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Speak up via WhatsApp: Understanding the Life Worlds of Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon

View on Lake Qaraoun

Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a WhatsApp survey about the life worlds of Syrian refugees and host communities conducted in Qaraoun (West Bekaa) in November 2017. The survey is at the core of an Innovation Project 'Speak your Mind to Prevent Conflict in Lebanon', funded by the UNDP innovation facility. The rationale of the WhatsApp survey was two-fold. First, to test the feasibility of using WhatsApp as an interactive survey tool which enhances local engagement of the crisis response in Lebanon. Second, to enrich our understanding of local conflict dynamics and the impact of assistance by collecting narrative data from both host community members and refugees. This section provides a short overview of the report's key findings.

WhatsApp – a Feasible Tool for Two Way Communication?

Overall, our respondents gave very positive feedback on the tool, appreciating it as an easily accessible way of communicating their needs and concerns to international organizations. Digital literacy is widespread among both host communities and refugees in Lebanon, making WhatsApp an underexploited tool for data collection. Indeed, the latest VASyR showed that 84% of refugee households use WhatsApp.

242 people participated in our survey out of 1434 numbers we contacted, which gives us a response rate of 17%. This is better than many online surveys where response rates are between 10 and 20%. Our survey was also more demanding as people were asked to send us voice and text messages to open-ended questions over a whole month.

The survey was more successful in reaching out to Syrian refugees than to host communities. 87% of our sample were Syrians and only 13% Lebanese. We also struggled to reach out to women who only make up 18% of our sample. That said, there was some overlap in respondents with men replying to the initial questions and female members of the household replying to later questions. All age groups were represented in the survey, with most respondents being between 30 and 40. The survey also managed to elicit the voices of more vulnerable demographics. Of those who indicated their employment situation in the survey, the majority were unemployed.

The narrative data we received is very rich, giving us a data volume comparable to conducting 242 qualitative interviews. Contemporary social stability analysis is often skewed towards quantitative data, yet rich narrative data can help to elucidate what exactly survey results mean and what the underlying factors of tensions between Lebanese and Syrians in Lebanon are.

Overall, we argue that once scaled up, the WhatsApp survey can make five important contributions to development and humanitarian programming in Lebanon and beyond:

- **First, it gives people more voice,** particularly vulnerable groups who struggle with literacy and may not feel comfortable to reply via text message. By providing the option to send voice messages, the WhatsApp tool empowers people to express their needs, concerns and fears in their own words. As such, it can complement needs assessments as community input via WhatsApp can help to make project selection and design more inclusive and accountable.
- **Second, the survey tool boosts Monitoring & Evaluation analysis** as bottom-up feedback supports a more rigorous evaluation of project impact and accessibility long after project

completion. Such feedback can also shed light on some 'hidden barriers' to project accessibility for vulnerable populations, knowledge of which can help to refine project design in the future.

- **Third, the tool produces nuanced qualitative data that enriches our understanding of refugee lives and inter-community tensions in Lebanon**. The informality of WhatsApp and the anonymization of data creates a safe space for people to articulate their views, including ideas and stories they would not narrate in public. As such, the survey gives us greater insight into public sentiments that may be simmering below the surface. At the same time, the survey also breaks the media's monopoly on 'what people really think' by demonstrating that people's discourses are much more diverse than the media narrative suggests.
- **Fourth, the WhatsApp survey can become a pertinent tool to collect real time data in crisis situations.** A WhatsApp network of phone numbers can be set up in at-risk areas. With such a system in place, two-way communication between people on the ground and international response actors can be initiated rapidly. People could send us voice or text messages explaining the situation on the ground and their needs, while international organizations could inform them about safe zones and aid distribution locations.
- **Finally, such a WhatsApp tool is also a more cost-effective data collection tool** than conventional household surveys.

Key Findings: Conflicts, Needs and Project Feedback in Qaraoun

Syrians and Lebanese in Qaraoun live in very different life worlds and have very different needs. Syrians 'personalized' the needs question, explaining the needs of their household or their settlement, while Lebanese laid out broader needs of the village. Part of the reason is that Syrian refugees do not conceptualize themselves as being part of the village. Syrian needs were much more basic and personal, focusing on fuel, food and shelter, while Lebanese often expressed collective needs especially infrastructure support and environmental protection. Yet, while Syrian and Lebanese needs differed, there was notable convergence on the need for more livelihoods opportunities, especially for youth and women.

There was a clear sense among both host communities and refugees that assistance is shrinking, which puts more pressure on both communities. Both Syrians and Lebanese shared the view that assistance to refugees is the responsibility of NGOs and the UN not the government or the municipality. Recent changes in the distribution methodology of cash assistance e-cards appear to have hit Qaraoun very hard. A municipality informant claimed that 70% of households that used to receive the e-cards were discontinued just before we launched the survey. Syrians expressed considerable frustration not only about the lack of assistance but also about what they perceived as the arbitrariness of its distribution. They often felt that others were benefitting, while they were personally excluded from assistance.

There are few 'neutral' relationships. When we asked about Lebanese/Syrian relationships, the replies revealed significant contrasts, with relationships being either good or bad but few in between. Overall, positive portrayals of inter-community relationships outweighed negative ones. This conflicts with results of the ARK and the VASyR perception surveys, where most respondents categorize relationships as 'neutral'. It is however in line with protection monitoring research. Protection interviewers have

often seen refugees describing situations of exploitation and harassment only then to classify host community/refugee relationships as 'neutral'. This suggests that more problematic relationships hide behind the 'neutral' category which can be better unpacked through qualitative research and rich narrative data.

Both Lebanese and Syrian respondents conveyed diverse and nuanced accounts of inter-community relationships. Their stories mostly defied the blunt stereotypes that often characterize the media discourse that pits one homogeneous Lebanese community against an equally homogeneous Syrian community. One important distinction our respondents established was between social and transactional relationships. The categories of 'Lebanese'/'Syrians' do not matter that much in social circles, yet exploitation often defines the more transactional relationships between Lebanese and Syrians.

Respondents were much more outspoken about economic conflicts than about security-related conflicts. Both Syrians and Lebanese identified 'lack of jobs' as the main problem rather than 'competition for jobs'. Overall, Lebanese and Syrian accounts of the nature of unemployment differed reflecting differences in educational profile, class and sector of employment. Yet, there was a shared understanding that Lebanon's economic woes cannot be solely blamed on the Syrian presence but are related to macroeconomic and global factors. Syrians described how their presence splits Lebanese communities into those who benefit (through cheap labour and rent payment) and those who see themselves as bearing the brunt of pressure on resources and falling wages.

Gender dynamics play a crucial role in shaping inter-community relationships. The fact that most of our respondents (82%) were men was mirrored in the stories we received, several of which described incidents of harassment of Syrian men by Lebanese men. Syrian stories illustrated how the interplay between toxic masculinity and Syrian illegality often renders Syrians powerless in the face of abuse. Syrian impotence emerged as a foil against which Lebanese masculinity and dominance is asserted 'as the owners of the area'. Such incidents unfold against the backdrop of young Lebanese men struggling to live up to normative expectations of masculinity as they suffer from job precarity and economic marginalization. This may push them to perform their masculinity in the relationship with weaker Syrian men, whose position is even more precarious.

Perceptions of safety were widespread but also differed between Lebanese and Syrians. Many refugees (18% of all stories) pointed out that their economic and survival fears are so profound that they hollow out any feeling of physical security. Refugees' sense of insecurity also strongly related to the lack of legal papers, checkpoints and army raids (14% of stories). Lebanese, on the other hand, were more concerned with political insecurity and crimes. Some Lebanese identified Syrian refugees as a source of insecurity. Overall, safety and security in Qaraoun appear to be premised on strict control and management, especially of Syrians.

The concept of dignity - or rather the absence of it - was pervasive in Syrian accounts. Syrian refugees see rights as exclusively tied to citizenship in Lebanon and feel that their status as refugees does not come with much in the way of rights, protection and assistance. Many conclude that the only way to regain a dignified life is to return to Syria.

Indeed, there was an overwhelming desire to return to Syria and a clear understanding that Syrians have no future in Lebanon. The main precondition for return was safety. Yet, Syrians also articulated

that conditions in Lebanon are becoming more restrictive for them and that return may be imposed on them before a safe and dignified return is possible. Some Syrians openly expressed their fears of forced return. Lebanese respondents made clear that they expect Syrians to return to their country once conditions allow. Yet, some Lebanese were less confident in the prospect of return. They likened the fate of Syrian refugees to the fate of the Palestinians who after decades of displacement have not been able to return to their home country.

UNDP's project in Qaraoun, the installation of solar lighting at the promenade of the Qaraoun dam, was well known and popular among Lebanese. 55% of our respondents knew about the project, and 30% thought that they or the village at large had benefitted from it. Most Lebanese respondents were positive about the project, mentioning its impact on tourism that could help to revive the Qaraoun economy. Syrians were much less likely to know about the project or to have been there, not least because a municipal curfew prevents them from going out in the evening. For refugees living in Informal Tented Settlements (ITS), their settlement forms the horizon of their lives. This means that if a project does not exist in the settlement or the highway leading to the settlement, it effectively does not exist for them. Many pointed out that the project benefitted the Lebanese or the village at large, but not the Syrian refugees. In fact, the survey revealed visible and invisible barriers to project accessibility such as curfews, transportation and social discrimination some of which also apply to vulnerable Lebanese.

The analysis suggests that it is difficult to design 'community projects' which benefit both Lebanese and Syrians given their different needs and the physical segregation of communities forged by informal settlements in the Bekaa. While tensions do shape Lebanese/Syrian relationships in Qaraoun, most people have nuanced perspectives on this relationship, which create multiple entry points for peacebuilding interventions. Livelihoods opportunities, in particular, constitute a shared interest and priority for both Lebanese and Syrians.

Speak up via WhatsApp: Understanding the Life Worlds of Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Lebanon

Introduction

Here, we are afraid to walk on the street and be verbally assaulted by someone. We can't respond because it's not our country. So we never dare talk to him, even though his words are full of disrespect and mockery. Some days we are beaten, but we have to stay silent and not respond. Why? Because it's not our country.

- Male Syrian Worker, 23 years old, Qaraoun

Seven years into the Syrian crisis and with almost a million Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon, a country of six million inhabitants, perception surveys show that host community fatigue is rising. In 2014, when there was still hope that the displacement crisis would be temporary, 40% of Lebanese said that there are no tensions with Syrians.[1] By 2018, that number had dropped to 2%.[2] At the same time, the protection space for refugees has been shrinking. In February 2018, 30% of refugees reported having experienced verbal harassment in the last three months, a 10% increase compared to data collected in May 2017.[3] What exactly drives Lebanese-Syrian tensions and how can conflict be prevented? We at UNDP felt that a lot of interesting data was slipping through the survey questionnaires and that it would be important to hear from host communities and refugees directly to better unpack these tensions trends.

