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Refugee Research and Policy in the Arab World Program

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Reconfiguring Relief Mechanisms: The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon

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American University of Beirut*

Research Report

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The Refugee Research and Policy in the Arab World Program aims to collect, support and initiate research relevant to refugees – whether Syrian, Palestinian, Iraqi, or others. It seeks to harness the refugee-related, policy-oriented research in order to achieve several goals: to enhance the Arab world's input into regional and global refugee issues, to raise the quality of refugee-related debate and decision-making in the region, and to enrich the quality of interaction among scholars, officials, international organizations and civil society actors.

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Executive Summary

The past three years of turmoil and bloodshed in Syria have forced more than 6 million Syrians to flee their homes and seek refuge in perceived safer areas inside and outside Syria. According to the latest reports¹ issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 868,224 Syrian refugees have settled in Lebanon, with the majority facing severe living conditions. Due to financial and political constraints, the Lebanese government has not yet created a crisis-plan for dealing, with what has been noted by Antonio Guterres, the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees, as "the great tragedy of this century – a disgraceful humanitarian calamity with suffering and displacement unparalleled in recent history"². To date, international organizations and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) represent the backbone of relief efforts. However, the rapid increase in refugee numbers (an eight-fold increase in one year, growing from 100,000 in October 2012 to 850,000 in October 2013³) has put serious strains on Lebanon's precarious economy and is causing tensions to rise between the refugees and the host community due to the lack of a strategic relief vision.

This paper highlights the specificity of the refugee crisis in the unstable Lebanese landscape and calls for the reconfiguring of current relief mechanisms by enabling decentralized local authorities to lead the process. Crisis Management Teams (CMTs), part of *Mohafazat* councils, will be responsible of collaborating with national and international agencies, planning and monitoring relief projects. The paper also draws on the experience gained by the Community Projects and Development unit (CDPu) – American University of Beirut (AUB), and recommends engaging refugees in municipal public works along ecological lines, as a means to highlight self-reliance among the refugees' communities and to alleviate rising tensions among refugees and the host communities.

The Unfolding Nightmare

The fallout from the war in Syria has forced around 2.3 million refugees to seek protection in neighboring countries, with Lebanon⁴ (868,224), Jordan (566,303), Turkey (536,765), Iraq (207,053), and Egypt (129,174) hosting the majority of the refugees⁵. Lebanon represents the most vulnerable case among the host countries for several reasons:

- a. Lebanon's polarized and divided community, and political alliances⁶;
- b. The ratio of refugees to the local population is considerably high (Lebanese population is estimated by 4 million and forecasted numbers for the population size are 4.75 million by 2040⁷);
- c. The high influx of refugees (7,000 refugees enter Lebanese lands on a daily basis while around 6,000 are currently awaiting registration⁸) vis a vis the limited size of the country (10,452 km²); and
- d. The unequal dispersal of refugees in over 1500 locations around the country⁹.

1 <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> - updated on January 11, 2014

2 <http://www.unhcr.org/522484fc9.html>

3 *ibid*

4 North Lebanon 33%, Bekaa 34%, Beirut and Mount Lebanon 18%, and South Lebanon 13%. Lebanese authorities claim the number to be 1.3 million.

5 UNHCR, Inter-Agency Regional Response For Syrian Refugees: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. 26 September – 2 October 2013.

6 The March 8 political alliance (spearheaded by Hezbollah, the prominent Shiite party) supports the Asaad regime, while the March 14 political alliance (spearheaded by Future movement, the prominent Sunni party) supports the Free Syrian Army.

7 Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel_indicators.htm

8 <http://carnegie-mec.org/2013/06/25/syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-impact-and-recommendations/gaz0?reloadFlag=1>

9 <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/rr-bric-livelihoods-syrian-refugees-lebanon-211113-en.pdf>

These unfavorable geopolitical factors are compounded by a dearth of resources and the impact on Lebanon's already substantially weak economy¹⁰. Along with a shortage in international relief funds¹¹, there is a weak governance system and the lack of a national crisis management plan¹².

Within this fragile Lebanese landscape, the majority of refugees live under dire conditions: in unfinished structures, empty depots, and informal tented settlements with restricted access to basic urban services. Limited access to water and sanitation, healthcare, and educational facilities is putting additional strain on the meager Lebanese public services sector and stretching it far beyond its capacity¹³. Throughout May 2013, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Program (WFP) and UNHCR conducted a vulnerability assessment for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and reported that around 70% cannot meet their basic food and non-food needs¹⁴. In August 2013, UNHCR scaled down its health program for refugees, covering only 75% rather than 85% of the full cost of treatment¹⁵. Meanwhile, Lebanese hospitals are "unable to treat more refugees"¹⁶. Children and teenagers constitute 52% of Syrian refugees¹⁷ and only 25%¹⁸ of them are attending schools. These figures are not exhaustive, but attempt to shed light on the scale of the unprecedented crisis in Lebanon and the exacerbated conditions of the refugees.



