and individual consumers. With the deteriorating situation in Syria, the normally large numbers of Arab travellers that pass through Syria to reach Lebanon have avoided travel, which has become extremely difficult if not impossible. Moreover, a number of Arab nations including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar have issued travel restrictions on their nationals wishing to travel to Lebanon, resulting in a decrease in the number of Arab tourists from 581,597 in 2011 to 458,069 in 2012 and 131,894 in the first four months of the year 2013. Visitors from other parts of the world (excluding Syria) were also hesitant to travel to Lebanon (and more generally the Middle East, which is perceived as an unsafe region), resulting in a total tourism decrease of 17 per cent over the period 2011-2012<sup>21</sup>. This impact is felt by the hotel industry – a central source of employment – with an intense negative impact on occupancy rates and revenues.

More broadly, the trade sector has been one of the key industries affected by the Syrian conflict. In fact, in addition to tourism, trade in goods and services has been severely impacted by the prevailing unrest and the closure of transit routes. Syria has always been the main channel for the movement of exports and imports<sup>22</sup>. This, in turn, has affected domestic prices of goods as a result of the alteration of the means of supply and demand in the market. The increase in prices has had the greatest impact on the poor, who are vulnerable to price shocks and distortions. More particularly, the reduced number of cheap imports coming from and through Syria has increased the cost of either domestic production or importing them from more expensive sources.

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<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Finance, *Lebanon Country Profile*, April 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Tourism.

<sup>22</sup> World Bank (2013) *Growing Tensions in a Resilient Economy*.

Real estate is another sector negatively affected by the Syrian crisis. The lack of stability has pushed residents and investors to adopt a wait-and-see attitude and reconsider their investment needs. As a result, the property market activity decelerated markedly, with the total number of sales transactions decreasing by seven per cent in the first half of 2013, and the demand for residential lodgings being concentrated in smaller, more affordable apartments, usually in the form of rent. This has put upward pressure on rents and has increased prices enormously given the lack of housing supply. It is also worth noting the reduced number of construction permits issued, which again reflects the uncertainty of the situation and weakening investment activity in the country<sup>23</sup>.

#### IV. IMPACT OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEES ON HOST COMMUNITIES

As noted earlier, the crisis has resulted in a huge influx of Syrian refugees to the country, classifying Lebanon as the biggest host country for Syrian refugees in the region. The number of refugees is projected to increase further, placing enormous strain on Lebanon in general and on the already poor hosting communities in particular.

#### INCREASED POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY

Syrian refugees are highly concentrated in peripheral regions and some of the poorest areas of the country, mainly the North, the South and Beqaa. A snapshot of the living conditions and developmental status of those three regions that host a fair number of Syrian refugees reveals elevated poverty rates, high levels of illiteracy, low educational attainment, low incomes, seasonality of jobs, and inexistent social protection mechanisms.

Poverty incidence has risen to 53 per cent in the North, 42 per cent in the South and 30 per cent in Beqaa, compared with the national poverty rate of 28 per cent<sup>24</sup>. The North embraces around one fifth of the total population, but 46 per cent of the extremely poor and 38 per cent of the entire poor population. Poverty is accentuated even more in the rural regions of the North, namely Akkar and Minnieh-Dinnieh, hitting more than 60 per cent of the population of those two regions<sup>25</sup>. Per capita consumption in the peripheral regions (North, South and Beqaa) is the lowest (three quarters of the national average) and inequality is the greatest compared with other Governorates. The expenditure level of poor households is far below the poverty line and their per capita poverty deficit is 2.4 times that of the overall one.

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<sup>23</sup> Audi Bank, *Lebanon Economic Report*. Quarter 4, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> According to the most recent studies on poverty, the poverty incidence is 28.5 per cent living below the upper poverty line equivalent to USD 4 per day for each individual out of which 8 per cent live under the lower or food poverty line calculated at USD 2 per day for each individual.

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and United Nations Development Programme (2008) *Poverty, Growth and Income Distribution in Lebanon*.

Indeed, the hosting of Syrian refugees exacerbates the already difficult living conditions of these communities and therefore generates increased tensions<sup>26</sup>. As local capacities come under severe pressure, the physical environment and basic services – education, healthcare, and solid waste management – are strained by the increased demand, and the perception that Syrians receive more support than poor Lebanese communities is aggravating tensions between Syrians and their host communities, which find themselves facing losses of uncertain magnitude and duration.