Our WhatsApp tool 'Speak your Mind to Prevent Conflict in Lebanon' aimed to address this data gap by more effectively harnessing the new ways of connecting and knowing created by Lebanon's vibrant social mediascape. Digital literacy is widespread among both host communities and refugees in Lebanon: 84% of refugee households use WhatsApp (VASyr 2017) and younger people in particular consider information relayed through WhatsApp as more trustworthy than traditional media.[4] Tapping into these digital possibilities helps UNDP Lebanon to have a more egalitarian relationship with people on the ground while also collecting real-time, localized data to strengthen its conflict prevention systems. The desired outcome is that Lebanon will remain stable and refugees will be safe through a crisis response that proactively responds to peoples' fears and needs and detects early warning signs to prevent the outbreak of violence.

We piloted our first WhatsApp survey in November 2017 in the village of Qaraoun in the Bekaa region, which hosts the highest number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The WhatsApp tool was developed together with target users through a one-day workshop in Qaraoun, using design thinking methodology. We also conducted three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with refugees and five Key Informant Interviews to triangulate with the data collected through WhatsApp. We then sent the survey questions as voice messages to 1434 mobile phone numbers. Participants were asked to tell a story recorded as audio WhatsApp message responding to questions on i) community needs, ii) conflict dynamics and iii) feedback on stabilization projects in the area. The voice message option helped us to reach people who are illiterate. Among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, 23% of female heads of household and 8% of male

[1] UNICEF; OCHA and REACH, Defining Community Vulnerability in Lebanon', September 2015-February 2015, at 87.
[2] ARK-UNDP National Perception Survey (January 2018).
[3] Ibid.
[4] UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR 2017)', available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/VASyR%202017.compressed.pdf, at 18; The Samir Kassir Foundation, 'Reception and Perception of Radical Messages', Pilot Study, June 2016, at 8.

heads of household are illiterate.[5] The survey was run for a whole month starting a new topic each week. 242 people participated in the survey, meaning we exceeded our initial target of 200 respondents.

The narrative data we received added much nuance to our understanding of host community/refugee relationships in tense and vulnerable areas in Lebanon. It also exposed some 'hidden barriers' to accessing projects for vulnerable populations in the area which will help to refine project design in the future. Crucially, our respondents gave very positive feedback on the tool as it created an informal channel of communication between them and international organizations which did not exist previously.

We are now implementing the second trial of the WhatsApp survey tool in another, bigger town in the Bekaa, Bar Elias, incorporating lessons learnt from the first trial. More than 500 people participated in our second survey showing the potential of the tool to scale up. One key concern is to consolidate our methodology to ensure other organizations and partners can more easily replicate and adapt the survey tool for their purposes. We are thus in the process of developing a 'How to' Guide that lays out the key steps, lessons learnt and good practices on WhatsApp-based surveying.

[5] VASyR 2017, at 11.

1. Qaraoun: A Model Village?

Qaraoun is in many ways a typical Lebanese village. 5000 Lebanese live in the village while 15,000 Lebanese from the village live abroad in Venezuela, Brazil, Senegal and Gambia amongst many other countries. In addition, 5000 Syrians live in the village, according to the municipality.[6] While on the surface the town bears signs of prosperity, hidden behind the mansions used by the Lebanese diaspora as their summer residence is economic decline. The town lacks an economic base and heavily depends on remittances from the Lebanese diaspora that have diminished in recent years due to the crises in countries as far flung as Venezuela and Saudi Arabia.

In fact, while the Syrian crisis has more visibly touched Qaraoun with small informal settlements (ITS) now dotting the agricultural lands just outside the village, the crisis in Latin America may have had more direct consequences for Lebanese livelihoods in Qaraoun. The internationalism of this village, which lies a good two-hour drive away from Beirut, is uncanny. 'Hablo espanol?', I was asked by a Lebanese in an ITS who operates a mini super market there for Syrian refugees. Qaraoun has 34 ITS, but some are very small only hosting four or five tents. Approximately one third of Syrians in Qaraoun live in informal settlements, while two thirds live in mostly sub-standard buildings in the village. The ITS are managed by Mohamad, the 'Doctor', as the physiotherapist is affectionately called in the village. Mohamad works part-time for the municipality. In Qaraoun, the municipality is in charge. It has rented some land to host ITS and supplies them with basic services such as electricity and water. Water is provided free of charge (a local NGO pays the municipality for water delivery) but electricity must be paid by the refugees. They are also charged 25,000 LBP (16,6 USD) for rent per month. The municipality claims that it collects the rent and puts it into a fund to assist Syrians with medical emergencies.

Syrian ITS look very different. There is one ITS up in the mountains, a 10 minutes' drive from the village. It is built of cement, more like 'studios', as one key informant remarked. He went at some length to portray the settlements as a 'way of life' rather than a survival method for Syrians: 'those people like to live in tents. That's how they would live in Syria. They organize it with a bed room, a kitchen, a little garden etc'. Yet, upon arrival, the hardship of life in the settlement was immediately apparent: garbage was piling up in front of the 'studios' and flies swarmed over discarded food packets and dozens of empty plastic bottles. It would be difficult to keep refugees warm there during the harsh winters of the Bekaa. People came out and engaged Mohamad from the scouts complaining about the lack of electricity in the settlements. A common claim by key informants was that Syrian stories would be alarmist, inaccurate and dependent on the season: 'they would say anything for a bit of money'. One municipal staff member estimated the accuracy of refugees' accounts as '50/50'. The truth is clearly monopolized by the municipality and the host community.

Another ITS is located close to the village. It is managed by the municipality. It is made up of tents rather than cement, but it is much better organized and cleaner. The tents are wrapped in plastic sheets with colourful advertisements. One shows shiny, blue sports bags and reads 'exsport: urban sports life'. Another one is cynically wrapped into a cover displaying hundreds and hundreds of dollar bills. The advertisements on the tents epitomize the commercialized nature of the Syrian presence in Lebanon.

[6] UNHCR registration records suggest that the number is somewhat lower (3923 refugees).

Syrians must organize and pay their own rent for informal settlements, they have to pay utilities, and some pay municipal taxes. Their precarity in Lebanon leaves ample room for exploitation especially in the labour market, where most work as informal daily labourers in agriculture and construction.

Informal Tented Settlement (ITS) organized by the Municipality

Qaraoun is in many ways a model village. Neither refugees nor host communities report many tensions. Relations between Lebanese and Syrians were described as cordial, respectful, and even ceremonial. Christians and Muslims live together peacefully, giving each other the platform to express and promote their faith.[7] Refugees in our survey reported that Qaraoun is much better than other places in the Bekaa. One said:

> The relationships are good, but sometimes there is some sensitivity because of work. Those are regular compared to other regions; here is the best region. I've lived in Bar Elias and I've seen the difference between here and there.

This seemed to stem from a general perception of Qaraoun as hospitable and oriented towards coexistence since before the Civil War. Lebanese community members felt that this longstanding reputation explains the welcoming spirit that residents and the municipality have towards the Syrian community. This was juxtaposed with underlying tensions resulting from the depletion of resources, increase in pollution, intermarriages, competition over jobs, and overcrowding in some areas like schools and the ITS. Although our Lebanese workshop participants stated that relationships are well-fostered on both sides, power dynamics between both communities are very clear.

Indeed, our FGDs and interviews suggest that Syrians in Qaraoun are seen through two lenses: 'pity' and 'control'. Syrian refugees are accepted in Qaraoun as part of a religious and humanitarian duty. Yet, the relationship is based on a clear hierarchy between Lebanese and Syrians. Syrians are often portrayed as culturally and socially inferior. For example, one key informant explained to us the urgent need to teach Syrians on hygiene: 'they don't know anything'. The second premise of the relationship is 'control'. Syrians are seen as a burden rather than a threat to Qaraoun because 'we have nice control'. There are very few security incidents in the village and most Lebanese and Syrians reported feeling safe. Control is based on strict regulations, monitoring and digitalization of Syrians. 'Syrians are numbers to us', one key informant told us triumphantly. Qaraoun is proud of its management tools. Syrians remember their municipality file number better than their UNHCR number. Who lives where, with whom and receives what assistance - all this information is fed into a large computerized database in Qaraoun.

There are also more visible operations of control. The municipality enforces a curfew after 9pm which applies only to Syrian men. Those who are found in violation of the curfew must pay a fine of 50,000 LBP (33 USD). In our FGDs, refugees even portrayed the curfew as protective rather than coercive. 'Of course, it's better because there are some evil people who spoil it for others who are not involved. One person can discredit the whole camp', they said. Yet, in our survey, there were contested accounts of that curfew with some refugees claiming that it de facto applied to all Syrians and earlier than 9pm. In their voice messages, refugees were also less positive about the curfew, describing how it constrained their freedom of movement.

One interesting finding from the FGDs was that Syrian participants were unable (or unwilling) to identify community representatives. Some of them said 'we represent each other', others mentioned the

[7] Around 90% of the population is Sunni Muslim, while 10% are Christian.

municipality or the UN but there was no sense of 'Syrian representation' through a Shawish[8], a religious figure or any other type of community representative. This may be an indicator of the thorough depoliticization of Syrian communities in Lebanon, which is a key tenet of Lebanese policy on refugees; particularly given the history of Palestinian political mobilization in Lebanon, which is often blamed for the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war. It also underlines the active role the municipality has assumed in the organization of the Syrian presence. Indeed, in recent years, the municipality has taken over the management of aid for refugees from the Muslim Scouts. According to the mayor, there is no Shawish acting as an intermediary and civil society does not play a big role in aid distribution either. The policeman and Dr. Mohammad take care of the camps.

The big fear in Qaraoun is the loss of control resulting in 'chaos'. There is a clear sense among both host communities and refugees that assistance is declining which puts more pressure on both communities. There is also a shared understanding that assistance to refugees is the responsibility of NGOs and the UN not the government or the municipality. If assistance decreases both refugees and the municipality blame the international community. Neglect of host communities is also a dominant theme especially as unemployment has risen in Qaraoun.

In the bigger picture, Qaraoun does not differ significantly from other West Beqaa villages. Employment in Qaraoun is seasonal and relies on Syrian migrant labour. Qaraoun also has a large diaspora responsible for remittances and therefore for an important part of residents' livelihoods. Economic decline has put more pressure on both Syrians and Lebanese leading to more conflicts. That said, these social conflicts are usually communicated more directly in conversations with residents from other areas. In villages like Mdoukha, Rafid, and Jeb Jannine, which are not too far from Qaraoun, Lebanese are much more outspoken about social conflicts in their villages and cite them to justify measures like curfews. Both Lebanese and Syrians in Qaraoun were more circumspect about expressing inter-community tensions and assigned blame to the UN for the problems they were facing. This restraint may be rooted in the municipality's prominent role in handling refugee affairs in general and the ITSs in particular.