Figure 1. Picture taken in Sareen village showing basic infrastructure methods devised by refugees living in Informal Tented Settlements

10 GDP growth fall from 9.3% in 2008 to 1.4% in 2012 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG/countries/LB?display=graph>

11 RRP5 requests.

12 Since March 2013, Lebanon has been run by a caretaker government.

13 The IRC Commission on Syrian Refugees, "Syria a Regional Crisis" <http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/IRCReport-MidEast20130114.pdf>

14 Inter Agency Response for Syrian Refugees; Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey; 26 September – 2 October 2013 <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Inter-Agency%20Regional%20Response%20-%20Syrian%20Refugees%2020131002.pdf>

15 Interview with UNHCR's spokesperson in Beirut, Dana Sleiman <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Aug-29/229136-local-hospitals-unable-to-treat-more-syrian-refugees.ashx#axzz2iG6LTCJ7>

16 Interview with Suleiman Haroun, the Head of the Association of Private Hospitals. Source: *ibid*. Mr. Haroun states that a sum of 800 million dollars is needed to ensure health care for 1.5 million refugees in Lebanon by the end of 2013.

17 <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

18 http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLXMGIpI4E/b.8721487/k.B523/Helping_Syrian_Refugees_in_Jordan_Lebanon_Iraq_and_Egypt.htm



Figure 2. Picture taken in Aqbiye' collective shelter showing open sewage-channels running along the shelter units.

Dissociation and Dissolving

Lebanon's official position with respect to the Syrian crisis is highlighted by Prime Minister Najib Miqati's policy of "dissociation"¹⁹, which calls to disengage Lebanon from Syria's war. This is in addition to President Michel Suleiman's "Baabda Declaration" which calls to "[keep] Lebanon away from regional and international conflicts and sparing it the negative repercussions of regional tensions and crises"²⁰. However, the President's and Prime Minister's rhetoric did not halt the anti-regime Sunni factions and the pro-regime Shiite militants (namely Hezbollah) from participating in the civil war, inside Syria itself. The persistent involvement of both sides quashed Miqati's "centralist" position and facilitated his resignation on March 23rd, 2013. Fears of further spillover culminated in a series of car bombs: the car bomb assassination of Brig. Gen. Wisam El-Hasan²¹ in Ashrafieh on October 22nd, 2012, August 15th, 2013 car bombing in Ghobeiri²² (characterized as a Hezbollah stronghold), the two simultaneous Sunni mosque blasts in Tripoli on August 23rd ²³, the two suicide bombers attack on the Iranian Embassy in Beirut on November 19th, 2013²⁴,

19 Stated on 11 April 2012

20 Baabda Declaration, 11-6-2012, article 12 <http://www.presidency.gov.lb/Arabic/News/Pages/Details.aspx?nid=14483> (in Arabic)

21 Wisam El-Hasan was the head of the Internal Security Forces Intelligence Branch. His bodyguard and a bystander were killed in the incident. El-Hasan used to lead the protection team of the former Prime Minister Rafiq El-Hariri who was assassinated by a car explosion on February 14, 2005.

22 27 killed and 325 wounded <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-23716271>

23 42 killed and more than 400 wounded <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-23811328>

24 25 killed and more than 150 wounded <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Nov-19/238284-blast-heard-near-iranian-embassy-in-beirut-witness.ashx#axzz2oK210PhQ>

the car bomb killing former Minister Mohammad Shatah in Downtown Beirut on December 27th, 2013²⁵, and the suicide bomb-attack in Haret Hureik on January 2, 2014²⁶. Meanwhile, as a result of the Syrian crisis, armed clashes are becoming more frequent along the Lebanese-Syrian border. In response to these skirmishes and due to the lack of trust in the competency of Lebanese security forces to restrict these events, worried communities are putting their own security contingency plans in place to protect their citizens²⁷.

To deal with the humanitarian crisis at hand, Miqati launched the 'Response Plan to the Crisis of Displaced Syrian and Lebanese Families' on December 3rd, 2012 during a meeting attended by senior representatives of UN agencies, the European Union, and a number of ambassadors²⁸. The plan was put into action after the cabinet of ministers finally reached consensus on formally addressing the refugee situation – referring to it as “a humanitarian cause, not a political one”²⁹. The Response Plan sought around \$179 million USD to be distributed among the Ministry of Social Affairs (\$28,590,000), the Ministry of Health (\$75,131,120 USD), the Ministry of Education (\$17,755,000), and the Higher Council of Relief (\$57,800,200 USD) in order to cope with the crisis³⁰. Following Miqati’s resignation, Prime Minister Tammam Salam was designated³¹ to form a new government on April 6th, 2013 – a task that, until the publication of this paper, had not yet come to fruition. As a result, the national crisis plan was halted. Lebanon did however keep its borders with Syria open to support the ‘humanitarian cause’ at hand and has been receiving increasing numbers of refugees.

Nonetheless, donor countries have shunned supporting Lebanese government agencies³² and have chosen to funnel their money through UN agencies only. The ‘international community’ attributes this behavior to the present dysfunctional political system (i.e. the presence of a caretaker government and the inclusion of Hezbollah³³ ministers in the cabinet³⁴). Off the record, foreign ambassadors and donor agencies claim that the main reason for the lack in financial support to the Lebanese authorities is Lebanon’s notoriously high corruption indicator³⁵.

25 Mohammad Shatah was a senior aide of both former Prime Ministers Saad El-Hariri (leader of the Movement of the Future Party since 2005) and Fouad El-Seniora (head of the Movement of the Future Party parliament coalition). In addition to Shatah’s driver five civilians were killed and 15 were injured.

