



THINGS FALL APART

political, economic and
social instability in Lebanon

JUNE 2013



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lebanon is facing a potential nightmare: a perfect storm of economic, political and social instability. The Syrian crisis has infused life into old tensions and given birth to a range of newer crises. At the heart of the problem is the inability of Lebanese society to cope with the spill-over effects of the Syrian struggle. More than half a million refugees have streamed across the border seeking security, food, housing, jobs, schools and medical services. The Lebanese government and people have been unable to respond to such overwhelming demand.¹ Communities who once welcomed Syrian families in need have hardened against them as prolonged hardship has spread to their own homes. The situation is compounded by the sectarian character of the Syrian discord which mirrors identity lines inside Lebanon. As atrocities by each side pile up, differences have turned into divides, and populations inside Lebanon are, with increasing fervour, aligning themselves with either the pro- or anti-regime forces. The recent decision by different Lebanese factions to openly engage inside Syria has elevated the regional component of the Syrian crisis to a new level. Lebanon is no longer a neutral bystander but an active participant in the fighting.

In April 2013, Mercy Corps undertook a country-wide assessment to examine the interplay between economic fragility and societal stability in Lebanon. The purpose was to identify the pathways through which increased economic strain could lead to greater instability and violence. The guiding hypothesis was that, for the majority of the population, increased economic security would diffuse or at least neutralize social tensions enflamed by the Syrian situation. A particular interest of the study was to look at growing tension between the Lebanese and the Syrian refugees. The assessment considered these two populations in equal measure. It focused on the specific themes of: economic difficulties and opportunities; inter-group perceptions, relations, and sources of tension; community cohesion; and physical security.

The nationwide assessment consisted of 1200 household surveys and 33 focus group discussions with the Lebanese and Syrian populations. Four geographical areas were targeted: North, Bekaa, Nabatiyeh, and South. The assessment focused largely on areas where there is a sizable Syrian population. Results reflect this bias and do not represent the attitudes or experiences of Lebanese who have had little contact with the refugees. The assessment also prioritised the experience of the youth population, as their experience with disrupted education, unemployment, and enhanced exposure to or involvement in the violence renders them a vulnerable population of concern. Results also reflect this bias.

Findings of the assessment confirm much of what conventional wisdom would suggest. As in most refugee situations, **economic pressure** is a significant driver of negative attitudes of host communities toward the visiting population. Already weak to begin with, Lebanon's economy was ill-prepared to absorb the large numbers of refugees who sought safety within the country's borders. Competition for jobs has become a source of significant tension between the communities, with Lebanese workers feeling priced out of the job market by Syrians willing to work for radically reduced wages. Syrians, in turn, see their situation as a classic case of exploitation by employers who profit from their desperate circumstances.

Inter-group resentment was also fairly predictable and consistent across groups and space. The Lebanese population has shown declining sympathy for Syrians over time. Additionally, the more economically insecure Lebanese households felt, the more they resented the presence of the refugees. Unsurprisingly, this resentment translated to scapegoating of Syrians in general. Where there is a high level of resentment, Lebanese are apt to also blame the Syrians for a number of other grievances, including crime, vandalism,

¹ Demand for electricity in Lebanon, which already suffers daily power cuts, has jumped 27% in the past 18 months straining government reserves as reported by the Lebanese Energy Ministry Gebran Bassil. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/17/us-crisis-lebanon-refugees-idUSBRE93GOMW20130417>



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harassment of Lebanese women, etc. In contrast to Lebanese antagonism, Syrians have adopted a more watchful attitude. While those interviewed cite clear examples of discrimination and describe feeling humiliated by their Lebanese neighbours, Syrians are less likely to express negative feelings about the Lebanese. This sentiment was robust across income groups and independent of future expectations of economic well-being.

The **propensity for violence** on the part of both Lebanese and Syrians was measured against different motivating factors. In response to economic privation, the propensity for violence seemed to increase. Both Syrians and Lebanese still have a number of coping strategies available that temper, to some extent, the everyday hardships they face. Data shows that the greater the number of coping strategies on which families rely, the less likely they are to see violence as an acceptable way to meet their needs. In addition, the more optimistic Lebanese and Syrians are about their economic future, the more positive their impressions are of one another as a group. It is noteworthy that similar responses emerged in the respondents' evaluations of both their present reality and future forecast. This suggests a low probability of Lebanese and Syrians fighting one another over economic issues as long as they have robust coping strategies, on which they can rely, as well as hope or reason to believe that their economic situation will improve.

Socially, the presence of Syrians in Lebanon is a phenomena that predates the conflict, both due to close family connections and because for several decades now Syrian workers have sought employment in Lebanon. As such, many focus group participants especially in areas closer to the border (North and Bekaa) remarked that social visits are normal between Syrians and Lebanese. As one Lebanese noted, past relations between the two groups mean that they do not necessarily feel that there is a Syrian refugee crisis; rather the main issue is the economic pressure on both groups. Indeed, the data showed that a higher level of social interaction between the two groups is also associated with a decrease in the likelihood of propensity towards violence. This finding was of medium confidence, and resonates with Gordon Allport's "Intergroup Contact Theory", which posits that under appropriate conditions, interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members.

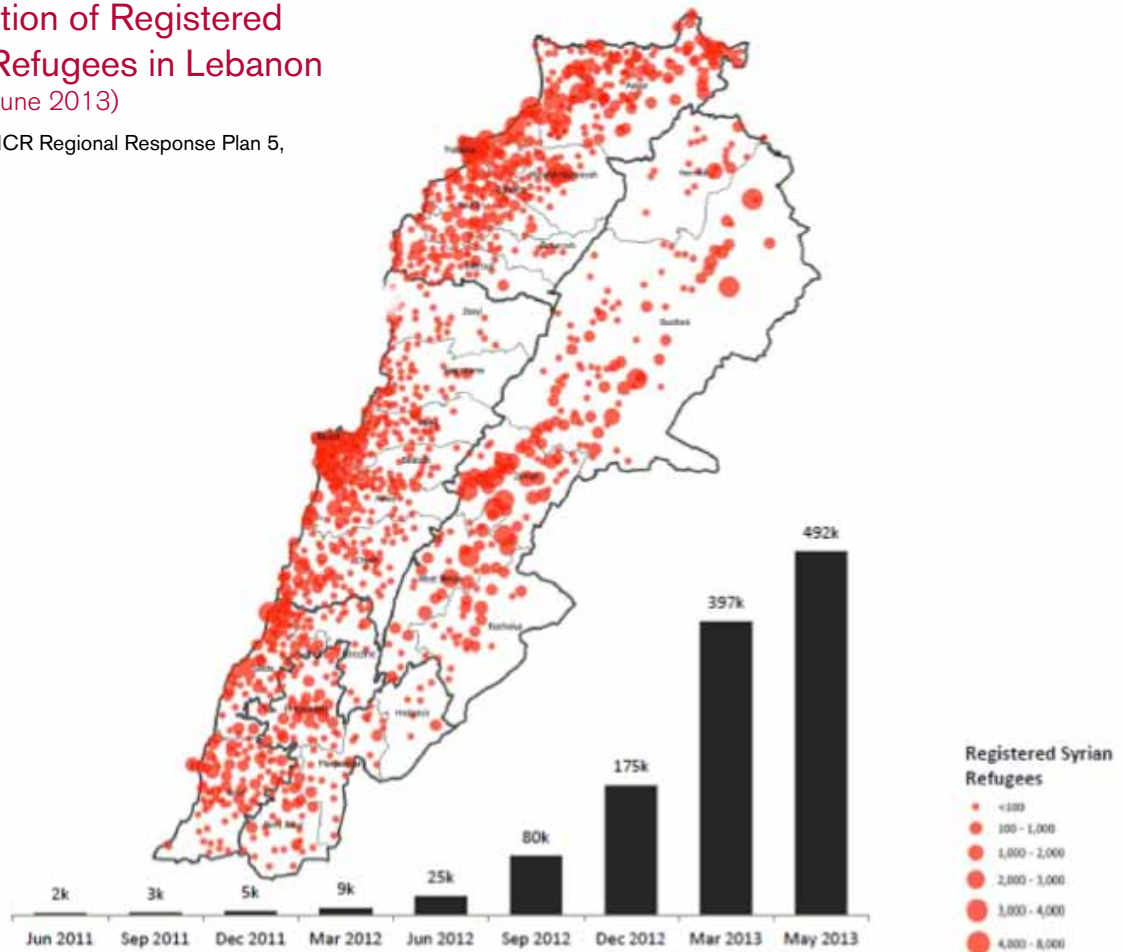
Politically, however, attitudes towards the use of violence differ. Both Lebanese and Syrians are more likely to see violence as a legitimate strategy to support a just political cause. At the same time, the data showed that the more positive one's perception of local government performance, the less likely was one's propensity towards violence. This strong correlation suggests that if local governance capacity is strengthened, the incentive for Lebanese constituents to turn to violent strategies to advocate will likely diminish.