Hardships experienced by both refugees and the host population include cost of living increases coupled with competition for the limited jobs available. As a result, an increase in poverty with broader levels of deprivation is foreseeable in those regions. Lebanese children are also thought to be at risk of being involved in child labour due to the deteriorating economic situation. Although there are no concrete statistics to prove this trend, the Ministry of Labour has increased its 2006 estimate of 100,000 child workers in the country to 180,000<sup>27</sup>.

#### COMPETITION ON JOBS AND BUSINESSES

Prior to the Syrian crisis, the labour market in Lebanon was characterised by low activity rates, especially among women, relatively high unemployment rates (eight per cent in 2004)<sup>28</sup>, as well as a growing informal sector. The employment situation has, unsurprisingly, worsened with the huge increase in labour supply and the large number of Syrian entrants along with the pre-existing great number of Lebanese jobseekers looking for employment, leading to an increase in the unemployment rate (especially cyclical unemployment) and making access to jobs even harder.

#### COMPETITION FOR JOBS AND DECREASED INCOME

Syrian workers are mostly unskilled workers with low educational attainment and high willingness to work under difficult working conditions. This threatens the Lebanese workers, mainly in the construction, agriculture and, to a lesser extent, the services sector. Competition between Lebanese and Syrian workers fleeing to the country is quite high, given that Syrian workers work for lower salaries, longer hours and without social security benefits. The sudden increase in the labour supply and the availability of cheap Syrian labour explains the decline in wages and the strain on jobs, which is translated into more limited job opportunities for Lebanese nationals. According to FAO, the increase in the number of Syrian workers caused a reduction of 60 per cent in daily wages<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> UNHCR (2013) *Syria Regional Response Plan*.

<sup>27</sup> More Kids Pushed Into Labour in Lebanon. Inter press Service (2013/08/07).

<sup>28</sup> Central Administration of Statistics (2006) *The National Survey of Household Living Conditions 2004*.

<sup>29</sup> FAO (2013) *Agricultural Livelihoods and Food Security Impact Assessment and Response Plan for the Syria Crisis in the Neighboring Countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey*.

The competition between Lebanese and Syrian labour is indeed leading to increased hostility between the two communities. Some municipalities have even forbidden Syrians from working. However, for Syrian refugees, not working is not an option as the majority of them have arrived to the country with very little or no savings, and have no alternative means for providing for their families; therefore, their only chance for finding employment is through competing on wages with Lebanese workers.

Syrians are often unable to fully access support from international relief organizations for between one and three months, due to delays in the refugee registration process<sup>30</sup>. This is particularly the case in poor areas such as North Lebanon and Bekaa other studies and research indicated that around 90 per cent of Lebanese workers in Bekaa reported a decline in income, mainly due to competition from Syrian workers, deteriorating security conditions, and decreasing smuggling activities as a substantive source of income for communities close to Syria<sup>31</sup>. The Syrian crisis and the influx of refugees in these regions are perceived to have caused a real and significant decrease in income as a result of the excess supply of labour provided by Syrian refugees and the reduction in trade activities along the Syrian-Lebanese borders. In Baalbek, the daily wage for unskilled labour dropped by 30 per cent and by 50 per cent in Wadi Khaled, a town that depends heavily on trade (and smuggling) with Syria. However, this is not only due to the high influx of Syrian refugees. The Bekaa for instance, was initially characterised by high unemployment rates and scarce job opportunities prior to the Syrian refugees' influx. Nevertheless, there is an overall perception in host communities that the influx of low-wage Syrian labour will significantly increase unemployment among Lebanese<sup>32</sup>.

Alternatively, however, some members of host communities are actually benefitting from the influx of refugees. Lebanese employers are hiring low-wage Syrian labour even though it is causing distress among Lebanese workers as they are being replaced by Syrians. Focus group discussions revealed a readiness on the part of Lebanese workers to discuss lowering their wages and changing their work conditions before being laid off and substituted by Syrian workers. Therefore, landowners, owners of enterprises, and other members of the Lebanese middle to upper class are benefitting from the refugee crisis, while the poorest and most vulnerable households and their children are the ones who are most threatened by it. Many of the workers in the focus groups viewed competition for jobs between Lebanese and Syrians as a matter related, as they put it, to the “ethics” and “greediness” of the Lebanese employers. According to the workers, the employers and the government bear the responsibility for their decrease in income and threat to their livelihoods, as has been noted by one of the interviewed workers:

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<sup>30</sup> World Vision (2013) *The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon-July 2013*.