26 Five civilians were killed and 77 wounded.

27 <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/08/beirut-dahiyeh-lock-down-attacks-fears-hezbollah.html>

28 <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/63145>

29 Minister of Social Affairs Wael Abou Faour, 3 December 2012 [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Dec-04/197098-mikati-seeks-\\$178-mln-for-syrian-refugees.ashx#axzz2tfThokDO](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Dec-04/197098-mikati-seeks-$178-mln-for-syrian-refugees.ashx#axzz2tfThokDO)

30 The estimated amount was based on the number of refugees listed at the time i.e. 137,065.

31 Salam garnered 124 votes out of the 128 members of parliament.

32 Suleiman: Pledges to Share Burden of Refugees not Sufficient <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/102531-suleiman-pledges-to-share-burden-of-refugees-not-sufficient>

33 July 22, 2013 the European Union put the armed wing of Hezbollah on its terrorist blacklist

34 Minister of Social Affairs, Wael Abou Faour, 3 October 2013 [http://www.elnashra.com/news/show/668896/\(in Arabic\)](http://www.elnashra.com/news/show/668896/(in%20Arabic))

35 Lebanon ranked 127th out 177 countries according to the 2013 Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International.

Who's in Charge?

At the forefront and officially representing the Lebanese government with respect to the refugee crisis is caretaker Minister of Social Affairs Wael Abou Faour. Abou Faour reaffirmed the government's "disappointment" and "frustration" with the international community's limited support to the Lebanese government in a UNHCR meeting to discuss how to better distribute the burden of the Syrian conflict on September 30th, 2013³⁶. Later, during a site visit with heavy rains to informal tented settlements in the Beqaa on December 14th, 2013, Minister Abou Faour issued a confusing statement in which he blamed the Lebanese government for "taking a back seat in regards to relief works conducted on its territories", and lashed out at the international community for "denying the government supports needed to deal with the crisis"³⁷.

Two major sources comprise the backbone of relief funds to refugees in Lebanon: the West and the Arab region. While Western support is channeled through 'liberal-based' organizations, the majority of Arab support is channeled through 'faith-based' organizations. Despite their conceptual differences and a clear lack of coordination, both lines are simultaneously active, on the same grounds.

Western support is chaired by UNHCR³⁸, which leads coordination meetings in order to synchronize sectorial operations among implementing agencies. Although a delegate from the Ministry of Social Affairs is in charge of co-chairing UNHCR's coordination meetings held at the agency's offices in Beirut, this delegate constantly misses out on attending the other weekly meetings held in Tripoli, Mount-Lebanon, the Bekaa, the South, and Akkar. Local authorities and local representatives are excluded from these meetings, and the implementing agencies only seek their support when reaching a stalemate. These shortcomings are further exacerbated by the inability to implement agencies that best take advantage of the available local resources, their disengagement from a wide range of local groups, and because of the increasing skepticism among the refugees and the host communities regarding the agencies' activities.

The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (CCASG) has shunned support for the Lebanese government due to Hezbollah's influence³⁹ in the cabinet. There are no available documents reporting accurate numbers about the 'non-governmental' Arab relief funds that are mainly channeled through Islamic faith-based organizations (FBOs). Coordination meetings among closely knit FBOs are chaired by renowned *Sheikhs* within their areas of operations, and are frequently held following the Friday prayer. Many incidents have been reported on disputes and duplication of work among FBOs due to inefficient coordination and competition among their respective benefactors.

Weak coordination among the various relief working groups, and the inept response of the Lebanese local authorities with regard to the Refugee Crisis were exposed in the aftermath of Alexa, the severe four-day winter-storm that hit Lebanon on December 10th, 2013. Five refugee children froze to death, two died under the rubble of a collapsed roof, and a three-year-old boy was burnt in a fire inside a tent. No individual or agency was held accountable for these incidents or for the many others that were reported by a plethora of national and foreign news agencies. It comes as no surprise to discover that as of yet there are no standard procedures to define the links between the various relief agencies, local authorities, and the refugees.

36 <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/100293>

37 <http://www.albaladonline.com/ar/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=115537> (in Arabic)

38 UNHCR funds for relief works in Lebanon in 2013 reached around 845 million dollars

39 During their meeting in Bahrain on June 3rd, 2013 CCASG countries listed Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