In terms of *multimedia* exposure to current events, Syrians that actively followed events back home are more likely to justify the use of violence than those that do not. The recent upturn in the number of cross-border military engagements and rocket attacks between Lebanese and Syrian factions signals how such activity could shift attitudes toward violence. It is highly conceivable that in the face of direct attacks, Lebanese and Syrians would adopt a more militant mindset.

Refugees have largely settled in areas where they feel more comfortable, leading many to gravitate to areas dominated by their own religious sect or tribal affiliation,² although there are exceptions. As of April 2013, approximately one-third are living in North Lebanon, one-third in the Bekaa Valley, 17% in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, and 14% in the South.³ Indeed, the data showed that refugees who are gathered in the North are

Distribution of Registered Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (as of 18 June 2013)

Source: UNHCR Regional Response Plan 5, LEBANON



2 It should be noted that the 95% of refugees registered with UNHCR are Sunni but even the UN does not think this figure represents the full scale of the sects present in Lebanon. Minorities may choose to keep a lower profile. The International Crisis Group, *Too Close for Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon* (13 May 2013)

3 UNHCR registration trend for Syrians, UNHCR, 26 April 2013

mostly self-segregated by religious sect, whereas those in the Bekaa have sought safety within tribal lines. However, the number of refugees moving to South Lebanon is on the rise as the situation becomes more tense and jobs become scarcer in the North and Bekaa. When asked why Sunni refugees were fleeing to the predominantly Shi'a South, one man explained, "There are two kinds of refugees: those who want to fight, who tend to stay in the North near the border and often cross back over to fight; and those of us regular people who just want to escape the violence and be safe." He went on to explain that the South is perceived as safe for even Sunnis despite being a Hezbollah stronghold because of the presence of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF).



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This explanation of geographic allocation corresponds with our finding that respondents from Nabatiyeh and South are significantly less likely to show propensity towards violence relative to respondents in Bekaa, whereas respondents in North are significantly more likely to exhibit propensity towards violence relative to respondents in Bekaa. It also indicates, however, that the more politicised refugees are also concentrated in the poorest regions of Lebanon where host communities are least able to help, compounding economic privation with propensity for violence.⁴ Lebanese focus group participants spoke of the potential of the refugees to upset the confessional balance in the country and the implications of this for security. Focus group members in the South referred to Syrians as "ticking bombs" or "dormant cells". They stated that those who destroyed their own country could destroy someone else's as well.

Syrians expressed apprehension over living in areas that were dominated by the opposite sect. While only marginally touched upon in the assessment, sectarian identities have become more relevant as the fighting in Syria has spread across the Lebanese border. What is less certain is how competing affiliations will manifest if and when conflict in Lebanon becomes more overt. Will Syrians align with other Syrians or will they retreat into their religious or tribal affiliations? Will Lebanese focus their ire on the refugees or on members of a competing sect, as has become common practice in certain parts of the country?

Notably, while there is somewhat of a clustering effect of Syrians from the same region and of the same sect or family settling in the same areas in Lebanon, social capital between people is weak.⁵ Unlike their Palestinian counterparts, Syrian refugees have not come together to organize in any significant way. Unlike in Jordan, where established refugee camps provide designated areas for Syrian refugees to interact with and support one another in a relatively safe space, Syrians are scattered all over Lebanon, and often live only with their nuclear families and not in big communities. In terms of shelter, many Syrian refugees in Lebanon are living in the backyard sheds of Lebanese host families, abandoned buildings, and even converted chicken coops. Socially, focus group discussions across the country revealed that Syrian families largely keep to themselves and don't socialise very much with other Syrians and even less with their Lebanese neighbours.

4 Based on the 2008 Lebanese poverty survey, 63% of Lebanese in Akkar live below the poverty (including rate of 58% in Tripoli) followed by Hermel (33%) and the West Bekaa 31%. Data found: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/05/28/averting-crisis-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon/g6wd>

5 As of late April 2013, the largest contingent of Syrians fleeing the conflict originates from central Syria. Over 32% of registered refugees report they came from Homs followed by Idlib, Aleppo, rural Damascus. At that time, refugees from Damascus were only 3.8% of the total. However, due to increased violence in Damascus this number is expected to rise. The International Crisis Group, Too Close for Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon (13 May 2013)

In their desire to “keep their heads down”, natural leaders of the Syrian communities have not emerged and support networks are relatively weak. This lack of cohesion ultimately undermines the ability of the refugees to capitalize on a potential collective safety net that can provide greater economic security and emotional and psychological support during their time in exile.

Syrians do, however, keep in close contact with friends and relatives who remained back home or settled in other parts of the country. The Syrian crisis has been called the first YouTube war due to the enormous amount of video coverage posted on the site. More so than social media, mobile phones have transformed the ability of people to remain connected with friends, relatives and events back home. Across the refugee population, 20% of Syrians try to call back home daily. 65% succeed in talking with friends and family back home at least once a week. In focus group discussions, Syrians acknowledged that staying in contact is a priority. Many save meagre amounts of their income to ensure their ability to purchase mobile cards to call. At the same time, the data showed that Syrians who have contact with people back home are more likely to have propensity towards violence.

When tensions and troubles do arise, both Lebanese and Syrians tend to look to respected local actors to help resolve the dispute. For the Syrians, sheikhs or religious leaders were most often cited as people who could be trusted to mediate on their behalf. Lebanese look more toward political parties for help or trusted individuals in the “village”. Neither group turns to the government, but the Syrians expressed a high level of trust in the Lebanese Armed Forces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Syrian crisis has injected an additional level of complexity into the already complicated environment of Lebanon. Working within the current context requires a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play and an appreciation of sector overlap. With this in mind, several policy and programming recommendations are listed below:

- **Economically assist Syrians and poor Lebanese to get through the near- to medium-term.**
Data shows a 95% confidence level that greater perceptions of economic security decreases people's propensity toward violence, increases positive perceptions of the other group and increases overall feelings of safety. While a struggling economy and deteriorating ability to cover household costs have contributed to magnified feelings of grievances among the Lebanese population, economic tensions are not yet the main drivers of overall country instability. The more the Lebanese government, with the support of international organizations, can bolster the coping mechanisms of struggling Lebanese and Syrian workers and provide them with realistic income-generating opportunities in the short- and medium terms, the less likely economic issues will be used to foment discord between these communities. As agencies begin to shift to medium- to long-term strategies, special emphasis should also be placed on providing opportunities for unemployed male youth (particularly those in the North) who, without a source of income, will become even more vulnerable to involvement in violent activity.

While economic security has numerous positive effects on overall stability, long-term growth strategies will not help Lebanon weather the immediate storm it's facing. International organizations should stay away from trying to jump start new economies or encourage new entrepreneurship (especially among Syrians) as a quick fix approach to immediate hardship. Rather, for short-term economic stability, efforts need to be focused on unconditional or conditional cash transfers, or commodities. In locations where too much demand is creating inflation either through lack of supply or a war economy (arbitrary increase in prices by vendors due to high demand even when supply is sufficient to meet demand), carefully monitored in-kind

distributions may still be the best option to help both Syrians and Lebanese meet basic needs. Cash for work is difficult to implement according to industry best practices due to the wide discrepancy in daily wages between Lebanese and Syrians, and the lack of significant damaged infrastructure. Other, more sustainable, short-term income strategies could include a focus on strengthening existing private sector structures that are currently hiring and have room to maintain or expand their workforce.