Other West Beqaa communities differ from Qaraoun in that they receive more attention, assistance, and institutionalized support from donors because their refugee population is bigger and since their municipalities are overwhelmed (as bigger, more populous areas) to manage the refugee presence themselves. Municipalities are therefore more direct about the needs and problems they are facing. In Qaraoun, this line is blurred because of the increasing stake the municipality has in managing the well-being of the refugee population.

[8] Shawishes are Syrian camp coordinators and often local strongmen in the community.

ITS in the mountains outside of Qaraoun

2. Rationale and Methodology

The rationale of the survey was twofold. First, to test the feasibility of using WhatsApp as an interactive survey tool. Would people respond to a WhatsApp survey? Would the tool be sufficiently credible? Would it produce relevant data? Second, the goal was to enrich our understanding of local conflict dynamics and the impact of assistance by collecting narrative data from both host community members and refugees. Our starting point was that the quantitative data we received especially from the ARK perception survey suggested that tensions between host communities and refugees are rising in Lebanon. Yet, we did not know how these tensions manifest themselves in people's everyday life and what exactly drives these tensions. The WhatsApp survey helped us to ask these 'why?' and 'how?' questions and delve into the nitty gritty of inter-community dynamics. Our hypothesis was that inter-community relationships in Qaraoun are somewhat better than in many other areas in the Bekaa. This made us wonder whether some insights could be distilled from Qaraoun on stability strategies that could be applied elsewhere. Qaraoun also stood out as a village with a very active municipality fully in charge of the organization of refugees. It thus offers an interesting case study of what impact a strong municipality has on host community/refugee relationships.

The methodology chosen for this project is based on a mixed methods approach which includes Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), a design thinking workshop as well as the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the WhatsApp voice and text messages. As a first step, we conducted three FGDs with refugees in Qaraoun to better understand their social media use particularly WhatsApp as well as their perspectives on life in Qaraoun and social relationships with Lebanese host communities.[9]

The rationale for separate FGDs was to create a safe space for frank discussion among Syrians. We were concerned that bringing Lebanese and Syrians together in one discussion format would de facto silence the latter given the power hierarchies that underpin host community/refugee relationships in Lebanon. FGD participants unanimously agreed that WhatsApp is the most common application for informal communication within their social circles. It is normally used by all members of the household, yet dynamics differ within each household when asked about who keeps the phone during the day, for how long, and what time is best to get in touch with them on WhatsApp. Most participants agreed that after 5pm is the best time to contact them, because those who leave the phone at home with the family would be back from work by then, and so would those men who take the phone with them during the day.

While refugees supported the idea of opening new communication channels through WhatsApp, they were adamant that these should not replace other forms of engagement especially household visits and SMS communication. For example, they argued that the most effective medium through which to receive updates and information is through SMS from the UN or the municipality. WhatsApp does not currently play a role in these notifications. Overall, participants tended to trust face to face communication, phone calls, or SMS more than WhatsApp. Participants emphasized the importance of having a formal profile and cohesive branding of the survey tool as refugees are not used to the UN communicating through such an informal application.

[9] The municipality helped us to organize these FGDs and most people who came and agreed to participate were men. In our second trial in Bar Elias, we made sure to organize a female FGD to ensure women's voices and concerns are better reflected in our analysis.

That said, all FGD participants expressed their willingness to participate in the WhatsApp study and most people preferred to reply via voice message, especially as some participants were illiterate and felt that this would give equal opportunity for everyone to have a say. Participants said they would be comfortable sharing information about host/refugee community relationships via WhatsApp. They recommended using multiple channels to inform people about the survey including through the municipality (SMS, municipality facebook page and word of mouth), direct contact (face to face), flyers and posters that publicize the phone number from which the survey questions will be sent.

Subsequently, UNDP hosted a workshop at the Qaraoun Municipality on 28 October 2017 to develop the survey tool using design thinking methodology. The attendees, 11 in total, were six women and five men, with only one Syrian participant present. Six participants were staff members at local NGOs and the Women's Rights Organization in Qaraoun. Three others worked in the health sector, one at a hospital, two at a public health clinic and two municipality staff members also attended. All attendees had experience working for and with members of both the host and refugee community in Qaraoun.

The workshop had four objectives, namely to 1) ensure context sensitivity, 2) to build community ownership, 3) to conduct a conflict analysis and finally 4) to mobilize the community. To begin with, the workshop fostered an open exchange with community stakeholders to ensure that the survey design is inclusive, participatory, conflict sensitive and practicable i.e. that it aligns with people's habits in social media usage. The WhatsApp tool itself was tested using different scenarios and questions. We also tried to build confidence and interest in the survey by explaining its rationale, implementation, data usage and protection to assuage community concerns. Workshop participants then conducted a conflict analysis to establish a more nuanced understanding of the conflict dynamics in Qaraoun. Finally, we trained and recruited community mobilizers and refugee focal points to promote participation in the survey especially among younger people and vulnerable communities. They received flyers and posters to distribute. We also put up posters ourselves announcing the survey and asking people to save the phone number from which the survey questions will be sent.

Poster announcing the WhatsApp Survey and UNDP's number

Design Thinking Workshop in Qaraoun

3.1. Data Analysis

Regarding the survey data, all recordings were processed by a data entry clerk in Arabic and then translated into English. The data was subsequently analyzed using 'narrative inquiry' method. Narrative inquiry is a method which systematically collects, analyzes and represents people's stories in their own words.[10] It is part of the 'interpretive tradition' in qualitative research which seeks to understand human experiences by unearthing their motivations, concepts and beliefs rather than to explain or predict them by identifying cause and effect.[11] It differs from other methods in that its primary material are words rather than observations (ethnography) or numbers (statistical analysis).[12] Narrative inquiry is a particularly apt method for the WhatsApp survey because the stories people tell are the only entry point we have into their lives.[13]

Narrative inquiry treats stories as knowledge *per se* as they give insight into 'the social reality of the narrator'.[14] In addition to their individual experiences, the story also 'reflect(s) wider social and historical changes that form the context of his or her life.'[15]As Clandinin and Rosiek put it, 'narrative inquiry honor(s) lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding.'[16] Narrative researchers value 'local knowledge', which is often diverse, messy, situational and partial.[17] In our case, narrative inquiry shed light on how both refugees and host community members make sense of their lives and relationships. The method helped to identify common ideas and frames, while also acknowledging the diversity of peoples' perspectives. Our question was not whether each and every story we received was 'true' or 'objective', but what that story tells us about the mentalities, ideas, fears and social context of our respondents.

We also coded the replies (e.g. 'positive relationships', 'positive relationships but tensions', 'negative relationships', 'neutral relationships') and counted the most frequent categories to give the reader the full spectrum of replies. Yet, given the qualitative nature of the data such quantification is merely approximate, and the narrative inquiry forms the core of our analysis.

3.2. Ethics

There were also ethical reasons for choosing a narrative driven methodology. Open ended survey questions and the voice message option empowered our respondents, especially refugees, to put things in their own words, unfiltered by bureaucratic concepts. Narrative inquiry foregrounds their speech and takes their stories seriously. Yet, there is also a risk that such a study raises expectations of concrete assistance among people who struggle to survive on an everyday basis. We tried to manage these expectations through a carefully worded introductory message that explained the purpose of the study and advised people to contact the police in case of emergencies and UNHCR for protection and assistance needs. However, some of the messages we received show that it is almost

[10] K. Etherington, 'Narrative approaches to case studies', Keele University, available at https://www.keele.ac.uk/media/keeleuniversity/facnatsci/schpsych/documents/counselling/conference/5thannual/NarrativeApproachestoCaseStudies.pdf.

[11] M. Hollis and S. Smith, *Explaining and Understanding in International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[12] S. Pinnegar and J.G. Daynes, 'Locating Narrative Inquiry Historically: Thematics in the Turn to Narrative', in D.J. Clandinin, *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (London: Sage, 2007), at 6 (online version).

[13] We did ask our survey respondents for some biographical information but not everybody provided it. Otherwise, we do not hold any other information about these particular people than the stories they told us.

[14] K. Etherington, 'Narrative approaches to case studies', at 9.

[15] M. Andrews, 'Exploring Cross-Cultural Boundaries', in D.J. Clandinin, *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (London: Sage, 2007), at 4 (online version).

[16] D.J. Clandinin and J. Rosiek, 'Mapping a Landscape of Narrative Inquiry: Borderland Spaces and Tensions', in D.J. Clandinin, *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (London: Sage, 2007), at 9 (online version).

[17] C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

impossible not to raise expectations when engaging with very vulnerable communities. For example, one Palestinian refugee admonished us:

> We will help you, if you are going to help us. However, if you don't want to help us, don't talk to us. All I care about is helping the people with medicine and nursing, because people are being thrown out of hospitals… I don't have any problem with giving you my name. My name is Khaled… and that's what I ask from you. If you want to communicate with me, this is my phone number. I'm living in Al Qaroun, my parents and my wife are from Nahr Al Bared, but I moved to live here because of the crisis. They've made humans like animals. However, any animal in Europe gets treated more humanely. They are treating us like animals, and this is a crime against humanity. People are left and ignored.

We compensated survey participants with phone credit for their time and data use at the end of the survey and with the hope that this may somewhat offset the frustration with research work that does not provide any tangible benefits.

3.3. Limitations

There are at least four limitations to this study. First, our sample is a convenience sample rather than a random sample as we received the numbers we used for sending the survey from the municipality. The municipality claimed that the numbers represent the records of all the numbers of people living in Qaraoun with slightly more Syrian than Lebanese numbers. Nonetheless, there may be biases in the sampling. In fact, our sample is skewed towards men and Syrians, meaning that our results are weaker for women and Lebanese. There may also be other biases in who chooses to respond to the questions and who does not that we cannot fully account for. Second, there may be distortions in what people felt comfortable telling us. Data from refugees in Lebanon always has to be contextualized in their precarious situation in the country: 74% of refugees aged 15 or above live illegally in Lebanon.[18] They fear arrest and detention and depend on the goodwill of Lebanese communities rather than a reliable and legally anchored protection regime for their day-to-day survival. In other words, the risks of reporting mistreatment, negative relationships or conflicts may be too high for very vulnerable refugees.