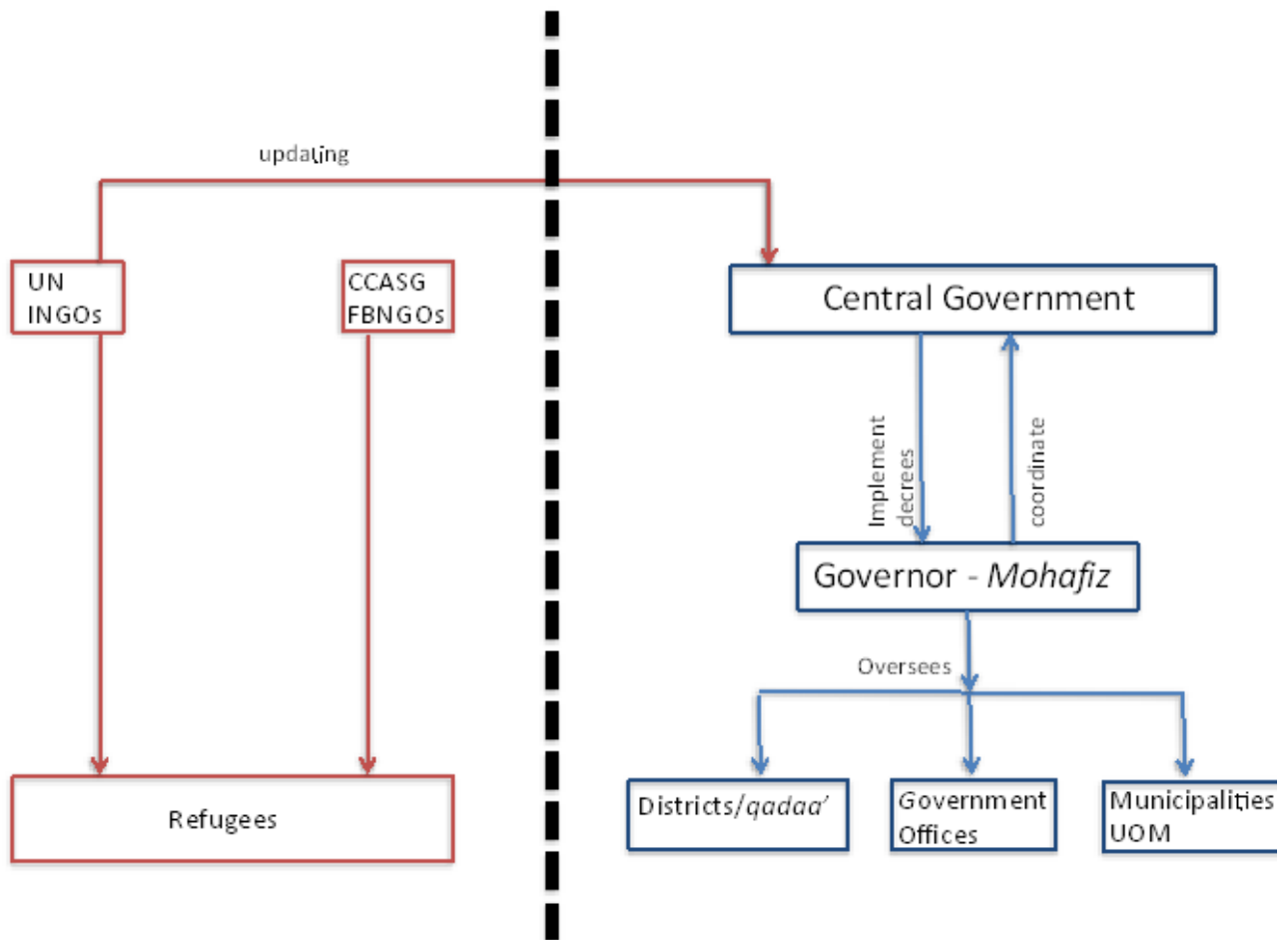


Figure 3. A schematic diagram of current relief mechanism

Soaring Anxieties

During the International Support Group meeting for Lebanon, convened September 25th, 2013 at the United Nations General Assembly, President Suleiman stated that the “aggravating burden now represents a true existential crisis in view of the security and social and economic repercussions”⁴⁰. This burden is clearly detected in UNHCR’s latest report entitled *Lebanon Inter-Agency Response: Syrian Refugees*. In this report, the agency expressed its concerns to the Ministry of Interior with respect to the “curfew measures imposed by a number of municipalities on Syrian refugees between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.”⁴¹. Such measures were put into place in association with official security reports that stated there was a rise in crimes committed by Syrian refugees, and the inflammatory political rhetoric that called for their expulsion. Even amongst the most welcoming host communities, a sense of weariness is growing due to “humanitarian, health, social, economic, ethical, and security concerns”⁴².

40 <http://www.presidency.gov.lb/English/Pages/SpeechesDetails.aspx?nid=20672>

41 Lebanon Inter-Agency Response: Syrian Refugees – 13 September 2013.

42 Statement of Mufti of Saida, Saleem Sosan on October 9, 2013 in a meeting organized by the Islamic Brotherhood’s Union of Relief Organizations. <http://newspaper.annahar.com/article/73897> (in Arabic)

The World Bank has estimated that the Syrian conflict will have cost Lebanon \$7.5 billion dollars in cumulative economic losses by the end of 2014. More alarming numbers predict that the refugee population will reach 2 million by the end of 2014, along with a doubling of the unemployment rate to above 25%, adding more strain on the stability in the country. The influx of refugees caused a decrease of wages in the agricultural sector by 50% in the last two years⁴³. Disaffected Lebanese laborers argue that the sharp decrease in wages is due to Syrian workers accepting lower salaries, even as the latter are receiving compensation from international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) such as food vouchers⁴⁴ and cash for rent. A ministerial committee was formed in August 2013 to curb competition between Syrian and Lebanese businesses. As a result, and according to the caretaker Minister of Economy and Trade Nicholas Nahhas, within three weeks the authorities have “closed down 400 Syrian-owned shops that lacked permits to operate”⁴⁵.

In order to alleviate rising tensions, UNHCR has argued for the establishment of “Community Centers”⁴⁶, each targeting an average of 5000 refugees, to help the refugees further “develop their capacities and self-resilience and share quality time with host communities”⁴⁷. While in theory their objective is sound, it remains dubious in practice as the centers are fully run and managed by INGOs that focus on providing refugees with vocational training and the like, while host communities and local authorities remain disengaged from these activities. In this regard, several incidents have occurred in the Beqaa and Akkar, whereby local groups blocked the main roads to the entrances of villages, restricting humanitarian organizations from entering, and even physically assaulting humanitarian staff members as an expression of dissatisfaction with employment practices and because of the increasing tensions between refugees and the host community.