<sup>31</sup> Development Management International (2012) *Rapid Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Crisis on Socio-economic Situation in North and Beqaa*.

<sup>32</sup> World Vision (2013) *The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon-July 2013*.

“... we are being discriminated against and exploited ... this is the fault of the employers who are undermining our dignity. We were satisfied by the little income we were getting, but this did not satisfy the employers. They think about their profit only. It is the fault of the state which has driven us to this degrading level.”

#### COMPETITION IN BUSINESSES

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The focus group discussions indicated that a number of businesses have been priced out of the market by Syrian-owned businesses that sell goods, mostly smuggled from the borders, at lower prices. Such cheap Syrian micro and small enterprises are further straining the Lebanese local economy, as they are renting very small areas and selling goods and services at much lower prices, leaving other shops and stores in debt and imposing serious threats to the small Lebanese businesses. According to workers and employers in the focus groups, it is estimated that hundreds of small businesses, including restaurants, retail shops, bakeries, mechanical repairs and others, have been established in the Bekaa and the North by Syrians since the beginning of the crisis. This has raised the concerns of a number of Lebanese employers who have complained that shops and small business established by Lebanese are closing down due to the emerging competition of the Syrian enterprises.

Most Syrian businesses open illegally without licensing and often at the same place of their residence, without paying for electricity, water or taxes. These businesses almost exclusively employ Syrians, including chefs, waiters, managers, and cleaners. Many participants stated that companies in Syria are selling their stocks (mainly furniture, clothes, and food) at very low prices for fear it will be destroyed or looted; Syrian refugees are bringing those products from Syria and selling them in Lebanon at prices below the market.

During focus group discussions many Lebanese expressed additional concerns regarding competition at the self-employment level, especially in handicraft and semi-skilled jobs such as carpentry, welding, mechanics and repairmen, among whom Syrians normally have better skills and provide cheaper services than the Lebanese. Some craftsmen stated that they had not worked in over a year, and a small number of them indicated they have been obliged to take their children out of private schooling. A number of Lebanese taxi drivers have also expressed their dissatisfaction with competition from Syrian drivers in an already highly saturated sector.

#### INCREASED INFLATION AND PRICES

The increase in prices of basic commodities and services has been a challenging issue for hosting communities and Syrians alike. The increasing demand for rented accommodation has exerted an upward pressure on rental prices, estimated to have risen sometimes by more than 200 per cent in a period of six months. The situation seems to be even more severe in Beirut where, in some districts,

rents are said to have increased by 400 per cent, because of the increased demand for apartments. Refugees are often able to afford higher rents by squeezing several families into a single apartment, hence reducing the ability of the Lebanese to rent or buy in the local real estate market. It has also been frequently reported that people are sometimes forced to leave their homes in order to make flats available for refugees able to pay higher rents<sup>33</sup>.

Besides rent, the prices of basic commodities including food, transportation and water has also risen according to the focus group meeting. An analysis completed by Development Management International in 2012 on the change of prices of basic commodities including food, medicines, rent, utility bills, drinking water, washing water and transportation has showed a 15 per cent inflation rate in the region of Bekaa and six per cent in the North. The price increases were attributed to a number of factors, including an increase in demand due to the influx of thousands of refugees, the injection of cash and food/cash vouchers by donors to the Syrian refugees – mainly food and rent – and the increase in fuel prices, which amplified the transportation costs of goods. On the other hand, the reduced access to cheaper goods is draining the household income of both Syrians and host communities. Before the crisis, many products and goods used to be provided from Syria at a much lower cost, but due to the security conditions they are being purchased locally, but more expensively<sup>34</sup>.

Unsurprisingly, inflationary trends vary greatly from one area to another and have had the most severe impact on the poorest communities that already suffer from weak purchasing power and a considerable level of deprivation and lack of resources<sup>35</sup>.