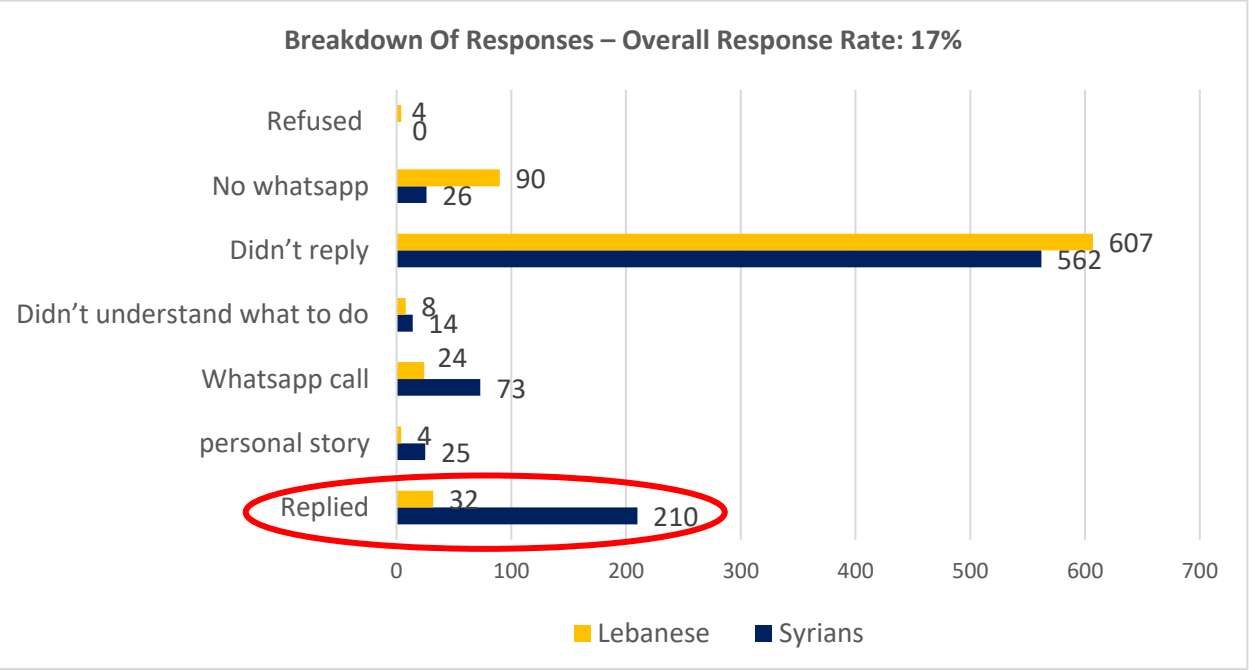
Another potential limitation is that we partnered with the municipality in doing this study, using their facilities to conduct the workshop and the FGDs and their phone numbers and networks to reach out to people. This was an asset as it helped us to establish the credibility of the survey, but also made it more difficult for our respondents to criticize the municipality, which very few did in their replies. At the same time, people freely expressed critique of the army, the UN, the Lebanese government and other community members in their WhatsApp messages, suggesting they felt reasonably confident talking about sensitive issues. The advantage of qualitative data here is that it captures more of the nuance and veiled critique that vulnerable populations express than quantitative data. While we requested some biographical data at the beginning of the survey (gender, nationality, age, employment situation), we explicitly asked respondents not to tell us their names to help us keep the survey fully anonymous. Respondents could also choose not to provide any biographical data. A final limitation is that the voice data was transcribed, and then translated and analyzed in English, meaning that very specific ideas or concepts may not be fully reflected in the analysis.

[18] VASyR 2017, at 13.

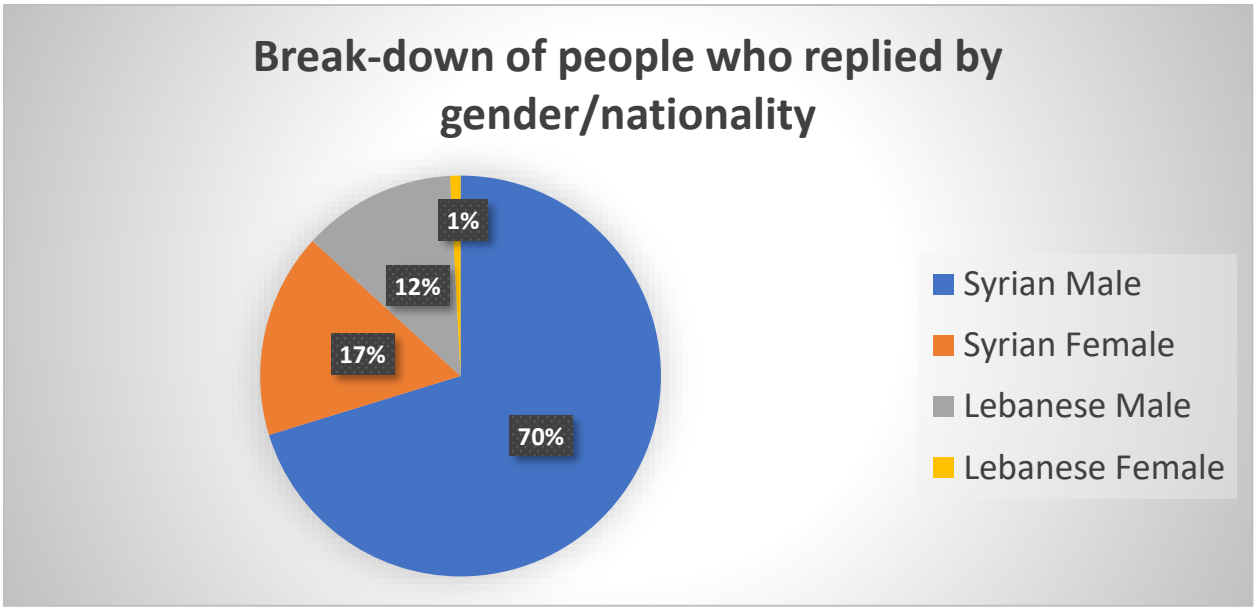
3. Sample Properties: Whom did we reach?

Overall 242 people participated in our survey out of 1434 numbers we contacted via WhatsApp, which gives us a response rate of 17%. This is better than many online surveys where response rates are generally between 10% and 20%. Our survey was also more demanding as it asked respondents to send voice messages to open ended questions over a whole month rather than to fill out a multiple-choice survey, the standard online survey format. Overall, our pilot suggests that the response rate varies substantially depending both on the question as well as the sending and follow-up strategy. We found that the response rate can be substantially increased through individual follow-up via WhatsApp and sms messages.

Looking at the break-down of respondents, 116 people (7%) did not have WhatsApp and thus could not participate in the survey.[19] Interestingly, more Lebanese than Syrians did not have WhatsApp (6% compared to 2%). 22 people did not understand what exactly they should do and sent us messages to that effect. 97 people tried to call us and 29 sent us personal stories as voice messages. This indicates significant communicative needs especially among Syrian refugees, who were desperate to alert the 'UN' to their situations.

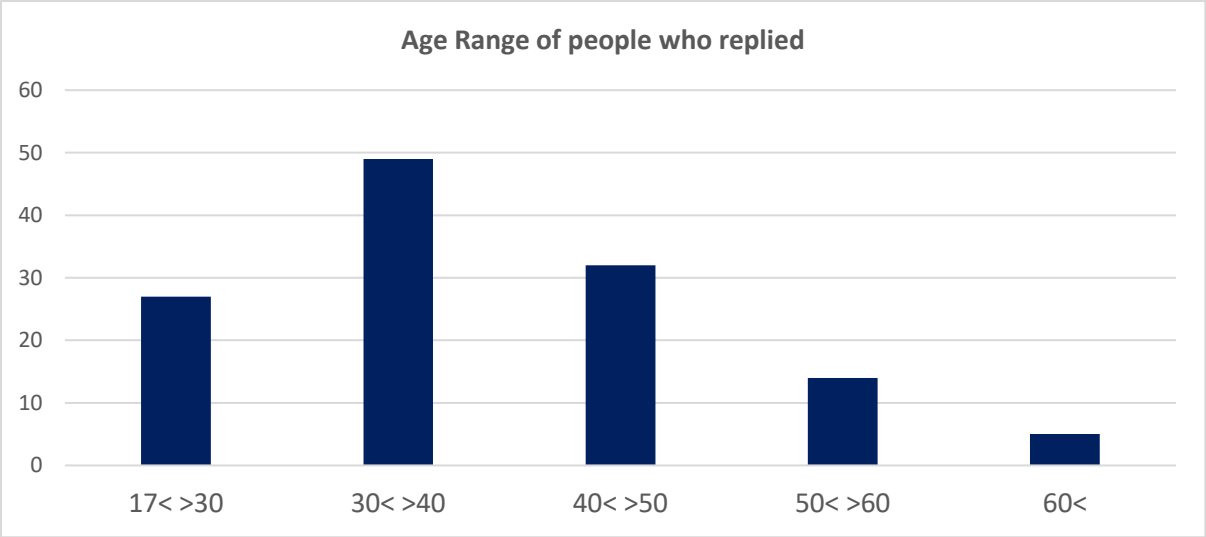


[19] The overall data set was 1554 numbers but those 116 numbers, which did not have WhatsApp, were not included in the sample.

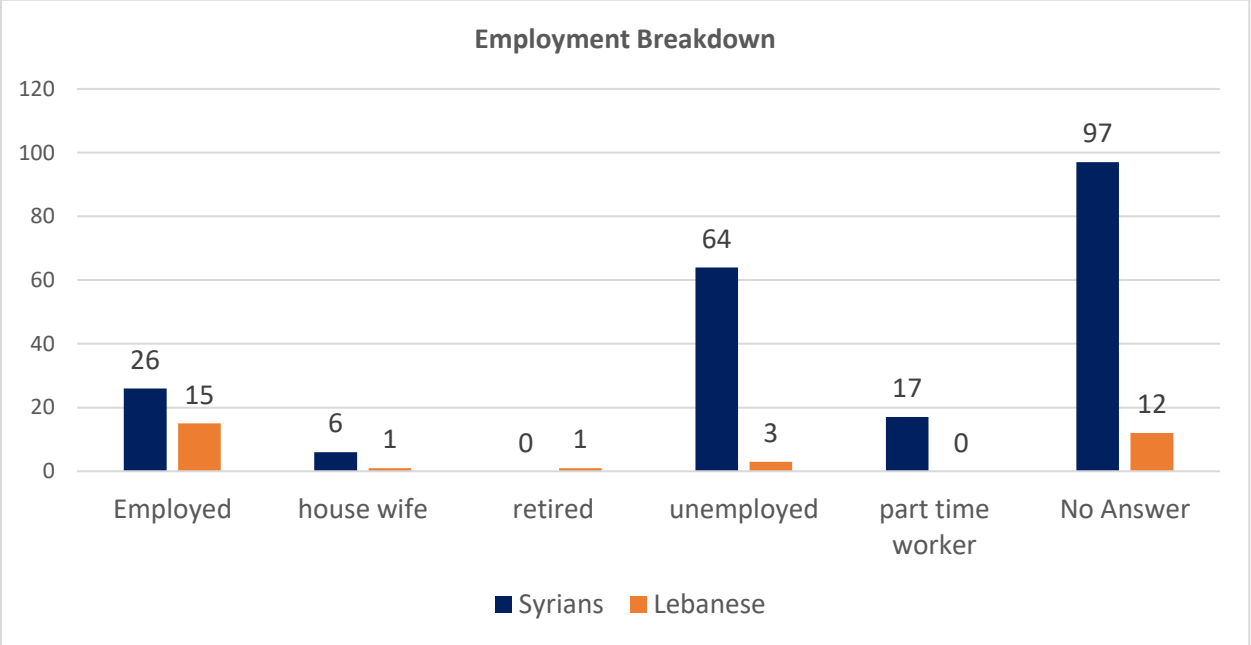


The survey was more successful in reaching out to Syrian refugees than to host communities. 87% of our sample were Syrians and only 13% Lebanese. We also struggled to reach out to women who only make up 18% of our sample. There are several possible explanations for this imbalance. The FGDs with Syrian refugees already alerted us to the fact that most phones are 'household phones'. This means that the phone was shared among members of the household rather than being owned by individuals. While the men claimed that they leave their phone at home when they leave for work and that it is mainly the women who used the phones, we noticed that most male FGD participants had brought their phone with them. The female FGD participants, on the other hand, had left it at home. Our sample shows that gender hierarchies translate into men having more access to phones than women. That said, in the survey we are currently running in Bar Elias our female response rate has doubled to 35%, suggesting that there are no inherent barriers in the methodology that impede access to women. We also noticed that, as the month went by, we heard more female voices from phone numbers where the initial respondent was male ('Hello, I'm the wife of the man you talked to last week').