Equipping and Empowering Decentralized Local Institutions: Mohafazat and Crisis Management Units

It is clear that there is an urgent need to rethink the current relief mechanisms in place in Lebanon and to define a national response plan that focuses on securing decent temporary living conditions for the refugees, as well as addressing the impact of the crisis on the Lebanese host communities. This response will be more efficient and beneficial if it operates not at the level of central government, but rather on a local/regional level.

A. Decentralized Response:

The scattering of refugees throughout Lebanon means the crisis is largely decentralized. The envisioned response plan will be put into action by existing local administrative structures that will be equipped with specialized crisis management teams. The current administrative structure of the decentralized body is based on:

- a. 8 regional governments⁴⁸ (*Mohafazat*);
- b. 26 district jurisdictions (*Aqdya*); and
- c. 985 municipalities (*Baladiyat*)/ 42 unions of municipalities.

43 IRC-Led Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) of the Labor Market System in North and the Beqaa, Lebanon: Constructing market-based livelihood opportunities for refugees and host community families, April 2013

44 WFP launched an e-card system with a plan to reach 800,000 refugees to distribute food vouchers with an amount of \$27 per person a month <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Oct-12/234387-wfp-launches-innovative-e-card-program-to-assist-syrian-refugees.ashx#axzz2ik67soe4>

45 Syrians, Lebanese job competition adds to tensions; Barbara Surk AP, October 3, 2013.

46 The Syria Regional Response Plan - January to June 2013 - mentions under the Protection Sector that UNHCR and partner INGOs are working in twenty Community Centers around Lebanon.

47 RRP 5.

48 The 8 regional governments are: Nabatiyeh, South, the Beqaa, Baalbek-Hermel, Akkar, the North, Mount Lebanon, and Beirut.

The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MIOM) oversees the three levels of authority among which the Mohafazat represent the most suitable venue to lead on relief efforts based on the following reasons:

International relief agencies already operate in a decentralized mode (Bekaa, Tripoli, Akkar, the South, Beirut, and Mount Lebanon) which is closest in geographic distribution to that of the Mohafazat. This system enables agencies to target municipalities within their areas of operation, and to promptly coordinate with their respective central offices.

Muhafiz (Governor) is a grade-one civil servant appointed by the cabinet to implement “policies established by the central government and the coordination among central government offices and officials within the Muhafaza⁴⁹”. This profile highlights the significant role of the Muhafiz/Mohafazat as junctions between national policies and local needs.

Article 47 of decree 116 of 1959 states that a council of Muhafaza should be an advisory body “presided by the Muhafiz and composed of all qaimacams in the Muhafaza, the official in charge of finance in the Muhafaza, and two representatives from each qada appointed by a decree from the Council of Ministers.”⁵⁰ These bodies haven’t been functional, yet their structure and amendments offer convenient platform for the suggested Crisis Management Teams.

B. Modified Operational Mechanism

No changes will occur in the structural organization that defines relations between the four levels of authority – namely the central government, regional governments, district jurisdictions, and municipalities/unions of municipalities. The suggested intervention will target the councils of Mohafazat, which will need to be simultaneously revitalized in the eight regional governorates to ensure balanced operations within the sensitive political landscape.

In order to respond to the escalating refugee crisis, seven units are required in order to set up a comprehensive and an efficient response mechanism:

Unit (1) Information Management and Coordination: This unit will follow up on the registration of refugees, collect data from local authorities and coordinate with Lebanese security divisions to facilitate the works of relief-working groups.

Unit (2) WASH (water, sanitation, hygiene and shelter): This unit will be responsible of implementing infrastructural works, rehabilitating unfinished buildings, and providing basic services in Informal Tented Settlements.

Unit (3) Child Protection and Gender Based Violence: This unit will curb violent practices against the most vulnerable groups among the refugees, and secure mental health assistance to traumatized victims.

Unit (4) Distribution of Food and Non-food Items: This unit will handle the listing of all refugees according to age and gender groups in order to ensure smooth and transparent distribution of clothes, food rations, and the like.

Unit (5) Education: In addition to the formal educational process, literacy programs will be offered to refugees at all ages.

Unit (6) Health: Syrian physicians will assist locals MDs in the diagnosis and treatment of refugees needing medical treatment. Abiding by the Lebanese rules and regulation for medical practice, special permits will allow specialized Syrian MDs to carry out operations on refugees.

49 Harb and Atallah, *Decentralization and Infrastructure Service Delivery in Lebanon*, The World Bank Group, July 2003, p.p. 7

50 Ibid.

Unit (7) Supporting Host Communities and Alleviating Tensions with Refugees: This will be achieved by engaging refugees in municipal public works along ecological lines. Universities will have a key role in conceptualizing strategies that will enable the implementation of this agenda.