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- **Strengthen local governance institutions.** The data revealed that an increase in the positive perception of government performance is associated with a decrease in the likelihood of propensity towards violence, at 95% confidence level. The scattered and mobile nature of the refugee population in Lebanon has rendered service delivery a significant challenge for humanitarian actors, thus much of the strain has fallen directly on the urban and rural host communities of Lebanon, particularly on the limited resources in areas near the Syrian border in the North and the Bekaa. The response of Lebanese municipalities to the influx of refugees into their areas of jurisdiction has varied from active resource management to complete unresponsiveness to the stress of the conflict on their Lebanese residents. As time passes and resources dwindle with the increase of refugees, a lack of local government responsiveness will only stoke resentment and potentially destabilize the already delicate political situation in Lebanon. Thus humanitarian actors should focus not only on addressing direct needs but also on actively engaging and empowering local governance institutions in all programming efforts, from NFI distributions to protection mechanisms. Identifying and supporting weak but willing municipal actors is key to improving the local residents' perceptions of government performance. If the municipal-level government can more effectively manage local service provision to its constituent Lebanese population and at the same time allocate resource to address basic needs for Syrian refugees, then individuals will be less likely to allow these grievances to exacerbate political fault lines.
- **Address negative media with clarification and positive media.** The power of the media in feeding instability in Lebanon cannot be underestimated. Indeed, earlier this year, the Lebanese Prime Minister even directly urged the media to help curb sectarian tensions by not encouraging coverage of fist fights and cursing between political leaders.⁶ The data revealed that most Syrians' source for Lebanese and Syrian news is from the television. However, racism towards Syrian refugees is growing in the Lebanese media. A recent news article⁷ online described how in several villages, "banners and signs have been put up imposing a curfew for Syrians after 6:00 pm" and other discriminatory measures. This reality, along with the "YouTube War" that characterises the conflict, resonates with the data that shows that Syrians who think violence is sometime necessary are statistically more likely to use television and the Internet as their source of information, and that Syrians who use the Internet more frequently are more likely to be open to the use of violence.

6 The Daily Star, "PM urges media to help curb sectarian tensions", <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Mar-02/208515-pm-urges-media-to-help-curb-sectarian-tensions.ashx#axzz2Rpn14U4v>, Wassim Mroueh, 2 March 2013. Accessed April 2013.

7 Naharnet, "Syrian Refugees face wave of Racism in Egypt, Lebanon", <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/91839-syrian-refugees-face-wave-of-racism-in-egypt-lebanon>, 25 July 2013. Accessed July 2013.



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At the same time, focus group discussions also revealed that most of Lebanese and Syrians' negative perceptions of one another were based on what they were hearing on the media and from other people, and not rooted in personal experience. Given the fragmented distribution of the refugee population, there is widespread confusion on both sides as to exactly where and how many Syrian refugees are in Lebanon, what aid is available to them, and also exactly how hostile host communities feel. As such, the humanitarian community has a responsibility to set facts straight regarding exactly the type of aid that Syrians are receiving, and take advantage of the fact that 99.4% of Syrians have access to a mobile phone to better communicate the availability of assistance. Negative media should also be countered with an injection of positive media, and efforts by Lebanese individuals to assist the Syrian refugees highlighted. The dearth of positive media should be addressed in creative ways that ideally engage both Syrian and Lebanese youth as a resource for stability.

- **Employ a cross-sector approach.** There is no one-size-fits all response to instability in Lebanon. Each region has its own set of weaknesses and strengths that determine the character of the problems. In the North, for example, any kind of livelihood programme must take into consideration the high levels of insecurity that define that area. These programmes will need to be assessed both in terms of how insecurity can derail proposed activities but also how activities can exacerbate the conflict. Similarly, any conflict mitigation activities cannot avoid working across the governance and economic fields; the balance between the three areas determined by where the programme is fielded. Organizations need to move away from single sector approaches when working in highly unstable environments. These situations require a hybrid approach that adequately deals with the complexities on the ground.
- **Invest in the Syrian community.** The Syrian refugee community in Lebanon is weak. Having fled from a situation of extreme violence, many arrived in Lebanon shell shocked and traumatized. What they found was an environment ill-equipped to meet their needs—inadequate registration procedures, patchy assistance, sub-standard housing options, few job opportunities, and ambivalent hosts contending with a weak government of their own. The majority of Syrian refugees have had to figure out how to survive in Lebanon by themselves. While Syrians have come together to informally assist one another, there is nothing like a real community. Syrians could do more to help themselves and will need to do so if their tenure outside their country lasts for much longer. Organizations working with the refugees should invest in building the ability of Syrian communities to better address their problems in their current environment. Whether it be the high cost of school fees, or inadequate medical coverage, or the need for short-term loans to cover emergency costs like rent or food, Syrians can do more for one another.

BACKGROUND

The Syria crisis has shaken Lebanon. Politically, the Sunni-Shi'a and Sunni-Alawi divide has taken on new importance as the fighting across the border has heated up. Adversaries who were watching each other warily have used the discord to the East as an excuse to take up arms against their "enemy". The upsurge in cross-border military engagements between Syrian and Lebanese factions has turned the Lebanese-Syrian borderlands into a battlefield. Economically, the overwhelming numbers of refugees who now make up approximately one-eighth of Lebanon's total population have placed a huge financial burden on the country – straining government services, healthcare, infrastructure and the already wobbly job market.⁸ Social capital is also fraying. With instability increasing on a daily basis, government legitimacy on the decline, thousands of new refugees appearing on the streets every week and neighbour fighting neighbour, people have become more cautious, less trusting and more insular.

From the start, the Syrian discord threatened Lebanon's stability. More than just the bad neighbourhood effect, Lebanon's complex history with Syria guaranteed that old and unresolved grievances would, once again, come into play. This historical legacy served as a charged backdrop for many typical cross-border problems that presented the first two years of the conflict. The Syrian refugees that flow unchecked across the border are not simply people in need; they are Sunni or Shi'a or Alawi or Christian. They are viewed as not only a burden on the economy but as a lightning rod of trouble, as they upset the confessional balance in the country and become targets of retaliatory attacks from those fighting in their homeland. Whether real or perceived, they are seen as bringing with them a political agenda that significantly influences the atmosphere of the areas in which they settle.

Lebanon has not withstood the crisis on its border well. Never strong, the economy has taken a severe hit. Economic growth dipped from 8% to barely 2% in the two years since the start of the Syrian disintegration.⁹ The most affected have been those who are the most vulnerable. Poor Lebanese communities in the North and Bekaa provided the lion's share of assistance during the first year of the crisis. These same populations witnessed a substantial deterioration of their livelihoods. In the agricultural sector, which has traditionally been a source of employment for low-income workers, Lebanese wages have fallen by 29% in the last two years. The cause is an oversupply of labour and Syrians willing to accept significantly lower pay than their Lebanese counterparts. Construction, which has also served as a source of employment for Syrians in Lebanon even before the war, has seen a 20% reduction in the Lebanese workforce in Bekaa. This has been accompanied by an approximate 46% loss in wages in the Bekaa Valley and a 30% drop in wages in the North.¹⁰ While the situation in some sectors has made for a bleak picture, there are still areas of growth. The Port of Beirut reports a 26% increase in revenues from the same time from last year as exporters look for alternatives to land crossings with Syria.¹¹ Additionally, some exports from Lebanon continue to cross the land border into Syria. Syria, in fact, has become the primary destination for Lebanese metal products, importing \$67.1 million of the total \$68.6 million exported from Lebanon in the first three months of 2013.¹²

But while some borders remain open, others have closed. In 2013, as the fighting in Syria escalated, the Masna'a border (from Syria to Jordan) was shut, significantly reduced the level of agricultural exports flowing out of the country. This drop has had a ripple effect on related industries. Sorting and packing facilities, for example,

8 The Lebanese government has had to increase public spending with the increase in refugees as the government subsidizes basic goods such as bread and flour but also services such as electricity, water infrastructure, and healthcare.

9 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/17/us-crisis-lebanon-refugees-idUSBRE93G0MW20130417>

10 Calculations in salary changes were determined based on salaries stated in the market maps from the interagency Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) of the Agricultural Labor Market System in North and Bekaa, Lebanon, 2013, and Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) of the Construction Labor Market System in North and Bekaa, Lebanon, 2013.

11 <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Lebanon/2013/Jun-21/221052-industrial-exports-surge-on-syria-demand.ashx#axzz2YVmuztlt>

12 Ibid.

have radically reduced their operations with several in the North closing completely or operating on a part-time basis. The result has been to further depress jobs in an already tight market.¹³

The rising friction between Lebanese and Syrian workers is, in part, due to the fiercely competitive job market that they all face and their dwindling ability to make ends meet. For both groups, the situation is grossly unfair. Syrian labourers are being exploited by opportunistic employers who demand long working days, with few breaks at low pay. When the choice is between backbreaking conditions or no income, the Syrians take the work. Their Lebanese counterparts are having their jobs confiscated, their wages reduced and not receiving any additional help from the international humanitarian community simply because they are Lebanese and therefore are not considered in need. It is no surprise that both communities feel victimized, aggrieved and angry.