## STRAIN ON SERVICES

The overcrowding caused by the high influx of refugees is placing additional pressure on already deficient healthcare and education services in terms of access and quality, especially in the poor communities. The Lebanese government is barely able to keep up with its own modest population increase and is struggling to provide its own citizens with basic services. With the high influx of Syrians, the strain on services has become even more challenging and, as a result, the initial welcoming attitude of the hosting communities is turning in many areas (especially the poorest) into anger and dissatisfaction.

## HEALTHCARE SERVICES

An increased demand for healthcare services has been recorded. In some areas, healthcare centres have doubled the number of beneficiaries compared to the pre-crisis periods. Primary healthcare

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Development Management International (2012) *Rapid Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Crisis on Socio-economic Situation in North and Bekaa*.

<sup>35</sup> BRIC (2013) *Survey on the livelihoods of Syrian refugees in Lebanon*.

services are made available for free for Syrian refugees at the social development centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the primary health care centres of the Ministry of Public Health, in addition to some dispensaries run by specific international organizations and local NGOs.

Members of the host communities find it increasingly difficult to access primary healthcare centres due to overcrowding and tend to resort to private clinics instead. At the same time, many unregistered refugees have limited access to healthcare services as they are not eligible. Nevertheless, there is also an omnipresent perception that Syrian refugees enjoy privileged access to Lebanese healthcare services and hospitals; this might be due to the humanitarian support directly targeting refugees, which appears to fuel tensions between the two communities<sup>36</sup>. It is worth noting that the medical and financial assistance is often recorded as insufficient and does not meet the increasing demands.

#### EDUCATION SERVICES

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Education is another service heavily strained by the increased number of refugees. Public schools in Lebanon, the main destination of Syrian students, are not usually overcrowded. However, the increasing number of Syrian refugees has increased student numbers and the ratio of students to teachers is expected to rise in host communities, but especially in the North and Bekaa. These additional students add pressure to an already frail public school system in need of safer buildings, healthier sanitary conditions, sufficient material and equipment, and qualified personnel. The pressure on schools that are not prepared to deal with a high influx of students is turning into a key challenge for communities<sup>37</sup>.

In addition, Syrian students face several learning obstacles. In fact, they have to cope with the differences between the Lebanese and Syrian curricula as well as a significant language barrier whereby the majority of Syrian students do not speak English or French, the two teaching languages of core materials. These challenges require additional support from teachers, principals and parents. Teachers, parents, and other students are providing educational support to Syrian students in order to ease their integration into school. However, the difficulties of Syrian children, as well as the support provided, imply a significant impact on the quality of education for all children as time and effort is diverted from regular school tasks and towards integration<sup>38</sup>.

However, It should be noted that, so far, approximately one third of Syrian refugee children are actually enrolled in schools in Lebanon. Had most students been enrolled, the effect would have been most severe on the educational system and services, as well as the children themselves.

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> UNICEF and Save the Children (2012) *Education Rapid Needs Assessment for Displaced Syrian Children in Schools, Community and Safe Spaces*, Beirut.

<sup>38</sup> World Vision (2013) *The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon-July 2013*.

## SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

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The increase in population in many of the host communities has imposed an additional burden of solid waste build-up. According to research, municipalities are facing an increase of 30 to 40 per cent of solid waste. This increase of solid waste strains the budget of many municipalities and consumes the few resources available. In addition, many municipalities lack adequate staffing and equipment to collect or transport garbage. As a result, households are often doing the garbage collection<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> CARE International (2013) *Integrated Rapid Assessment Report, Chouf District*.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the main outcomes of this report is that Syrian refugees' conditions are dire in terms of their poor livelihoods and incomes. The Syrian refugees are, nevertheless, living side-by-side Lebanese communities who were already suffering from social exclusion. The two populations are concentrated in the most impoverished regions, and compete for poorly paid and scarce job opportunities. They earn very low incomes, have access to low quality overstressed public services, and have to cope with increasing prices. During the initial months of the Syrian refugee influx, Lebanese host communities were more hospitable and generous in their reception of the refugees. However, as the crisis protracted, the economy of Lebanon deteriorated and the influx of Syrian refugees kept growing, threatening social stability within host communities.