The Council of *Mohafaza* Team (CMT) will chair coordination meetings with donors and relief agencies, and will allocate defined tasks to its supportive units to implement relief projects in partnership with the municipalities that host refugees. Due to their extensive knowledge in the field of relief and crisis management, UN agencies will have a significant role in the establishment of the units and in building personnel capacities. The invaluable knowledge gained by the CMTs during this experience will be sustained by integrating the unit managers into the institutional framework of the *Mohafazat*. Eventually, the CMTs and affiliated units will take a lead in planning, implementing, and monitoring developmental projects, and will be ready to respond to emergency situations.

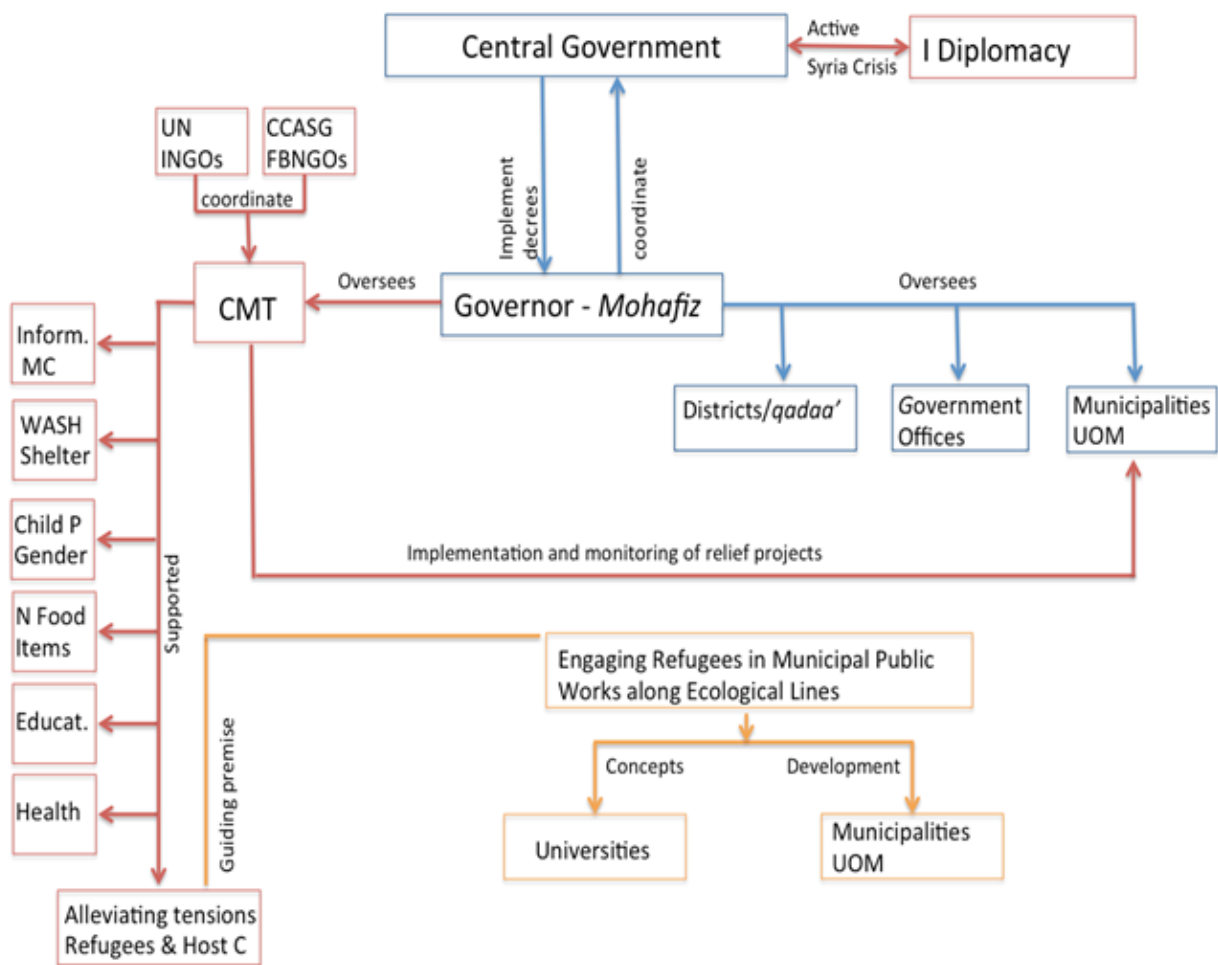


Figure 4. A schematic diagram of the proposed relief mechanism

Alleviating Tension among Refugees and the Host Communities: Engaging Refugees in Municipal Public Works Along Ecological Lines

Building on its long track record in civic and community engagement, the wealth of expertise in its faculty and staff, the dynamism of clubs and activist students, the American University of Beirut (AUB) offered support to the communities of Syrian refugees directly or by influencing national policies and interventions.

Much of these efforts are led by the Community Development and Projects unit (CDPu)⁵¹ at the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS), with an objective to harness the rising commitment and multiple initiatives by channeling them into well-defined locations for greater and more sustainable impact, thus ultimately serving as a model for proper shelter organization.