A possible reason for the lower response rate among Lebanese was that many Lebanese see the 'UN' as a body that exclusively pertains to Syrians. Some even replied to us: 'You must have the wrong number. I'm Lebanese, not Syrian.'



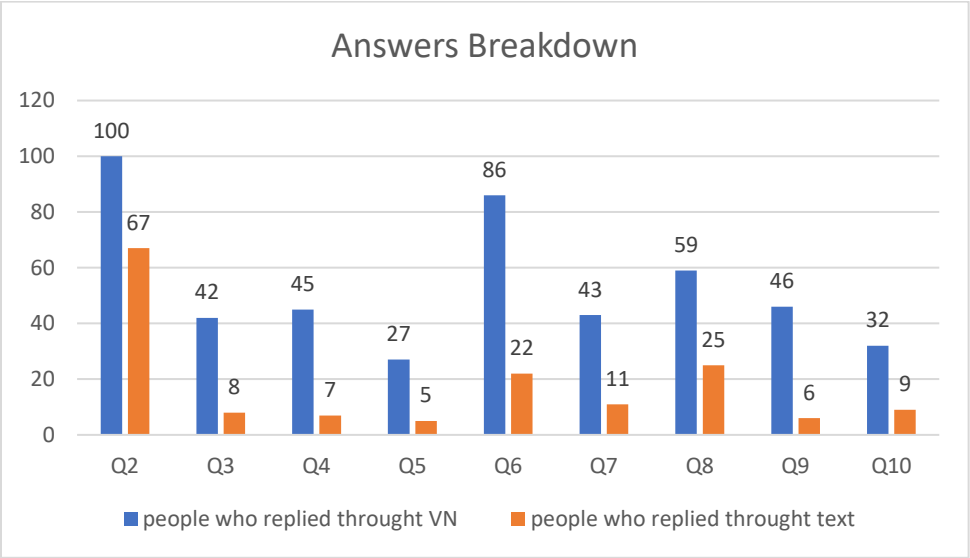
Our sample was more balanced when it came to age. Most respondents were between 30 and 40 but all age groups were represented including the elderly and the youth.



The employment situation of our respondents indicates that we were also able to reach more vulnerable demographics. Many respondents did not indicate their employment situation, but of those who did 50% were unemployed, 31% were employed and 13% were part-time workers.

We left respondents with the choice of either replying via voice or text message to our questions. As the table below shows, most respondents chose to reply with a voice note (VN). Overall, we received 480 voice messages and 160 text messages. We received most replies, a total of 167, to the first substantive question we sent (Q2) about the main needs of the village, followed by question 6, where we asked people about their fears, concerns and sense of safety. We received the least

number of replies to the question which directly enquired about Lebanese-Syrian relationships (Q5), followed by the questions on tensions and conflict (Q3) and on unemployment (Q4). Our inference is that these questions were considered more sensitive and thus fewer respondents were willing to send us replies. Nonetheless, we received a lot of interesting input relevant to those issues for the broader question on peoples' fears and concerns. This speaks for framing questions more generally to provide people with the space to define themselves what they would like to talk about.



Q2: What are the needs of your village?

Q3: Are there any tensions or conflicts in your area? If so, what are the reasons behind these tensions?

Q4: Have you or your family and friends been affected by unemployment or job competition in your area? If yes, could you tell us what happened? What are the reasons behind unemployment or job competition in your area?

Q5: How are relationships between Lebanese and Syrians in your village? Have they improved or worsened during the last year? And if so, why have they improved or worsened?

Q6: What are your main fears and concerns? Do you feel safe in your area? And if not, what makes you feel unsafe?

Q7: About a year ago, UNDP together with the municipality installed a solar lighting system along the dam of Qaraoun. Are you aware of this project and have you personally been to the dam area and benefitted from the solar lighting? If not, why not? What change/improvement of the project would have been necessary for you or people like you to benefit from the project?

Q8: How do you see the future of Syrians in Lebanon?

Q9: Are you satisfied with the work of the UN and NGOs in Lebanon? If not, can you identify the main problems you see with their work and suggest how they could be addressed?

Q10: Are you interested in receiving feedback about this study and if so how, for example via WhatsApp or text message?

WhatsApp Poster in an ITS in Qaraoun

4. Syrian and Lebanese Life Worlds through WhatsApp

4.1. Different life worlds, different needs

Part of the survey's rationale was to complement UNDP's needs assessment methodology. UNDP's projects are selected based on the results of the Maps of Risks and Resources (MRR). The MRR is a participatory conflict-sensitive methodology, which engages municipalities and communities in a development dialogue to identify risks, problems, resources and priority sectors. The WhatsApp survey can enrich this methodology through direct and broad community input and validation. We asked our participants, 'what are the main needs in your village and why?'

One noteworthy difference between Syrian and Lebanese respondents was that Syrians 'personalized' this question, explaining the needs of their household or their settlement rather than the village's needs. Part of the reason is that Syrian refugees do not conceptualize themselves as 'people of the village'. One Syrian respondent said: 'there are no problems with the people of the village, or any threats', while another affirmed: 'Here in Qaroun we are safe. There isn't any disturbance, as though we're not refugees, but among the people of the village. Also, the people of the village are good.' Both replies, while positive in nature, reveal the liminal status of refugees in

Qaraoun. This perception is reinforced through the physical segregation between the village and the informal settlements in which refugees live. According to the mayor, 300 Syrian families live in around 250 tents scattered in small informal settlements around the town. Another 640 families live in sub-standard residential buildings within the village. FGD participants insisted that there are no major differences between refugees living in ITS and residential building. If anything, refugees in residential buildings often fall through the cracks of the assistance system as there is an assumption that they are less vulnerable. This assumption is often flawed. For example, some Syrians participating in the survey were desperate to move out of residential buildings as they could not afford their rent, but either did not receive permission by the municipality to build a tent or could not afford building materials. Independent of where they live, Syrians interact and share social networks, even though there is a tendency for each group to be somewhat oblivious to the distinct problems that come with the residency conditions of the other. One finding was that refugees described life in residential buildings as more cooperative as people share accommodation and utilities such as WIFI connections. Life in ITS, on the other hand, was portrayed as more conflict-prone as disputes arise over ever shrinking resources and space between tents. This is echoed in a recent study which found that social networks among Syrian refugees in Lebanon are collapsing in areas of extreme vulnerability.[20] Nonetheless, FGD participants agreed that whether they live in ITS or residential building, Syrians in Qaraoun generally share the same grievances.

The primary reason for the 'personalization' of the needs question was the overwhelming urgency of Syrian needs especially as the survey was conducted at the onset of winter. A Syrian woman (unemployed) replied:

> Our demands are plenty. Our country is ruined, and we are living here in Lebanon in camps, which have no plastic sheets or wooden insulation, and winter is at the doors; that's all what we need from you. We registered with the UN, but we haven't received anything yet. They gave us the file number and didn't give us anything. Our condition is wretched. We don't own anything.

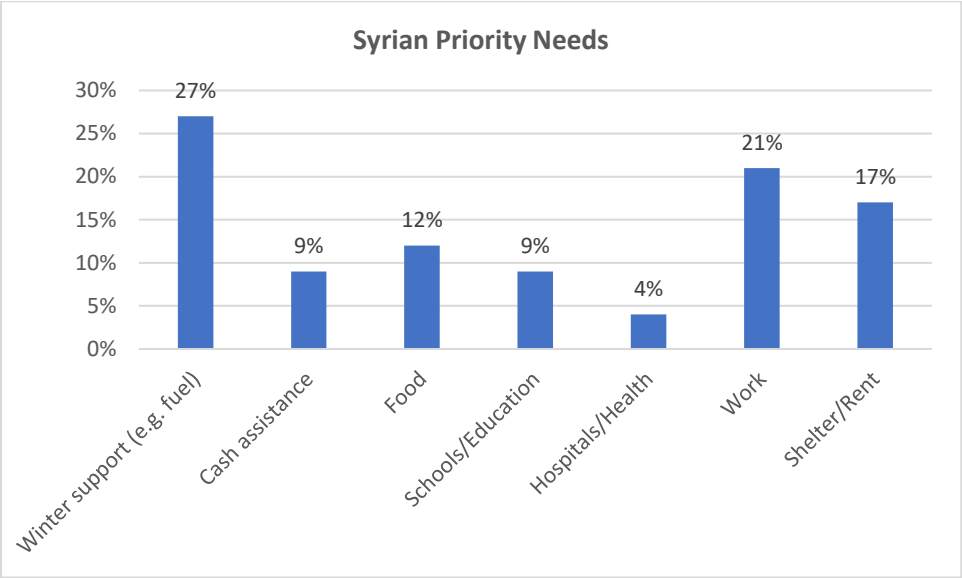
Another Syrian woman said:

> You're asking about our daily needs, but we're refugees, and a refugee needs everything. We need everything, because my husband is sick, so he can't go out and work, and I work for 10,000 LBP (6,6 USD) a day, and this isn't always. Also, I was disconnected from the food aids and the '260 card'. From the start I didn't receive 260 at all, and they have given me food aids for four months only and then they stopped. I suffer from a disease in the leg, and if I didn't take the medicine daily I wouldn't be able to walk. So, from where should we begin to talk about our needs?...

While needs were pervasive and priorities different, winter support, work and shelter were priority concerns. 27% of messages mentioned winter support such as fuel and blankets, 21% highlighted the need for work and 17% focused on shelter conditions and the difficulty to pay rent. Refugees claimed to be paying between 200 USD and 300 USD monthly for renting land or sub-standard buildings that were not suitable for human habitation. Many felt they were drowning in debt. This is also reflected in the VASyR results for 2017 which showed that 77% of Syrian refugee households in Lebanon had debts of 200 USD or more. Other priority needs were food, cash assistance, education and access to

[20] Ana Uzelac, Jos Meester, Markus Goransson and Willem van den Berg, 'The importance of social capital in protracted displacement', *57 Forced Migration Review* (February 2018), available at http://www.fmreview.org/syria2018/uzelac-meester-goransson-vandenberg.html.