Until recently, resource-driven tensions between Lebanese and their Syrian guests dominated the discourse of instability. These economic-driven tensions have not subsided, even as attention has shifted to more security-centred issues. The increasing financial fragility of both Lebanese and Syrian households continues to pose a serious threat to Lebanon's well-being. Lebanon's open borders guarantee a sustained flow of refugees into the country. How long these visitors will stay remains uncertain. Depending on the results of the conflict in Syria, Lebanon may find itself playing host to a large and permanent Syrian community. The current economic problems will only increase and fuel greater levels of resentment as people feel more insecure and less able to meet their daily needs. Research and evidence has shown that economically weak populations can serve as hotbeds for radical and extreme ideas to take hold. This leap from economic vulnerability to militant mobilization is not difficult to imagine in Lebanon.

METHODOLOGY

In April 2013, Mercy Corps undertook a nationwide economic-conflict assessment to look at the interplay between economic fragility and social instability in Lebanon. The assessment consisted of a 1,200 household survey of and 33 focus group discussions with Lebanese and Syrians refugees. Of the 1,200 households surveyed, 600 were Syrian and 600 were Lebanese. There was a 50/50 gender breakdown. The focus group discussions were also divided equally between male and female participants. Effort was also made to target the youth voice (ages 16-25). Approximately one-third of all focus groups conducted spoke with youth.

The assessment was carried out in four Governorates of Lebanon: North, Bekaa, Nabatiyeh and South. In the North, the survey was administered in Akkar and Tripoli and focus groups conducted in Tripoli. In Bekaa, the survey was conducted in Hermel and Baalbeck and focus groups convened in Qaa, Al Hermel, Jeb Jennine, and Baalbeck. In South, the survey was administered in Jezzine, Saida, Sour, and focus groups held in Tyre and Saida. In Nabatiyeh, the survey Bint Jbeil, Marjayoun, Hasbaya, and Nabatiyeh and focus groups held in Nabatiyeh.

Areas were chosen according to density of the Syrian population; the survey was not conducted in parts of Lebanon that do not host a large number of Syrian refugees. Security restrictions also prevented the survey to be administered and focus groups discussions to be conducted near the Lebanon-Syria border, where the situation is more inflamed than in the interior part of the country. Census information on the number of Syrian families living in specific towns, villages or cities was acquired from the municipal governments who also provided information on the neighbourhoods in which they reside. For the survey, participants were chosen according to a one-five formula where residential blocks were randomly selected (both in Lebanese areas and Syrian neighbourhoods) and five residences were skipped after each successful interview conducted.

13 Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) of the Agricultural Labor Market System in North and Bekaa, Lebanon, 2013.

For each block, there was a maximum target of eight questionnaires that were completed before interviewers moved to the next block. The greatest extent possible, Lebanese men and women, working in pairs, interviewed the Lebanese households. Syrian men and women, working in pairs, were hired to interview Syrian respondents. The focus group discussions were conducted by Lebanese facilitators with men leading the discussion with other men and women taking the lead with women.

The data allows for the identification of some trends, relationships, commonalities, general impressions and recurrent themes. There was no control group or baseline against which to compare the results obtained.

MAIN FINDINGS



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The relationship between Lebanese and Syrians cannot be simply boiled down to tensions over low wages and few jobs. The interplay between these two communities is more complex than simple economic competition. A history of occupation and exploitation of Lebanon by Syria has left a legacy of bad feelings, particularly among the older generations of Lebanese. Close trade, religious and family connections between these two countries, however, have created ties that bind. The recent military battles between the states have left people torn; on a personal level, individuals oppose the fighting, while at the same time their group identities push them to support the larger cause.

While economics are not the sole determinant of relations between Lebanese hosts and their Syrian visitors, financial considerations loom large in the everyday lives of both groups. Data from this assessment shows to a 95% confidence level that greater perceptions of economic security decreases people's propensity toward violence, increases positive perceptions of the other group and increases overall feelings of security. These positive externalities that result from perceptions of economic wellbeing are not insubstantial. Especially in an environment of increasing physical and political insecurity, they strongly suggest that effective livelihood support to vulnerable Lebanese and Syrians households can have multiple positive spinoff effects on overall stability in Lebanon.

Data from the assessment identified clear factors that contribute to a lowered sense of economic security, and pathways by which heightened feeling of economic hardship threaten the overall stability environment. The variables for the former include fewer jobs, depressed wages, high prices and a reliance on a large number of coping strategies to make ends meet. These are discussed in more detail below. While none of these causes are surprising, they nevertheless merit top priority consideration for programming in Lebanon in the near- and medium-terms.

Economic insecurity has had the effect of generating friction between the Lebanese and their Syrian neighbours. While direct clashes between these two groups have remained minimal, resentment between them is finding expression in the growing number of demonstrations and open protests staged mostly by angry Lebanese. Road blockages in areas highly populated by Syrians took place for various reasons. In February

2013, Lebanese residents of the northern border town of Arida blocked the road leading to Syria to protest the shelling of their town. Other road blockages took place to protest fuel smuggling into Syria or the lack of job opportunities due to a cheaper Syrian labor. Some municipalities in Metn district in Mount Lebanon imposed curfews banning Syrian refugees from moving at night. Although illegal according to Lebanese law, these curfews are generally positively perceived by the Lebanese population. This animosity can no longer be ignored, as disagreements will not resolve themselves on their own. The danger is that left unchecked, collective frustration will eventually spark violent action. Direct attention is required to manage the growing rancour. As is outlined in more detail below, a logical first step is to find ways to bring these discordant communities together to begin to overcome stereotypes and biases. Ultimately, the aim would be to foster cooperation across a number of different areas for mutual gain. These sorts of activities should, in part, mitigate the tendency to use violence as a way to express frustration or punish the offending party. In looking specifically at what drives people to violence, the results obtained are mixed. While certain general relations were found to increase the propensity of individuals towards using violence, there is little that alerts us to thresholds that would tip behaviour toward aggression.

SOURCES OF ECONOMIC INSECURITY

Across Lebanon people are feeling pessimistic about the economic situation. Data shows that both Syrians and Lebanese perceive wages to have fallen significantly over the past two years and jobs have also become scarcer. A 10% national inflation rate has left many families with a substantial and growing income gap each month, further reinforcing the impression that life is much harder now than it was before. Neither Lebanese nor Syrians are very optimistic about their future. When queried about potential markets for growth, both groups were fairly negative about untapped sectors that could provide employment.

There is cause for the gloomy outlook. Low-income Syrian migrant workers have seen their take home salaries drop by 25-33% over a twelve-month period.¹⁴ This includes those who are working as day labourers in the construction and agricultural sectors, as well as unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the services sectors. In addition to lower incomes, conditions under which these employees are required to work have deteriorated dramatically. While data from this study show that Lebanese wages have remained fairly constant since 2010 across income groups, other studies have clearly noted a large income drop amongst the lowest earners.¹⁵ Salaries for this group are estimated to have fallen by 25-60%.¹⁶ As approximately 25% of Lebanese rely on day labour for their income, this is a sizeable portion of the population that has seen a drastic decline in their take-home pay. It can be anticipated that this percentage will continue to grow.

The downward pressure on salaries is a direct function of expanded labour supply. Competition for jobs, notably in the daily labour, construction and agriculture sectors, has exploded with the surge in available Syrian workers. Across the country, data shows that Syrian unemployment rates are five times higher this year than last. These rates are the highest in the North and Bekaa where, consequently, wages are also at their lowest. For the Lebanese, however, the situation is slightly different. Surprisingly, data on the national level shows steady employment across sectors over the last year; contrary to perceptions, there has not been a noticeable drop in Lebanese employment numbers overall. There are exceptions. In the construction sector the Lebanese

14 Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) in North and Bekaa, Lebanon, 2013

15 The consistency in the Lebanese income levels over the past two years was an unexpected finding. The median monthly income was calculated to be US\$1000, with a low of \$0 and a high of \$9000 and an average of \$1165. The generally high incomes could account for the stability in employment. If lower income people were looked at in isolation, the results would likely be substantially different.