CDPu's approach to the relief process depends on utilizing human resources within the Syrian refugee community to implement relief projects that are guided by the following key values:

- Minimizing dependence and fostering self-reliance
- Focusing on community assets
- Promoting sustainability of efforts
- Ensuring beneficence
- Promoting dignity
- Upholding cultural norms and values

The priority interventions have been identified as the following:

- Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene projects (WASH)
- Shelter
- Child welfare and youth activities – literacy programs
- Distribution of non-food items

51 CDPu's methodological framework is aligned with the following guiding concepts:

- *Developmental planning*: as defined by Bollens, it "seeks to integrate traditional spatial planning with social and economic planning, as well as to include a participatory process aimed at empowering the marginalized" (2012).
- *Participatory design*: that leads to socially responsive projects. Because peripheral areas function mostly according to 'urf [local customs] with limited adherence to written state codes, operating in such areas requires in-depth understanding to local practices and local knowledge. Local involvement in the decision-making and implementation processes stimulates innovative ideas in terms of technical operations and resource management.
- *Strategic intervention*: targets short-term interventions with an immediate impact meant as a catalyst that induces complementary initiatives by the community itself.

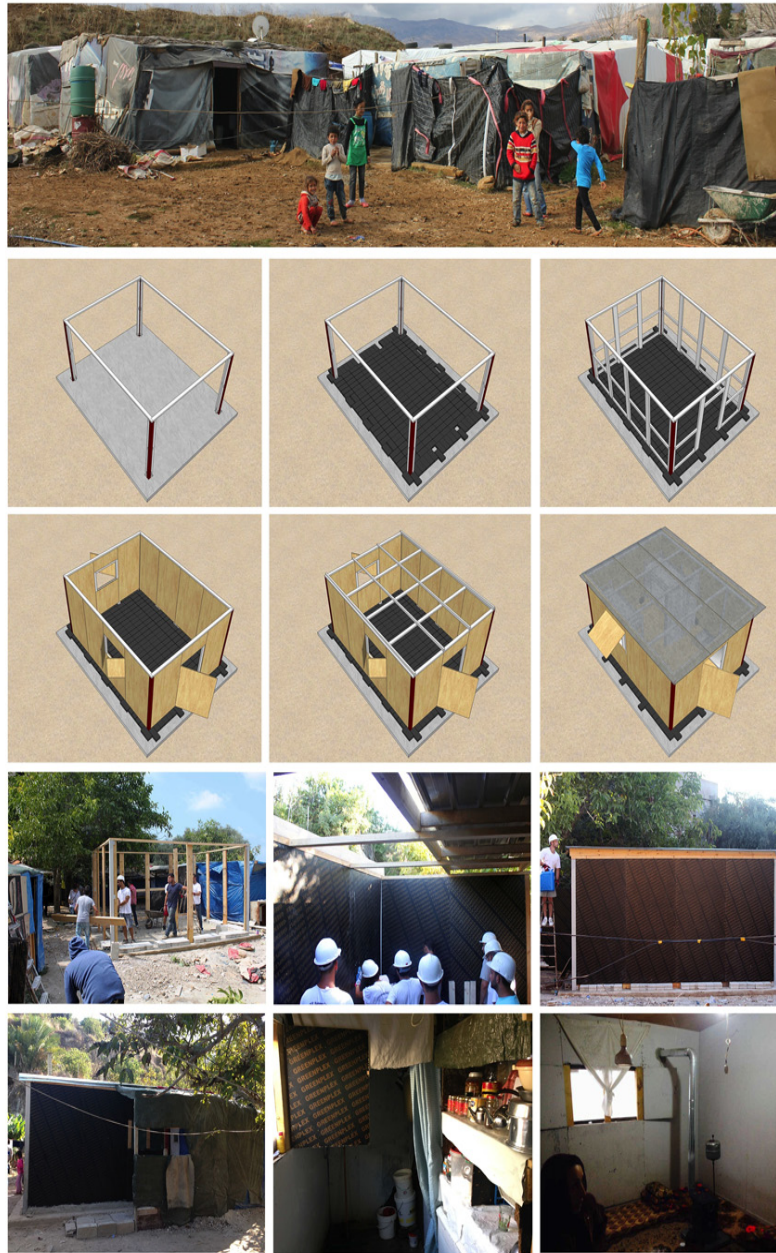


Figure 5. (Top panoramic) picture demonstrating the dilapidated condition of tents in ITSs
 (Middle, six consecutive drawings from left to right) self-help guide for constructing a shelter unit ghata designed by CDPu. The ghata is a portable structure, assembled on grid structure using locally found material. Its area is 20 sqm, adjustable to modifications, and it withstands strong winds and heavy rains.
 (Below, six consecutive pictures from left to right) the first three pictures present the implementation process, while the following three pictures present the modification process devised by the respective refugee-family.



Figure 6. Picture of the *ghata* model built on AUB campus for further testing and upgrading

Based on CDPu's fieldwork with the Syrian Refugees, the Unit's team realized a significant rise in tensions from 2013⁵² until the time of publication, among the refugees and the host communities due to a multitude of reasons (previously discussed in the section entitled Soaring Anxieties). This bleak reality has been noted in UNHCR's *Inter-Agency Response Report* 24-31 October 2013, where Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and Community Support Projects (CSPs) were suggested "to foster peaceful coexistence and sustain or improve the overall protection environment for Syrian refugees"⁵³. However, the application of this agenda has been diluted by focusing on "Basketball for Development"⁵⁴ as a key strategy to reducing tensions. It's worth mentioning here that the Sports' motto, as a conceptual approach to conflict resolution, has been counter-argued in Lebanon by banning fans from entering stadiums, following the assassination of former PM Rafiq El Hariri in February 2005, due to frequent clashes that followed football matches.