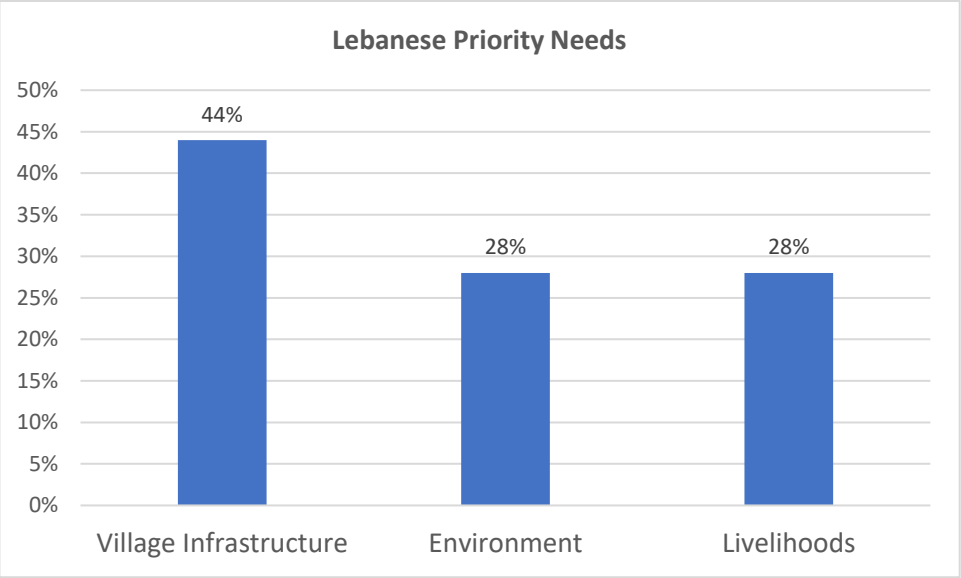
hospitals and medication. 7% of respondents told us that a family member was sick making it even more difficult to meet basic needs.



Lebanese views differed markedly from Syrian perspectives. Indeed, their replies suggest that Syrians and Lebanese in Qaraoun live in very different life worlds and have incommensurate needs. Unlike Syrians, Lebanese usually laid out broader needs of the village. Approximately 44% of messages focused on the village infrastructure, 28% on environmental protection and another 28% emphasized the lack of livelihoods. A retired Lebanese elaborated: 'The needs in my opinion are plenty; I'll limit them to the following: Securing safety on the streets; constructing a pedestrian pavement on the main street and organizing the entry and exit of cars from the secondary streets and parking; establishing one or more public gardens.'

'The town needs a public library for children in addition to free language courses, mobile and computer maintenance like other towns. We also need a public park,' another said. Many Lebanese expressed their concern about the pollution of the lake of Qaraoun:

> Since our village is agricultural, the most important priority is preserving the environment. Our water is polluted, and the lake is polluted to the point of causing many health problems, so the rate of cancer is very high. As for the ground water, it's also polluted… Also, given the large number of refugees, unemployment is so high, and there is no possibility of working… I imagine that if there was a waste recycling plant, it might help a lot in this village, as it may create many job opportunities. Also, if you can notice, all municipalities burn their waste, and this smoke is of course toxic…



While our sample is limited and not necessarily representative especially for Lebanese respondents, overall, the results suggests that Syrian needs are much more basic and personal, while Lebanese often expressed collective needs. The point here is not to create a hierarchy of needs, but to consider that different types of interventions may be required to cater to the needs of differently situated communities. While Syrian needs may be greater, development interventions should be sensitive to a common perception of host community neglect:

> Our town needs public services and reorganizing the situation of the Syrian refugees in the town, for we've become equal in population. We also need the UN to take a look at the poor people of the town. I think that some Lebanese people need help more than the Syrian refugees, because some Syrians are benefiting from the UN and working as well.

Some Lebanese also linked Qaraoun's environmental problems to the presence of Syrian refugees:

> Immigration has led to many problems, the most significant of which is groundwater… Wherever there is a camp, sewage would be thrown under it, and its density permeates the ground and descends into the ground water, affecting the wells. My speech is based on tests, because we've done various tests on several wells. Ammonia has entered the water, which is bad for the Syrians and all humans in the area…

While Syrian and Lebanese needs differed, there was notable convergence on the need for more livelihoods opportunities especially for youth and women. An unemployed Syrian electronic salesman, for example, demanded that 'professional centres should be provided to train youth within their field…', while a Lebanese stay-at-home mother expressed the need for more employment opportunities for women.

4.2. Shrinking assistance, unfair distribution

Syrians expressed considerable frustration not only about the lack of assistance but also the seeming arbitrariness of its distribution: 'It seems, based on people's talk and what we see, that distribution is based on acquaintance. If the distributor knows the person, he'll give him aid, and if that person works for him he'll give him, too. But if he doesn't know him, then he won't give him anything.' This also aligns with the ARK survey results from February 2018: 41% of Syrians and 51% of Lebanese

expressed that assistance does not go to the right people.[21] Access to assistance is seen as highly contingent on social networks.

Many Syrians were particularly concerned about the distribution of multi-purpose cash and other e-cards. Almost 50% of humanitarian assistance provided in Lebanon (550 million USD in 2016) consists of cash assistance. Syrians in our survey most commonly asked to receive the '260' card – a multi-purpose cash card providing the poorest refugees with 260,000 LBP a month to cater to their needs. Yet, the distribution system underwent significant changes just before the survey was conducted in November 2017, which were amply reflected in the stories refugees told. UNHCR discontinued cash transfers for 70% of households, replacing them with other households that were deemed more vulnerable based on a new 'bottom-up' methodology. A Syrian woman expressed her desperation as follows:

> I'm living in Al Qaroun at the municipality camp. My husband is sick. He suffers from the DISC disease and thrombosis. I have four kids and I'm unable to provide them with their needs. Please activate the '260 card' for me. If you didn't believe me, I can send you the medical reports which are with my husband. I'm confused, and I'm in debt of 3,000 USD, and people are asking for their money. I'm a woman, and what can a woman do? I stand in the field like men and go to harvest olives. Please activate the card. I can't take it anymore; we're six persons, and my mother in law is with us now, so we're seven.

As UNHCR explained:

> As UNHCR has maintained the same total number of beneficiaries for the MCAP, and wanted to avoid any incorrect perception by the refugees that it was decreasing its assistance – which could add to the already increasing anxiety caused by the recent developments in Arsal – UNHCR chose to send out its discontinuation and inclusion SMS at the same time, so that the same number of refugees would receive positive news, as those receiving the sad news of discontinuation. The Q&A used by staff, partners and OVs also included a specific questions and answers relating to these elements, which UNHCR read to the group.[22]

Yet, our survey data suggests that such a communication strategy can backfire. The fact that new households were receiving assistance while others were discontinued only further fuelled anger and suspicion among refugees. They often felt that others were benefitting, while they were personally excluded from assistance:

> We see other people… each one has a monthly card, a food card, or a heating card. That person's situation is good. As for families with four or five members, the majority does not benefit. And others have benefitted from those cards since 2015 until today. Some of the family members might have married, left the country or migrated, but the card would still work for the same number of family members. So, I'm shocked because of the lack of monitoring of this issue.

Another respondent expressed his frustration about being excluded from assistance and not understanding why as follows: 'The whole camp has received wood except for me. We're ten tents,

[21] Ibid.
[22] Inter-Agency Coordination, 'Minutes of the National Basic Assistance Working Group Meeting', 15 September 2017, available at http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=14311, at 2.

nine of which received wood except for me… I want to know the reason, for I'm the only one who didn't receive wood.'

The perception that assistance is decreasing and refugees in Qaraoun are increasingly left out was also pervasive in the FGDs. One FGD participant claimed: 'There is so much discrimination. The UN isn't fair with distributing aid. It's not giving to those who are really in need, but it's giving to those who aren't.' The change in distribution methodology appears to have hit Qaraoun particularly hard. A municipality informant claimed that 70% of those who used to receive the cards do not receive them anymore. This suggests that any changes in distribution methodology carry risks not only in fuelling further frustration but also more tensions within refugee communities.

4.3. 'It's complicated': Tensions and conflicts in Qaraoun

A key motivation for designing a qualitative, narrative focused survey was to unpack tension dynamics between host communities and refugees. We thus asked people about tensions and conflicts in their area. The question was deliberately framed vaguely to provide respondents with the space to define themselves what type of conflicts and tensions shape their everyday life. We also wanted to avoid prompting people to talk about Lebanese/Syrian relationships, if this is not uppermost on their minds. While the media discourse nurtures the assumption that the 'refugee issue' is Lebanon's priority concern, some studies show that refugees are only one among many concerns for the Lebanese. An Ipsos poll in 2016 found that Lebanese identified corruption as the main issue (87%), followed by shortage in securing basic needs (85%) and lack of security and stability (68%).[23] Refugees only emerged later in the list of priorities with 42%.[24] Among Syrians, on the other hand, there may be a tendency to under-report tensions so as not to highlight their presence in the area as 'an issue'.

This was somewhat similar in our survey. Only 10% of replies to that question explicitly referred to Lebanese/Syrian relationships and most respondents assured us that there are no tensions or conflicts. Some Syrians emphatically praised Lebanon for its hospitality:

> We hope that no tension will take place in our beloved Lebanon. Lebanon has become our second home, and I pay it my tribute. Lebanon has many great achievements and wonders… It's considered one of the smallest countries of the world, and at the same time, it has the largest number of Syrian refugees within its lands, and it's trying as much as it can to provide them with safety, security, and food. So, I really thank this country, and I pray that God protects this homeland and its people.

4.3.1. There are few neutral relationships

In a later question, we asked more directly about the nature and quality of Lebanese/Syrian relationships. The replies we received revealed significant contrasts, with relationships being either good or bad, but few in between. From 32 replies to that question, only two used the concepts 'regular' or 'ordinary', nine replies were unambiguously positive, 11 were overall positive but also revealed tensions, while six were very negative.[25] This is interesting, because in the ARK perception survey and even more so in the VASyR, most respondents categorize relationships as 'neutral' or

[23] LBC Group, 'Report: 87% Report of Lebanese people say corruption main issue facing country – Study', 22 November 2016, available at https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/291105/report-87-of-lebanese-people-say-corruption-main-i/en.

[24] In an Aktis study, only 16% of stories that people told about changes in their community related to refugees. Aktis Strategy, 'Baseline Report: Lebanon Host Communities Support Project', 28 March 2017, at 11.

[25] Few stories in the overall sample (not just that question) described 'neutral' inter-community relationships.