Indeed, the Syrian crisis and refugee influx has had many destabilizing consequences for Lebanon as a whole. A recent World Bank assessment points to a reduction in GDP growth by 2.85 per cent each year since the crisis began and estimates that the total cost of the crisis to Lebanon will reach 7.5 USD billion by end 2014. This includes, as noted earlier, impact on major economic sectors such as services, trade and tourism. Moreover, public spending on education and health has increased significantly; the quality of public services has reportedly deteriorated while prices for basic necessities, such as fuel or rental accommodation, have increased.<sup>40</sup>

Over and above, prior to the Syrian crisis, Lebanon had been facing high unemployment rates that coincided with a prevalence of low quality and low productivity jobs in an unregulated and poorly governed labour market. This related mainly to a lack of compliance with labour laws in terms of deteriorating working conditions and a large informal economy that included child labour and limited application of the minimum wage laws.

The current study helped to shed light on the profile of Syrian refugees. They are mostly young, poorly educated and have minimal savings or incomes. The economically active among them are either unemployed or working in low skilled low paid jobs, mostly on daily wages and without any form of protection. In many cases, women have become the household's main breadwinners, yet they face major obstacles in accessing work, including limited opportunities, the burden of family and childcare, and poor skills – all of which curtail their productive capacity. One significant outcome is the number of youth who are neither in education nor employed.

Based on the focus group discussions, host communities believe that their employment situation has worsened with increased competition and that their wages have been pushed down due to the cheaper supply of Syrian workers. There were also particular concerns that Syrian refugees are

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<sup>40</sup> World Bank (2013) Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict. Washington D.C.

opening small enterprises in some areas, blocking opportunities for the Lebanese, in addition to placing pressure on public services and contributing to price inflation.

In terms of moving forward on recommendations, while addressing the Government's priorities, it is important to highlight the ILO's perspective that focuses on employment, livelihoods and decent working conditions. According to the ILO, "employment is core at all stages of disaster management and response; it is an immediate as well as a development need, thus requiring that job creation be an integral part of both humanitarian and reconstruction response...". For the ILO, "decent work matters in crisis. It is a powerful, tested rope that pulls people and societies out of crises and sets them on a sustainable development path. Decent and stable jobs offer crisis-affected people not only income, but also freedom, security, dignity, self-esteem, hope, and a stake in the reconciliation and reconstruction of their communities"<sup>41</sup>.

In line with those principles and based on the findings of the study, the following guiding recommendations are proposed to address the employment challenges and priorities that Syrian refugees and host communities are facing:

- 1. SUPPORT IMMEDIATE JOB CREATION PROGRAMMES AND ENHANCE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR BOTH SYRIAN REFUGEES AND HOSTING COMMUNITIEIS:** Immediate job creation programmes are for the short term and as a means to absorb a maximum number of job seekers and contribute to social stabilization. It should provide a range of income-earning opportunities from temporary public works to self-employment. The targets will be low-skilled low-educated young male and female Lebanese and Syrian job seekers in the most affected areas. Specific programmes could include the following:
  - **CASH FOR WORK PROGRAMMES:** Implement and fund major employment intensive infrastructure/reconstruction projects and public works in rural or deprived areas and regions with a high presence of Syrian refugees and in sectors highly affected by either the crisis or the overcrowding, such as solid waste management. Such programmes contribute to: a) generating jobs and income that mutually benefits both refugee and host communities; b) utilizing the pool of the unemployed, both residents and refugees, to build infrastructure that is economically productive and currently needed; c) developing skills and building capacities of both communities; and d) promoting social cohesion between the two communities.
  - **SMALL LOANS OR GRANTS:** Promote micro-enterprises and productive self-employment by enhancing access to micro-finance for Lebanese and for refugees in non-competing sectors. Lacking access to financial facilities is one of the reasons that limit the refugees and locals' ability to find and/or create jobs. An amount of less than 1000 USD can prove to be

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<sup>41</sup> ILO (2005) *ILO Tsunami Response*.

very useful in that regard. A small loan or aid that allows men and women to purchase construction tools, hairdressing tools, sewing machines, kitchen or bakery equipment can secure employment for many people who have the skills, but lack the financial capacity.

- **LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMS AND INCOME-GENERATING INTERVENTIONS:** Provide technical support for the design of local economic development initiatives to increase employment opportunities, especially in those areas where the refugees are concentrated and the residents are more vulnerable to the spill over effects of the Syrian crisis.
- **EMERGENCY EMPLOYMENT CENTRES:** Set up emergency employment centres targeting both Syrian refugees and their host communities. The centres would facilitate entrance to the labour market through job referrals and links with the employers. It could also offer simple and quick capacity-building services such as mentoring, life skills, and training.