16 According to the Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) conducted by multiple agencies in the agriculture and construction sectors wages have decreased 29-33%. According to the Save the Children and International Rescue Committee, Livelihoods Assessment Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, conducted October 2012, daily labor wages in some areas have decreased up to 60%.

workforce was reduced from 90% in Bekaa to 70%. In the North, skilled Lebanese workers were reduced from 70% to 15-20%, while unskilled workers fell from 45% to 5%. In the agricultural sector, the Lebanese workforce has only been reduced by 4%, but profits have fallen between 50-80%.¹⁷

Since the start of Syria's war, prices for every day goods and services have skyrocketed. In a livelihoods assessment conducted in Lebanon in October 2012 by Save the Children and IRC, it was noted that that most Syrian households were unable to secure steady work. Days employed could be as few as seven per month, making it near impossible to earn enough money to cover monthly expenses.¹⁸ This situation deteriorated in the winter when work is always more difficult to find, heating costs rise and blankets and warm clothing becomes necessary.¹⁹ Participants in the focus groups discussions for this assessment spoke about the difficulty of finding money for rent, healthcare, food, school fees, and other needs. Survey results confirmed that people are struggling. In Bekaa, Nabatiyeh, Tyre and Saida, Syrians are spending most of their income on healthcare, food and rent. Housing prices dominate costs, as the majority of refugees in these areas rent their residence rather than staying with host families or relatives. In October 2012, rent prices were approximated at 200 USD/month.²⁰ Anecdotal evidence in early 2013 shows that rent prices increased to nearly 400 USD/month in some areas. In Hermel, rental costs have doubled and even tripled.²¹

	BEKAA		NABATIYEH AND TYR		SAIDA		NORTH		GRAND TOTAL	
Value	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Education	0	0.0%	8	1.5%	3	1.1%	18	2.7%	29	4.8%
Health	108	33.3%	168	32.0%	90	32.3%	112	16.7%	478	79.7%
Food	106	32.7%	172	32.8%	91	32.6%	212	31.5%	581	96.8%
Hygiene	3	0.9%	6	1.1%	7	2.5%	31	4.6%	47	7.8%
Rent	107	33.0%	164	31.2%	87	31.2%	155	23.1%	513	85.5%
Fuel	0	0.0%	3	0.6%	1	0.4%	7	1.0%	11	1.8%
Clothing	0	0.0%	4	0.8%	0	0.0%	137	20.4%	141	23.5%

In the South, Syrians noted their biggest expenses to be food, health and rent, in that order. Whereas in the North, where refugees are hosted or live with relatives to a somewhat greater extent, money is largely spent on food, rent, and clothing being third.²² This is in contrast to the Lebanese surveyed for this assessment who, nationwide, listed food, healthcare and education as their three greatest costs. Because most Lebanese respondents either own their own residence or live in family-owned lodging, housing costs did not figure largely into monthly household expenses. However, with increasing property prices in places like Bekaa, where the cost of a square meter has more than tripled from 600 to 2,000 USD over the past five years, even well-off Lebanese families may begin to be priced out of the property market.²³

17 Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) of the Agricultural Labor Market System in North and Bekaa, Lebanon, 2013 and Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) of the Construction Labor Market System in North and Bekaa, Lebanon, 2013.

18 Save the Children and International Rescue Committee, Livelihoods Assessment Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, October 2012.

19 Save the Children and International Rescue Committee, Livelihoods Assessment Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, October 2012.

20 Save the Children and International Rescue Committee, Livelihoods Assessment Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, October 2012.

21 Interview with the head of the al-Qasr municipality in Hermel. Carnegie International Endowment for International Peace (May 2013).

22 In Walid Khalid there is an average of nine refugees living with each local host family. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (May 2013).

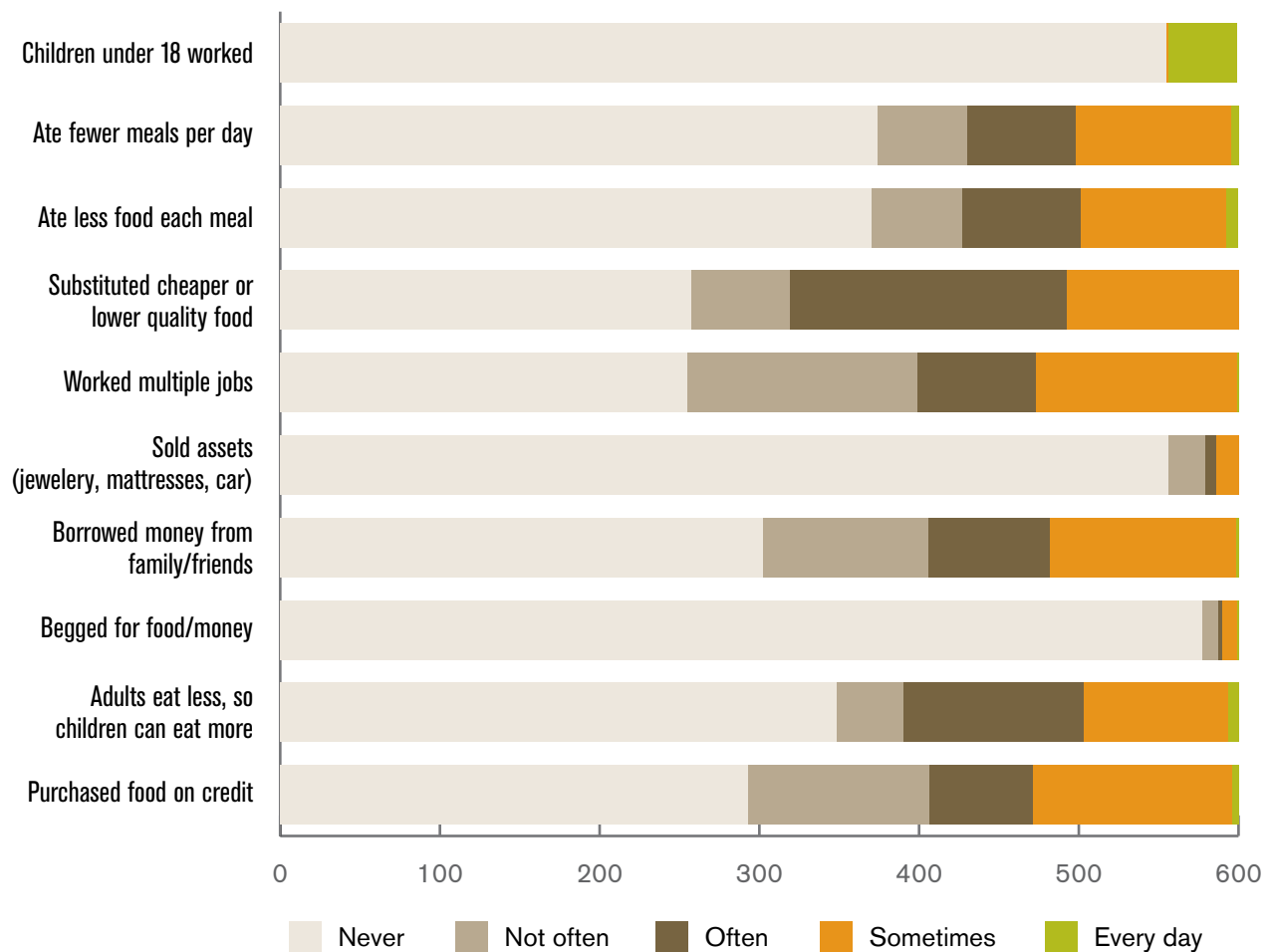
23 Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) of the Construction Labor Market System in North and Bekaa, Lebanon, 2013.

Given the dire economic situation that many people are facing, more and more Lebanese and Syrians are having to rely on creative means to meet household costs. These coping mechanisms include a range of strategies such as eating less at meals, eating fewer meals, selling assets such as jewellery, using savings for day to day survival, borrowing money, working multiple jobs, sending children to work, and relying on credit.²⁴ In August 2012, the UNDP found that in areas with high concentrations of refugees, Lebanese increasingly were purchasing food on credit, taking on loans, spending from savings, and selling productive assets (e.g. livestock or machinery).²⁵ The last two measures are of specific concern as they deplete the households' capacity to generate revenues on the medium- to long-term, rendering households vulnerable to further economic shocks.²⁶

Similarly, Syrians across Lebanon are substituting cheaper food and working multiple jobs as a way to compensate for low wages and high prices. Data shows that Syrians in the North are being forced to switch into survival coping strategies more so than Syrians living in other parts of the country. In the North, refugee households recorded eating fewer meals, less food, cheaper food and prioritizing food for children. In contrast, Syrians in Saida have not reached the point of having to rely on such tactics. Many admit to working multiple

Syrians' Coping Mechanisms

How often in the last month have you done each of the following?