Accordingly, in order to alleviate tension among the host communities and refugees in Lebanon, it is imperative to change the perceptions of the refugees among the Lebanese from a "burden" to a temporary "added value". This goal could be achieved once the refugees are engaged in municipal/public works along ecological lines to be planned by

52 Aarsal is located on the Anti-Lebanon mountains along the Syrian-Lebanese border and is hosting more than 40000 refugees in addition to its 35000 local inhabitants that. The town has been regarded as one of the most welcoming host communities that support Syrian rebels in Lebanon. On January 12, 2014 leaflets were distributed in the town calling for a curfew on Syrian Refugees and obliging them to close their 'businesses'.

53 UNHCR Inter-Agency Response Report 24-31 October 2013, p.p. 3 <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Inter-Agency%20Regional%20Response%20-%20Syrian%20Refugees%2020131031.pdf>

54 *ibid* " Lebanon: Two dozen Syrian and Lebanese youths participated in UNHCR and Right to Play's "Basketball for Development" training in Beirut and Akkar this week. These new coaches will in turn train over 1200 individuals and organize sporting activities. The project aims to promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between refugees and local communities through sports".

the CMTs, funded by donor agencies, and monitored by local authorities. All activities that are to be planned in this regard must meet the following guidelines:

- A. *Temporary - Job Vouchers*: Unit Seven (Supporting Host Communities and Alleviating Tensions with Refugees) will prepare technical studies and support partnering municipalities with financial resources to terrace and cultivate untapped communal lands. Detailed budgets will allocate 30% to purchase equipment, 60% to pay wages, and 10% to cover municipal overheads. The Ministry of Public Works and Transport and the International Labor Organization (ILO) will determine fair wages, and contractual agreements with Syrian Refugees will be terminated when they are secured a safe return to their homeland.
- B. *Supplementary – Knowledge Exchange*: The place of origin of most of the refugees is the rural Homs (29%), Aleppo and Idleb (16%), and Damascus (12%)⁵⁵, where they have been living in close proximity to land and depended on cultivation to secure livelihood and sustenance. The fact that 35% of the refugees are sheltering in the Beqaa and 31% in the North (mainly Akkar)⁵⁶, the two areas that comprise the largest agricultural areas in Lebanon (59% of the total arable land)⁵⁷, places the refugees' labor force in the right place to practice their cultivated skills. Accordingly, participating municipalities will offer job opportunities to the local labor force as well as to refugees on the condition to not have less than 50% refugee-laborers. The extensive experience of the Green Project at the Ministry of Agriculture is significant at this level.
- C. *Promote Dignity – Self Reliance*: A UNHCR report entitled *Stories From Syrian Refugees* states that "the vast majority of refugees are dependent on aid"⁵⁸. The growing feeling of hostility⁵⁹ and the rising security incidents among the refugees and the host communities, mainly due to competition over limited job opportunities, is forcing refugees to become fully dependent on aid. Accordingly, males are losing their traditional role as the breadwinner (refugees "feel they cannot meet society's expectations of them as men"⁶⁰) and are venting their anxieties among their respective communities and families. Engaging refugees in the labor force includes securing decent work opportunities and highlights self-reliance.
- D. *Empower Municipalities – Reduce the Negative Externalities*: According to a study conducted by the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, "Almost 400 municipalities do not have one single employee and another 400 have very weak municipal administration"⁶¹. Most of these villages have been identified as vulnerable areas based on communal poverty indicators combined with the number of refugees⁶². The suggested jobs include (but not limited to): terracing, reforestation and cultivating masha'a lands (whether municipal or governmental), restoring river pathways, reclaiming communal ponds, among others, all have direct economic and ecological returns⁶³.

55 <http://www.acaps.org/img/documents/r-regional-analysis-for-syria---part-ii-host-countries-june-2013.pdf>

56 <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>

57 2010, Agricultural Census – Draft Report, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agricultural Organization.

58 <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/syria.php>

59 Aarsal is located on the Anti-Lebanon mountains along the Syrian-Lebanese border and is hosting more than 40,000 refugees in addition to its 35,000 local inhabitants that. The town has been regarded as one of the most welcoming host communities that support Syrian rebels in Lebanon. On January 12, 2014 leaflets were distributed in the town calling for a curfew on Syrian refugees and obliging them to close their 'businesses'.

60 <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/rr-shifting-sands-lebanon-syria-refugees-gender-030913-summ-en.pdf>

61 <http://www.lcps-lebanon.org/featuredArticle.php?id=6>

62 <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/rr-bric-livelihoods-syrian-refugees-lebanon-211113-en.pdf>

63 Example on this is the project entitled Enhancing Alternative Agricultural Practices in Rural Southern Lebanon, which targets a cluster of borderline villages. Marwaheen, Ramiyeh, Jibein, Dhayra and Zalouteye provide solid evidence that poor agricultural techniques, water shortage and untapped lands constitute the underlying causes for economic deprivation in the area of study. An average of 500 donnums is municipal or communal in each of the respective villages, all of which is untapped land. Upon the rehabilitation of a communal pond in the village of Marwaheen, the CDPu team documented the increase of vegetable cultivation by 60% in a time frame of one year. The successful intervention enabled the CDPu to partner with a donor agency, purchase a piece of land located on proximity to the cluster of municipalities, and build an agricultural extension center to promote enhanced cultivation practices and to exploit untapped communal lands.

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