2. **ENHANCE LABOUR GOVERNANCE FOR AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO THE EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES EXACERBATED BY THE INFLUX OF SYRAIN REFUGEES.** Pre-existing challenges to working conditions in Lebanon are significant and they have been exacerbated by an increasing supply of Syrian workers. Most of these challenges relate to the lack of compliance with the labour law and international labour standards. The end result is a large informal economy, absence of work safety, inadequate application of the minimum wage, significant child labour, and so on. These issues may be addressed through the following:

- **FORMALIZE THE INFORMAL ECONOMY:** The Syrian refugee influx has brought attention to the high degree of informality in the Lebanese economy. In the medium term, policies are needed that encourage the formalization of the economy, including policies that foster the growth of existing establishments through entrepreneurship development, training and credit facilities, market-relevant skills development (including vocational education and social protection for workers. In addition, it is necessary to create the proper regulatory framework that is both conducive to the formalization of enterprises and, at the same time, able to expand market access for goods and services produced by such enterprises.
- **DEVELOP A WAGE POLICY:** One of the main detectable negative effects of Syrian refugees working in Lebanon is the downward pressure on wages. Wage policy-setting mechanisms remain weak, resulting in a) the failure of productivity increases to translate into higher wages; b) asymmetric bargaining power between employers and workers; and c) a potential for social and political unrest. While wage determination should, in principle, be linked to labour productivity and general economic conditions, wages are also mediated by a set of institutions and policies used by governments to correct market failures and produce efficient and socially desirable outcomes. Failure of productivity

growth to translate into higher wages at the lower end of the wage distribution has contributed to higher numbers of working poor and to increasing inequality. Wage policies should address these issues but they need to be a) designed in a way that balances the interests of workers, employers and the country as a whole; b) continuously monitored; and c) evaluated based on evidence and adjusted as needed.

3. **BUILD A LABOUR MARKET STATISTICAL INFORMATION BASE AND EXPLORE POTENTIAL MARKETS:** Conduct market analysis of critical labour market systems to identify whether and how the market system can be strengthened to employ a greater number of workers. Assist in opening new markets for products made by Syrian refugees and hosting communities.
4. **ENHANCE SKILLS AND STRENGTHEN AVAILABLE CAPACITIES:** Provide basic and targeted vocational and technical capacity-building support for Syrians and Lebanese. This could also include business management training and basic financial literacy for those starting their own businesses, in addition to special training programmes for women based on a needs assessment and market requirements. Provision of tools and simple equipment for Syrian refugees who have specific skills that are in demand, without disturbing the ecology of the labour market, would also be beneficial.
5. **TARGET WOMEN AND YOUTH:** Develop innovative approaches to create employment opportunities for women and youth. Unemployment is very high among Syrian women, the majority of whom are first-time job seekers. There is a need for home-based employment coupled with capacity building and training activities (potential sectors include composting, solar panel manufacturing, etc.). Social entrepreneurship could be a means for reducing youth unemployment and providing assistance and care for other vulnerable groups like children. Engaging youth to handle recreational activities for young children, provide school support/private tutoring and elderly care could be a viable option.
6. **SUPPORT PROGRAMMES FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR AND ENSURE THEIR EDUCATION:** The displacement circumstances have forced many families to send their children to work as an essential (often the only) means to generate household income. Supporting welfare and aid programmes that satisfy the basic needs of food, shelter, health and schooling, and compensate for the added value of the child's income can play an immediate role in fighting child labour. Child-headed and female-headed households should receive direct assistance to strengthen their livelihood and economic status. Some other programmes could also contribute to reducing child labour including awareness-raising campaigns on the worst forms of child labour, its causes and consequences, with special advocacy campaigns that target employers. Facilitating access to education is another intervention that will not only lead to reduced child labour, but will also improve the chances of escaping the poverty and vulnerability trap in the future. The study found that around one third

of the Syrian children are enrolled in school; lack of financial resources and the lack of locally available schools were the main reasons for not sending children to school. Providing support to cover school-related expenses, including books, stationery and transportation services, will increase school enrolment.

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