24 DRC Livelihood Assessment Bekaa – May 2012

25 UNDP Rapid Assessment of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on the Socio-Economic Situation in North and Bekaa (August 2012).

26 FAO found reports of Lebanese farmers 'panic selling' their dairy cattle at one-third of the market price due to high animal feed costs, concern over lack of winter grazing, and to finance immediate household living costs.

jobs, borrowing money from family and/or friends, and purchasing food on credit but have not yet altered their behavior significantly in other ways. While refugees should receive substantial help from the international community while in exile, at the time of the survey, humanitarian assistance was falling short, and the so-called safety net was non-existent for the majority of refugees living in Lebanon.²⁷ Only 56% of refugees report that they receive food aid. An even lower 40% say they receive non-food assistance.

As households become more vulnerable, preferred coping strategies may become unavailable and others that are less favoured may need to be activated. Other assessments, for example, have found that shop owners are starting to deny credit to Syrians and poor Lebanese, as both these groups have minimal ability to pay off their debt.²⁸ Unable to access this ready money in times of need, families will be forced to switch to other methods that may be less palatable, less secure and less effective. For example, in areas of the Bekaa, such as Baalbeck, Syrian women are beginning to take on larger non-traditional decision-making roles in the household and are increasingly looking for their own employment outside of the home to supplement household incomes.²⁹ In focus group discussions around the country, a number of Syrian women interviewed stated that they did not work or were forbidden by their families to work in Syria. Stepping into this new role with new authorities may be quite empowering for some, for others the experience could be uncomfortable and serve to increase stress levels and decrease their overall psychological well-being.

LEBANESE-SYRIAN INTER-GROUP PERCEPTIONS

Data shows that, for the Lebanese, greater feelings of economic insecurity directly colour attitudes toward Syrians. Lebanese are much more likely to have a negative perception of Syrian refugees if they expect their wellbeing to get worse both in the short- and long-term. This finding holds true across income groups and across geographical areas and was confirmed in focus group discussions where many Lebanese vocally objected to their country accepting any more refugees from Syria. However, where Lebanese had a few strong economic coping strategies on which to fall back, their attitude toward their Syrian neighbours softened and they were more likely to entertain a more positive impression. The magnitude of the positive impression was not found to be large, but it was found to be robust at a 99% confidence level.

Lebanese Impressions of Syrian Refugees

Vis-À-Vis Impressions of Economic Situation in the Short-Term

What is your (Lebanese) impression of the Syrian refugees?	I don't know	Strongly negative	Negative	Somewhat negative	Somewhat positive	Positive	Strongly positive
How do you feel your economic situation will change over the next 3-4 months?							
Get better	0.0%	7.0%	21.7%	4.8%	12.3%	32.5%	65.2%
Get worse	20.0%	64.8%	41.3%	67.1%	28.8%	29.9%	17.4%
Won't change	80.0%	28.2%	37.0%	28.1%	58.9%	37.7%	17.4%

27 UNHCR's 2013 Country Operations Profile on Lebanon states that the refugee organization is helping 625,940 refugees in the country. See <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php>
 28 DRC Livelihood Assessment Bekaa – May 2012 and Save the Children and International Rescue Committee, Livelihoods Assessment Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, October 2012.
 29 UNDP Rapid Assessment of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on the Socio-Economic Situation in North and Bekaa (August 2012).

Lebanese Impressions of Syrian Refugees

Vis-À-Vis Impressions of Economic Situation in the Long-Term

What is your (Lebanese) impression of the Syrian refugees?		I don't know	Strongly negative	Negative	Somewhat negative	Somewhat positive	Positive	Strongly positive
How do you feel your economic situation will change over the next 3-4 months?	Get better	0.0%	7.0%	21.7%	4.8%	12.3%	32.5%	65.2%
	Get worse	80.0%	63.4%	56.5%	58.1%	25.2%	31.2%	17.4%
	Won't change	20.0%	28.2%	26.1%	36.7%	62.0%	36.4%	13.0%

For the Syrians, however, attitudes toward their Lebanese hosts do not appear to be largely affected by their anticipated wellbeing either in the short- or long-term. The nation-wide survey showed surprisingly robust positive perceptions toward Lebanese by the Syrian refugees. This positive impression increased slightly but significantly if the refugees were optimistic about their economic future. The overwhelmingly favourable view of the Lebanese by the Syrians may be a function of a general hesitancy to openly criticize the Lebanese in a survey. Focus groups discussions across all four regions uncovered a less favourable view. Syrians spoke candidly about a general feeling of humiliation and specifically about large and small incidences of discrimination, harassment and violence that they or their fellow nationals experience at the hands of their Lebanese neighbours.

Left unchecked, the burgeoning hostility between the Lebanese and Syrians will continue to grow, become more visible and, potentially, more violent. Currently, there is little meaningful interaction between these two communities. Most engagements are instrumental and utilitarian: through trade or at the market; employment; rental relationships; health services and other. Focus group discussions highlighted the hesitancy of Syrians to engage more substantively with their Lebanese neighbours. Syrian youth at focus group discussions talked about the difficulties they had interacting with Lebanese youth due to a difference in mentalities. Syrian men during focus group discussions revealed that Lebanese looked upon them with superiority. Especially in the North, which is perceived as being highly insecure, Syrians have avoided sustained interaction with their hosts out of fear of scapegoating and inadvertent confrontation turning violent. Lebanese, for their part, see little reason to befriend those Syrians who have settled in their area. At best, they viewed their Syrian visitors as a temporary inconvenience whose presence could be endured out of compassion and altruism. As these populations settle in for the longer-term, the Lebanese became less sympathetic and more resentful of the problems that inevitably accompany the hosting of a large and poor refugee community. Current attitudes border on antagonistic as hardship grows with little relief in sight.

Research has shown that negative inter-group perceptions can be somewhat diffused through greater interaction of conflicting groups.³⁰ Data collected for this assessment confirms this finding. Statistical analysis shows to a high degree of confidence that the more interactions that occur between Lebanese and Syrians, the more positive their perceptions are of each other. For the Lebanese, attitudes seem to be more positive if individuals are hosting Syrian families. While the sample size in this study for the number of Lebanese families hosting Syrian refugees was small, the effect was large. For Syrians, greater economic interactions as well as financial interactions seemed to increase positive feelings towards the Lebanese. Interestingly, social

³⁰ This is the central claim of Intergroup Contact Theory which states that interpersonal contact is one of the more effective ways to neutralize prejudice between conflicting groups or groups who hold negative perceptions of one another.

Syrian Impressions of Lebanese

Based on Whether They Have Had Interaction with Them or Not

What is your (Syrian) impression of the Lebanese?	I don't know	Strongly negative	Negative	Somewhat negative	Somewhat positive	Positive	Strongly positive	
<i>In the last 12 mths, did you interact with people from the Lebanese community?</i>	Count (# of Syrian respondents)							
	Yes	2	4	2	14	59	338	93
	No	6	1	0	3	31	16	31

Syrian Impressions of Lebanese

Based on Whether They Have Had Interaction with Them or Not

In what capacity do you have contact with Lebanese?	I don't know	Strongly negative	Negative	Somewhat negative	Somewhat positive	Positive	Strongly positive
Trade or at the market	Value	0	0	0	3	15	26
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3	11.7	20.3
Borrowing/lent money	Value	0	0	0	0	8	4
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3
Employment	Value	1	4	2	11	43	51
	%	0.3	1.1	0.5	2.9	11.3	13.5
Farming	Value	0	0	0	0	2	8
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.5	42.1
Conflict	Value	0	0	0	0	4	2
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3
Social event	Value	0	0	0	0	8	5
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30.8	19.2
Religious institution	Value	0	0	0	0	2	0
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.0	0.0
Living with a Lebanese family	Value	0	0	0	0	2	0
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
Renting from a Lebanese family	Value	1	4	2	12	43	75
	%	0.2	1.0	0.5	2.9	10.4	18.1

interactions did not appear to have any effect on the mindset of Syrian individuals towards their Lebanese neighbours. This could possibly be accounted for by the lack of meaningful social engagement that is currently occurring between these two groups. Lebanese women were more likely to have a positive impression of their Syrian counterparts than men. There appeared to be little difference in attitudes between Syrian men and women toward the Lebanese.