'fair'.[26] What exactly the category of 'neutral' means is contested. Protection monitoring officers, for example, are wary of the category as they have often seen refugees describing situations of economic exploitation only to later classify host community/refugee relationships as 'fair' or 'neutral'.[27] They suggest that certain exploitative practices such as the non-payment of wages have become so normalized that they are perceived as 'ordinary' or even 'fair'.[28]

Essentially, our survey replies ranged from, 'Relationships are excellent, and there's no dispute, thank God. All people are living with each other…' to 'the relationship between us and the Lebanese is awful. They accuse Syrians of everything, regarding work, schools, and streets. It's a pitiful relationship.' Social distance and segregation between the communities was also reflected in some comments: 'We don't go out anywhere. My husband only goes to the yard to look for a job. If he found a job, it'd be good, and if he didn't, he'd have to stay at home. So, we never meet the Lebanese. Until now, no one has assaulted us, thank God.' Some felt that the situation has deteriorated in the last couple of years as the Syrian presence in Lebanon has become more entrenched. Others, on the contrary, expressed that the situation is overall improving as Syrians better understand and adjust to Lebanese sensitivities:

> As for relationships, there is an improvement in our region, especially in the last two years of the Syrian stay in Lebanon. Most of the problems here are due to work, for instance when the Syrian takes over the place of the Lebanese at work or vice versa… Thank God, those problems have started to decrease, and they only take place when work decreases. However, the Syrian is now aware that if the Lebanese works and loves his job, he has to stay away from this job…

Another key finding is that both Lebanese and Syrian respondents conveyed diverse and nuanced accounts of inter-community relationships. One important distinction our respondents established was between social and transactional relationships. As one Syrian explained:

> There is no tension, and we thank the Lebanese for bringing us into their lands and welcoming us. You can find a bad Syrian, and you can find a bad Lebanese as well… So, people aren't the same. And there are no problems. However, our problem is that sometimes we work for someone, but we don't get paid and he forces us to quit, saying that he doesn't owe us anything. Of course, we can't say anything, because they live in their villages and lands, so we can do nothing. But there are no problems or tensions at all. On the contrary, there's no distinction between Lebanese and Syrians. I have Lebanese friends more than I have Syrian friends. We go out and party together, but the thing is that if I work for someone, I won't get paid. This is more than in 60% of cases; hence, when we work for someone, he forces us to quit and doesn't pay us.

Even though the account is positive and makes the point that the categories of 'Lebanese'/'Syrians' do not really matter in social circles, it also reveals that exploitation is often nested in the more transactional relationships between Lebanese and Syrians. In fact, the account is concerning as economic exploitation appears both pervasive and normalised ('but there are no problems or

[26] In the ARK survey in February 2018, the most common response (44%) was neutral. In the 2016 VASyR, 60% of refugee households described inter-community relationships as 'fair'.
[27] International Rescue Committee, Protection Monitoring Monthly Report, North Lebanon, November 2017, at 2.
[28] Ibid.

tensions at all'). This also reflects a broader tendency (or strategy?) in Syrian accounts to open with a very positive statement and then more subtly reveal problems as their story evolves:

> The relationship between Lebanese and Syrians is good; there are no problems. But there are some mischievous boys. Lebanese construction workers hate Syrians because wages have gone down due to the large number of workers. On the other hand, the owners of houses and shops love Syrians because they rent their houses and shops. All of that is for the sake of profit. Those who gain say that they love Syrians, but those who don't gain want Syrians to leave…

Here the speaker illustrates how the Syrian presence splits Lebanese communities into those who benefit from their presence through cheap labour and rent payment and those who see themselves as bearing the brunt of their presence through repressed wages and pressure on services. His and many other Syrian stories evince an understanding of Lebanese/Syrian relationships that is mainly transactional:

> The relationships between the Syrians and the Lebanese are very tense. First, if the Lebanese has an interest in the Syrian, he would treat him very well. As soon as the interest ends, even if it's after 20 years, he'll be blamed for any simple or silly mistake that isn't worth discussion, and if he can fire him, he would do that. And if he can't, he'd deprive him of his rights and humiliate him. That's what causes tension between them.

In general4, our respondents were much more outspoken about economic conflicts than about security-related conflicts:

> There is no tension or conflict these days. It's quieter and safer here. That is on the level of security. As for the economic level, there is tension, discomfort, and conflict over job opportunities between the Lebanese and the Syrian refugees. This causes many problems and crises in the country and in the village, and it might, of course, create a kind of fanaticism and racism, if we can call it like that, along with financial distress.

In this regard, our WhatsApp survey results match the results of the ARK perception survey, which has consistently revealed that competition for lower-skilled jobs is the key driver of inter-community tensions by far with 63% of respondents citing it. Yet, our voice notes showed much more complexity in how Syrians and Lebanese make sense of the problem.

4.4. Lack of Jobs, not Competition as the main problem

To begin with, many respondents emphasized that the main problem is unemployment not job competition: 'There's no competition for work, because jobs are non-existent' neither for Lebanese nor for Syrians. This is an important distinction as it shifts the focus of the analysis away from fellow workers (whether Syrian or Lebanese) and towards the Lebanese political and economic system. As such, it can be seen as an attempt by Syrians to push back against a discourse that casts them as the main cause of degrading Lebanese livelihoods. The problem runs deeper and lies in the inability of the Lebanese economy to produce jobs even pre-crisis as well as its dependence on money flows from outside.[29] Others did identify competition as the main problem, but located it between Syrians rather than between Lebanese and Syrians:

[29] World Bank Group, 'Lebanon: Promoting Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity', Systematic Country Diagnostic 2016, at 34.

> As for the origin of unemployment, it's the huge density of population. Of course, you aren't ignorant about those things. Hence, the density of population is so huge, so it is normal to have unemployment. Syrians fill the country, and competition is only found between us as Syrians.

Another respondent explained:

> Unemployment is very dense in the region. There's no work here, and the reason of unemployment is us, the Syrians, not the Lebanese. Our work is different from the work of the Lebanese, and the Lebanese people have never worked like us, so competition has occurred between us as Syrians. Before the war, the region had about 150 Syrian workers, but today it has more than 500 or 600 Syrian workers. This is the reason for the competition for jobs…

Another finding which emerges clearly from the replies is that the dichotomy 'unemployment' vs. 'employment' makes little sense to Syrians as most of them are daily labourers highly dependent on seasonal work in agriculture and construction: 'I'm unemployed, since we're not allowed to work. We work one day and stay without work ten days. We've been like that since we came to Lebanon.'

The distribution of work follows the same logic as the distribution of assistance in the eyes of our Syrian respondents: '…there is some favouritism at work that leads to the employment of some people, and the deprivation of others.' Another respondent drew a clear distinction between 'Syrian workers' who came before the war and are embedded in the community and more recent 'Syrian refugees' who are cut off these social networks:

> Regarding job opportunities here in the camp, since we're refugees, we don't' work, for there are many old Syrian workers who were here from the start. So, the refugee doesn't know anyone to work for. We need the UN, but it rejected us.

According to the mayor, 60% of Syrians in Qaraoun already worked as migrant labour in the village before the crisis, but they brought their families from Syria after the war broke out. This reflects a broader pattern in Lebanon where an estimated 400,000 Syrians worked in Lebanon before the crisis.[30] Most Syrians work in sectors in which competition with Lebanese workers is limited. In the ARK survey, 75% of Syrians indicated that they work in agriculture and construction compared to only 15% of Lebanese.

Lebanese were more likely to relate unemployment to the presence of Syrian refugees, but there was a subtlety in their stories that much of the media discourse misses:

> The issue has become related to Lebanese and Syrians, for it concerns them both. For example, the Lebanese manager who used to employ a Lebanese worker and pay him 30 USD per day, the Syrian now is coming to work for him and accepts to take only 15 USD just for the sake of the job opportunity. So, the Lebanese manager is employing the Syrian and deprives the Lebanese of work. Yet, the salary that the Syrian is taking isn't enough for his needs because living is too expensive, and this causes competition and hatred. Who's leading to this monopoly is the employer himself, because he himself is causing hatred and monopoly.

The story highlights that behind every Syrian employee stands a Lebanese employer who benefits from the cheaper labour. It also makes clear that only because Syrians accept lower wages does not

[30] John Chalcraft, 'Labour in the Levant', *45 New Left Review* (May-June 2007), at 31. These pre-crisis estimates are very close to ILO's post-crisis estimate of the Syrian labour force in Lebanon which is 383,917. 80% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are women and children, most of whom do not work. ILO, 'Quantitative Framework for Access to Work for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon', Presentation, December 2016.

mean they can live off them. Another Lebanese respondent also told a story about job competition but blamed the municipality and the clients and not simply Syrians:

> My daughter's husband is a flagstone worker who was deeply affected because of the Syrian labor force. Although he has lowered his prices, Syrians used to offer even lower prices. Of course, it's not on the same level of professionalism, but customers care more about prices. Also, the municipality chooses Syrian labor more than Lebanese and that's because they accept low prices.

Yet, overall Lebanese and Syrian accounts of unemployment were different reflecting differences in educational profile, class and sector of employment. For example, many Lebanese spoke about the difficulties university graduates face in securing jobs, while Syrians usually talked about daily labour and other manual work. One Lebanese man recounted:

> Personally, I've experienced something similar regarding unemployment. My wife has studied English literature, and she's a school teacher whose salary is only 500,000, and my salary as an administrative supervisor at the airport is 900,000, and that's one of the reasons for the unemployment crisis. They tell me that if I don't like it, then I can leave, because I have a BA and they can employ someone with an MA for 900,000 too. My wife's salary is 500,000 and she's a school teacher. If an English teacher's salary is 500,000, then this is the peak of humiliation.

The same respondent reflected on the causes of unemployment as follows:

> The causes of unemployment in Lebanon are many, including the increase in the proportion of graduates, and the increase in the proportion of newcomers and immigrants to Lebanon, including Syrian workers and other foreigners (Bangladesh, Filipinos, Ethiopians). All of these have led to the increase in unemployment in Lebanon, hence its rate has become almost 25% according to ILO… Also, the Syrian immigrant, who comes to Lebanon after being displaced because of the war in Syria, is now competing with the Lebanese for work. He's opening shops, restaurants, institutions and companies. Syrians are doing everything in Lebanon, which is leading to an increase in unemployment. *It's not the fault of the Syrian worker, but it's the fault of our government because it doesn't control the economic situation in the country or organize it so that unemployment won't worsen* [author's emphasis]...In addition, the dismissal of Lebanese workers from the Gulf is part of the global financial crisis which led to this kind of unemployment which shook the whole country.

This analysis is interesting for at least two reasons. First, it firmly puts the government into the picture, highlighting its responsibility to improve the livelihoods of both Lebanese and Syrians. Second, it identifies Lebanon's global interconnectedness and economic dependencies as the deeper undercurrent of the economic situation. The economic slump in the Gulf affects the Lebanese worker as much as the economic situation in Lebanon and the two are inextricably linked. In this way, the story creates solidarity between Lebanese and Syrian workers as they both toil under conditions that are not of their making and beyond their control. There are ulterior forces, such as government policies and international markets, that conspire to create economic hardship for both communities.