Going forward, these preliminary findings suggest that efforts need to be made to de-isolate the Syrian and Lebanese communities as a way to neutralize prejudicial attitudes. Economic activities that benefit both groups are an obvious starting point for forging better relations. Additionally, social engagement can be deepened through religious institutions, school functions, common celebrations or other events that cross lines of division and serve to bring people together. While the survey data does not give much weight to the social domain as a particularly fruitful area for generating more positive relations, this is most likely a function of the limited ongoing activity that is currently taking place. Strengthening relations between women, for example, around issues connected to children, schools, health and nutrition, safety and security, etc. could provide avenues for Syrian and Lebanese mothers to jointly work together to benefit their families, their communities and each other. Focus group discussions with Syrian women uncovered acute feelings of isolation, unhappiness and depression. The psycho-social trauma that these women have experienced has received little attention. While simple social engagement is not the solution to their pain, stronger networks of women that provide them with a space to discuss their experiences, receive support and feel a part of a caring community could go a long way to help in their recovery.

PROPENSITY TOWARD VIOLENCE

An interest of this study was to consider the different factors that drive people to more readily embrace violence as a legitimate means of behaving. Simmering tensions between Syrians and Lebanese have yet to erupt into physical confrontation, although demonstrations by Lebanese protesting against the negative economic externalities of hosting a large and poor Syrian population have begun to occur with greater frequency since the start of 2013. The data from this assessment gives mixed and sometimes non-intuitive results on what increases or decreases the propensity toward violence within each community.

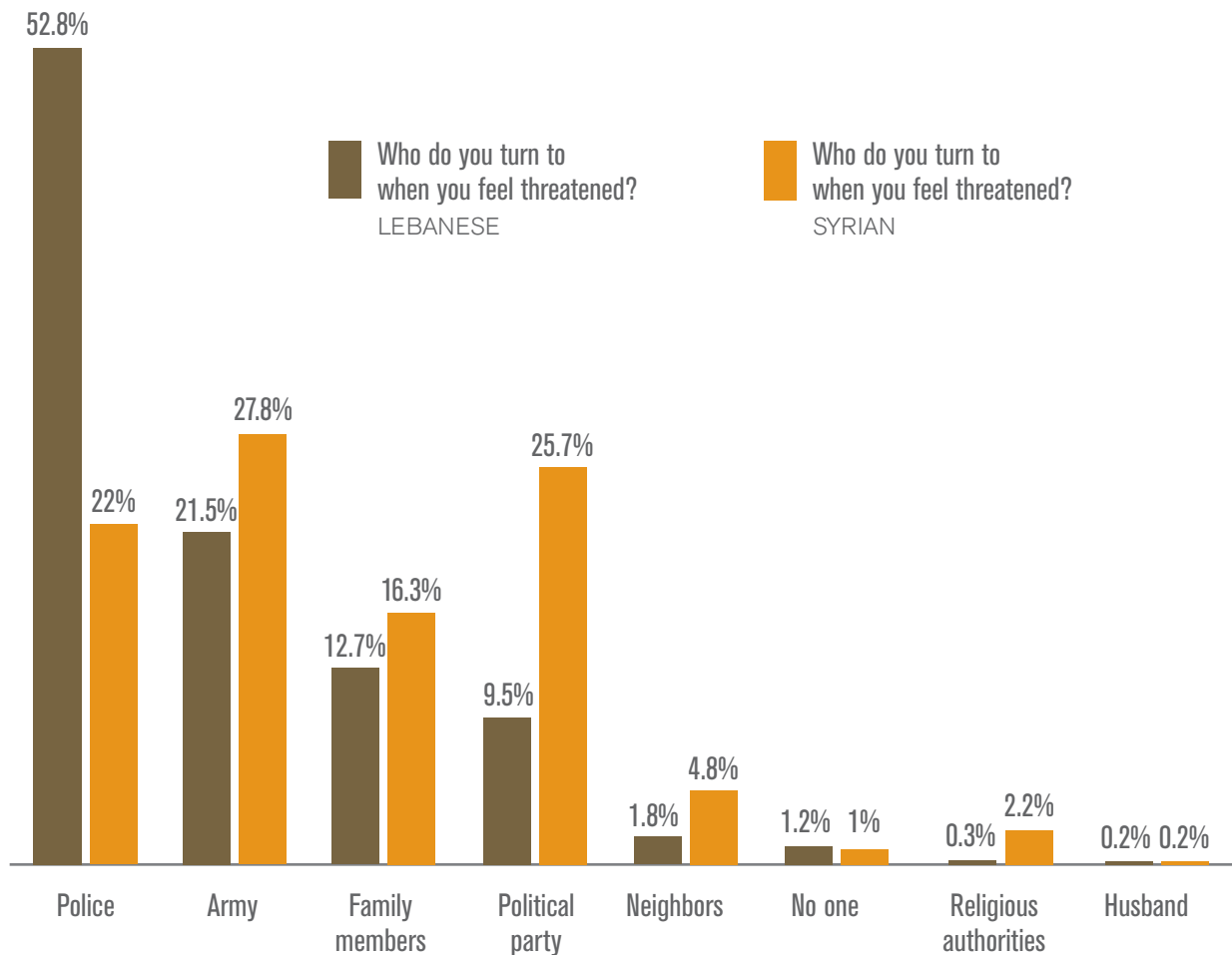
Surprisingly, while unfair wages had a significant negative effect on the attitudes of the Lebanese toward the Syrians, the data shows the opposite effect with regard to violence propensity. Lebanese respondents who felt that wages were unfair had a lower propensity toward violence. The magnitude of their preference was low but significant at a 5% level. This result is opposite of what we would expect. Perceptions of unfairness—be it with wages, allocation of aid, job discrimination—commonly result in feelings of resentment and anger. Research shows that these negative emotions are more likely to increase the impulse to lash out at or punish those who are seen to be the cause of the injustice.³¹ In this case, data shows that the Lebanese clearly blame the Syrians for the increased hardship they are facing, including depressed wages, fewer jobs, and unfair aid distribution.³² At a minimum, we would expect people to be neutral if not slightly more prone to violence the greater their perception of unfairness. What this data suggest is that while perceptions of unfairness may make the Lebanese more resentful of the Syrian refugees, these same perceptions do not increase their proclivity to act violently.

The data also establishes a relationship between coping strategies, perceptions of physical security and propensity toward violence. Regression analysis shows that the greater the number of coping strategies on

31 See Nico Frijda, Antony Manstead, Sacha Bern (eds). *Emotions and Beliefs: How Feelings Influence Thoughts*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
32 The International Crisis Group, *Too Close for Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon* (13 May 2013)

which Lebanese families rely, the smaller their propensity toward violence. These results were significant at the 1% level, giving us high confidence in these relationships. While coping strategies are a clear indication of vulnerability, they also indicate that a household is capable of resourcefully “getting through” difficult times, and thus be less inclined to be desperate so as to turn to violent means for survival. The current data, however, does not allow us do more than establish this general relationship. More research would need to occur to understand thresholds and triggers that would push inclination to action.

For the Lebanese, positive perception of government performance shows a decrease in the propensity toward violence but no significant effect on attitudes toward safety and security. The magnitude of the first effect is high and the result significant to the 1% level. This finding is somewhat difficult to explain without further inquiry into the level of government to which people refer. Data shows that political parties tend to play a more significant role at the local level than federal institutions. Municipal governments, however, may be more consequential players and viewed more favourably than their national counterpart. This being the case, efforts to bolster the capacity and capability of municipal actors may provide an effective strategy to deal with Lebanon’s near- medium- and long-term instability. It is also worth noting that 74.3% of all Lebanese said they would turn to the local police (52.8%) or Lebanese army (21.5%) if they felt threatened, which is a source of stability that should not be taken from granted.





Lebanon – Cassandra Nelson/Mercy Corps

In contrast to the Lebanese, the Syrian population shows sensitivity to other drivers. Economic optimism both increases perceptions of physical security and lowers the propensity toward violence. However, unlike their Lebanese neighbours, refugee attitudes toward violence and safety do not appear to be affected by the number of coping strategies on which they must rely, including the total assistance that they receive from local and international organizations. It could be that as refugees, the expectation of the Syrians was that life in exile would be difficult. It could also be that after an average of 12-24 months living Lebanon, Syrian families are no longer under the illusion that their stay in Lebanon will be comfortable.

What appears to significantly influence Syrian attitudes towards violence is the frequency with which they remain in contact with people back home, as well as their exposure to local and international media. Syrians that maintain contact with friends and family members in Syria are likely to express greater appetites for violence. This effect was large in magnitude and significant at the 1% level. Data shows that most Syrians in Lebanon use mobile phones and/or WhatsApp to keep in touch with people back home. Additionally, Syrians who rely on the internet and television as major sources of information for news inside Syria are also more inclined to see violence as an acceptable means to effect change. A number of hypotheses could account for this finding. Unlike previous conflagrations, the Syrian conflict is being fought publically on the international stage. Videos, Facebook pages, Twitter feeds recounting both the horrors that are taking place as well as the negative or racist reactions from the host

communities are readily available to the wider public. Such images and messages can elicit powerful reactions in those who feel closely tied to what is occurring but who are no longer directly involved. Especially amongst the younger generation, feelings of anger over the carnage, indignance towards the racism towards Syrians, guilt over having fled the country and impotence at not being able to do anything can combine into a toxic brew that feeds violent impulses. With limited options to effect change, support of a military solution makes perfect sense.

Data for this assessment was collected in April 2013 before the open and active engagement of Lebanese factions in Syria's war. Since then, military confrontation between different Lebanese and Syrian factions has substantially increased. Bombings, armed checkpoints, direct engagements are all occurring with greater frequency and the political environment inside Lebanon is becoming more charged and more unstable. Attitudes toward violence have most likely altered, for the worse, in the two months since this survey was conducted. Reasons for accepting violence as a legitimate means of operating have also, most likely, expanded. These developments do not alter the conclusions of this assessment. Rather, they point to a greater urgency for acting decisively and effectively to mitigate the underlying drivers of discontent both within the Syrian and Lebanese communities.



Lebanon – Cassandra Nelson/Mercy Corps

MOVING FORWARD: **WORKING BETTER WITH THE SYRIAN AND LEBANESE COMMUNITIES IN LEBANON**

Outside assistance is becoming a part of the everyday experience of a large number of households in Lebanon. The tragic reality is that such need will not go away but only grow. For Syrians caught in the limbo of refugee life, humanitarian aid is a lifeline that both helps new arrivals find their footing and long-time residents cope with the day-to-day. Shortfalls in aid availability and inconsistencies in delivery impose a hardship on families who count on this support from the outside. Lebanese families are also not immune to hardship. The fighting in Syria has imposed direct and indirect costs on Lebanese society. Areas now home to a large number of refugees are feeling the effects of a population explosion: strain on municipal services, skyrocketing prices for basic goods, fierce competition for jobs in a shrinking employment market, and a clash of cultures as conservative practices become more prominent in more relaxed Lebanon. Unlike the Syrians, however, poor Lebanese households have been largely overlooked by the aid community. A common error in rapid-onset refugee situations, the focus of international assistance has been largely directed toward the Syrian population. The assumption is that the local Lebanese governing institutions will take care of their own. While understandable, the harsh reality of current day Lebanon is that municipal level government response to growing need is patchy. While some areas have successfully worked with communities to manage emerging financial and social strains – through registering refugee families, coordinating with international agencies, mobilizing resources to improve service delivery, increasing police patrols in the areas, etc – others were either not or less effective. The growing animosity of Lebanese toward Syrians is in large part due to the uneven response to the needs of both populations, with Syrians receiving more consideration than their poor Lebanese neighbours.



Lebanon – Cassandra Nelson/Mercy Corps

Emergency assistance, be it humanitarian or government provided, will continue to be in high demand. When it is needed, such aid should be provided in a fair and equitable manner that takes into consideration the vulnerability of an area and its entire population—both Lebanese and Syrian. Such an approach can begin to dampen perceptions of favouritism or unfair aid practices and attenuate emergent hostile feelings between the two communities.

With the balance of power in Syria not clearly tipping in one direction or the other, Lebanon will host refugees for a much longer period than anticipated. Under these circumstances, emergency aid cannot continue to be the first choice response to the crisis. Both low-income Lebanese and Syrian refugees require support that can help them become more economically secure in the near- and medium-terms. Investment in creating non-welfare opportunities will discourage the dependency mentality that can be the by-product of long-term aid reliance and reinforce positive self-confidence as people feel able to provide for themselves. While people are no doubt struggling to cope with limited household resources in an inhospitable job climate, there is an opportunity to make better use of what they already have. A first order priority is to increase people's financial

capacity so that they are able to manage the resources available. Embedded in any training—for both men and women—should be basic financial literacy and asset management skills and behaviours to strengthen household production of goods and/or services that have value in the marketplace and can provide an extra layer of protection against economic shocks. Such training would benefit both Lebanese and Syrians in the near-term but also provide the type of 'portable assets' for the Syrians that will strengthen their ability to cope if and when they return back home.

Training opportunities should always be used as occasions to build social capital between groups and amongst groups. The Syrian refugees have a weak sense of community in Lebanon. This ultimately hurts them economically—by depriving them of networks that can generate economic value in ways that individuals simply cannot—and psychologically—by reinforcing a sense of isolation and vulnerability. Especially among females, who are more secluded than the male members of their families, training events can provide a community-level mechanism for women and girls to increase their social interactions, and self-confidence, through a structured peer-to-peer engagements which uses financial education activities as a non-threatening pull or incentive to attend the meetings. Larger groups could be divided into (a) those already economically active at the household level; and, (b) those not currently engaged in economic activities but looking to contribute to their household income. Activities should promote joint ventures, to the greatest extent possible, and mentoring by more experienced women of those who are just learning. All training should be sensitive to the social and psychological barriers that women are more apt to face than men in the economic domain. A good number of Syrian women interviewed in for this assessment did not work or were forbidden by their families to work in Syria. While stepping into the role of household contributor may be quite empowering for some, for others it could serve to generate increased tensions in the household as Syrian men feel humiliated by having to rely

on help from their wives in this domain. Other assessments have noted the changing role of refugee women. With more women stepping into authority roles in their homes, they will need the knowledge and skills to manage their household finances and the extra support of their communities to support them through difficult times. Helping them to transition to such position of responsibility is vital but should be approached with great sensitivity.

In addition to strengthening relations within the Syrian community, financial skills training can bring together Syrians and Lebanese around a common cause—everyone's need to be more economically secure. Data shows that the greater the interaction between the Syrians and Lebanese, the less animosity that exists between these groups. Data also shows that women are less likely than men to have strong negative feels toward the other group. Working with both communities to help them better address their economic vulnerabilities, in a way that is sensitive to perceptions of favouritism and already existing attitudes of animosity, can begin to gently diffuse tensions and generate greater acceptance amongst perceived rivals.

Economic support to poor Lebanese and Syrian households should, to the greatest extent possible, work through existing Lebanese institutions. While parallel systems and mechanisms can be more efficient in terms of accomplishing the limited goal of a program, working outside already existent structures undermines local capacity and makes international assistance more entrenched, rather than less needed. For example, in partnership with financial institutions, loans can be subsidized or restructured for small or medium businesses, especially in growth areas such as those linked to the port or transportation supply chain. Additionally, a focus on businesses that have the capacity to maintain staffing (or ideally grow) to relieve their cash flow pressures. This could be done in coordination with the financial institution rather than through grants which would only serve to undermine the loan agency. Economic support should also focus on reducing household and business expenditures, including encouraging bulk purchasing of food, fuel, or agriculture inputs as well encouraging the use of alternative fuel sources which accounts for a high portion of expense.

For the time being, Syrians in Lebanon are not going home. The potential for a significant portion of this population to stay indefinitely in Lebanon is no longer considered outlandish. Given this possibility, more needs to be done now to repair damaged relationships between this group and their Lebanese hosts. Economic support, such as some of the examples that have been cited in this report, can eliminate some of the sources of tension but the question of how Lebanon can absorb a whole new community is much larger than simply economics. Religious and political considerations loom large in Lebanon and the Syrian population, unfortunately, feeds into these sectarian divides. With the fighting in Syria now having a more overt international component, there is the distinct danger that the refugees will be caught in the crossfire of larger political agendas. So far, there has been little direct backlash against the refugees. Should this begin to occur, or should the refugees begin to feel the need to fight back if they are attacked, Lebanon could quickly dissolve into a bloody civil conflict that would shake the region and further challenge the current balance of power. Stability in Lebanon is of paramount importance. The focus should be to maintain it.

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