Yet, with that global inter-connectedness also come opportunities for some Lebanese, which are unavailable to Syrian refugees. One Lebanese respondent pondered:

> I wasn't affected by it. As for my family, some of them were affected, and some travelled abroad to find work. It seems that the reason is the huge presence of Syrian workers in all jobs and institutions.

While working abroad is an option for at least some Lebanese, such options do not exist for Syrians. Finally, some respondents pointed out that many tensions are exogenous to Qaraoun and depend on the evolution of the broader political and media discourse:

> Last year, the relationship between the Lebanese society and the Syrian society was often full of tension because of bad news, problems, media, and the instigation of some media pages. But generally, this relationship is getting better, but the latter depends on news, political or security tensions, or the personal problems of some tumultuous Syrians.

4.5. Gender shifts in Crisis Environments?

As in many crisis contexts, new social conditions also foster changes in gender relationships. The legal residency regime in Lebanon which has left 74% of Syrians without legal stay has pushed more women into work as they can navigate checkpoints more easily and are less often asked for legal papers than men. Our key informants from the municipality in Qaraoun often mentioned that phenomenon. They claimed that it is the women, much more than the men, who are working in agriculture because they are cheaper: 'You can hire three women for the price of one man,' one interviewee said. This is not reflected in surveys, at least not yet, where Syrian woman labour force participation still appears to be very low. In the latest VASyR, 10% of working-age women participated in the labour force and 8% had been working in the 30 days prior to the survey.

Nonetheless, disquiet about shifts in gender roles gleamed through some WhatsApp narratives. A man told us the following, his voice trembling with exasperation:

> I've had disc for three years, so I'm staying at home jobless. My profession is barber, which I've practiced for many years, and so I have great experience in it. While we're unemployed, many organizations, and the UN itself, are sending people to hold courses for women so that they can have jobs or certificates. There isn't anything wrong with this, but they never come for men. For instance, no one came and asked us about our profession or in which field of work we are skilled. As for competition, no one competes, because there are no job opportunities to compete for. As I've mentioned before regarding work, they come and take women, and for me, my wife returns home late…Even though transportation is available, she comes back very late at night. If this was during the day then it would've been accepted, but she used to go at 4 pm and come back at 8 pm or 9 pm, which is dangerous, so we didn't accept that. We wish you could organize programmes for men to check our qualifications, and in which professional fields we can develop ourselves…

Efforts to train women constitute a threat to the patriarchal organization of families where men are breadwinners and women caregivers. Other gender shifts have been noted, too. Our key informants alleged that Syrian customs are changing now that they have lived in Lebanon for several years. For example, Syrian women in Lebanon drive cars, which many would not have done in Syria.

4.6. Toxic Masculinity and the Precarity of Syrian Life in Lebanon

Even though they were the minority, much bleaker accounts of Syrian-Lebanese relationships also appeared in our sample. The fact that most of our respondents (82%) were men was mirrored in the stories we received, several of which described incidents of harassment of Syrian men by Lebanese

men. Syrian stories illustrated how the interplay between toxic masculinity and Syrian illegality often renders Syrians powerless in the face of abuse:

> There are tensions, for example, harassment by young men. Young men love to show Syrians that they're the ones dominating here, because they are the owners of the area. For instance, ten to fifteen men gather and go to assault one or two Syrians, so they molest him two or three times, and might even beat him up. This has happened, and the local authorities are aware of that, and the elder ones and the people of the area quickly intervene and solve it peacefully, so that Syrians won't raise complaints. The Syrian doesn't dare complain, because in the end he's the one who will be harmed, and he might even be expelled. So, he keeps silent, regardless of whether he deserves it or not… The Syrian doesn't have the right to say anything, nor grow up and feel safe… What can we say more than that?

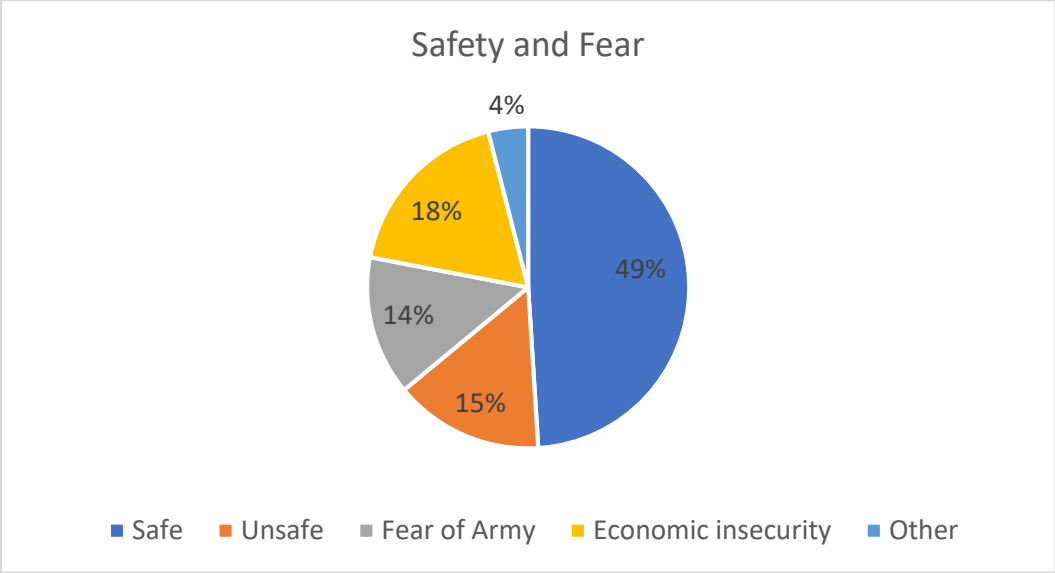
The quote is interesting because it reveals an understanding of the Syrian refugee status in Lebanon as a status that is completely bereft of any protection or rights. It also shows how Syrian impotence constitutes a foil against which Lebanese masculinity and dominance is asserted 'as the owners of the area'. Such incidents unfold against the backdrop of young Lebanese men struggling to live up to normative expectations of masculinity as they suffer from job precarity and economic marginalization. This may push them to perform their masculinity in the relationship with weaker Syrian men, whose position is even more precarious. Another quote illustrates this phenomenon very well:

> Here, we are afraid to walk on the street and be verbally assaulted by someone. We can't respond because it's not our country. So, we never dare talk to him, even though his words are full of disrespect and mockery. Some days we are beaten, but we have to stay silent and not respond. Why? Because it's not our country. Once, I was driving with someone I know on a motorcycle. A man stopped us, and it seemed that he just had a quarrel with someone or he was defeated. He stopped us and didn't tell us why. He asked us where we were going, and we said that we were just driving around on the motorcycle. The one with me jumped off the motorcycle out of fear. He asked him: "where are you going?" He answered: "I'm going home." He asked him: "where do you live?" He answered: "in Baaloul." So, they started beating him. He told him: "You live in Baaloul yet you're taking this way towards Suhmur, and you tell me you're going home?" They kept beating him, without having any right to, saying that he wanted to hand us to the gendarmerie because we don't have papers. Back then, it was only 4pm, and we were in summer. At this time, those who are entitled to ask for papers didn't do so, but if it was too late, it would've been somehow understandable.

Again, the story demonstrates that refugees see rights as exclusively tied to citizenship. There are no rights attached to the status of being a refugee or simply a human being. They cannot even respond to assault 'because it's not our country'. The quote also suggests that the aggression of the Lebanese man was rooted in internal power and masculinity struggles that had little to do with the Syrian presence: 'It seemed that he just had a quarrel with someone or he was defeated.' The rest of the text expresses the respondent's outrage about Lebanese entitlement: the fact that Syrians have no rights in Lebanon does not mean that Lebanese have a right to do anything. The man was a civilian 'not entitled to ask for papers' and 'it was only 4pm' and thus plenty of time before the curfew in Qaraoun comes into force. The confidence with which the Lebanese man in the story assumes a

policing role arguably reflects a broader sense of host community entitlement to take security into their own hands.

4.7. Safety and Fears in Qaraoun



49% of respondents (53 out of 108) reported feeling safe in Qaraoun: 'As for safety, of course we have safety here in this village. We rarely hear about problems that happened between the Lebanese and the Syrian communities, or between the members of one of the communities themselves. Safety is very important, and it's found these days.' That said, the stories we received were diverse and there were also significant differences between Lebanese and Syrian accounts. Many refugees (18% of all stories) pointed out that their economic and survival fears are so profound that they hollow out any feeling of physical security. One Syrian woman said indignantly:

> You want to know if there's security or not, so come and check the camp out to see our situation in the camps of Al Qaroun. Our situation is horrible; we swear we can't even afford getting food. You're asking about safety, but also provide us with our needs…

Lebanese respondents, on the other hand, were more concerned with political insecurity and crimes. One ministry employee professed: 'In general, there is no safety, due to the governance arrangements. There is no complete safety. And the fear is on the general level and not on the personal level or due to a personal experience.' We also heard stories of crimes including one story about extremism:

> We're worried because of the extremist groups, because we're not with them or belong to them. I work at a bakery in Al Qaroun, and because I don't belong to them, they're fighting me and trying to harm my livelihoods.

Some Lebanese identified Syrian refugees as a source of insecurity. This insecurity largely related to allegations of increases in crimes such as theft. As a Lebanese mukthar recounted:

> People used to sleep and leave their doors open, but now with the presence of refugees – you can't say all are good or all are bad. Some are good, and some are not. But thefts always take place. For example, for two years, whenever we go to the field we find the nuts and the

> grapes are stolen. And if they found something around the house they'd steal it; everything that can be taken without being noticed.

Other respondents expressed a deeper suspicion that Syrians at large pose a security threat to Lebanon. A 54-year-old Lebanese electrician (m) told us:

> Concerning safety, our fear is that there are more than 1500 men in the town who are trained to use guns, and most of them own guns in their homes or camps. The town hasn't done anything to improve safety. It depends on two Shawishes to monitor and observe, but they do nothing. Also, there are no surveillance cameras or night patrols… Even among Syrians themselves attacks happen, and they kill each other.'

This comment reflects a widespread suspicion, which we also heard in our tension mapping exercises, that most Syrian men received military training in Syria due to mandatory army conscription and thus pose a potential threat.

Despite such concerns about the lack of surveillance, overall our research suggests that safety and security in Qaraoun are premised on strict control and management, especially of Syrians:

> The situation of the area is good and safe. No one lacks anything in terms of safety, because all the people in charge here are completely circumspect in terms of citizens' security and are in full control of the situation.

Citizens' security presumably means 'Lebanese security' and control of Syrians is widely perceived as a means of creating that security. This also became clear in the interviews with municipal staff and other key informants. 'We have very nice control of the Syrians', one pointed out. This control is seen by many as a precondition for good inter-community relationships. Yet, some of the measures that make Lebanese feel more safe make Syrians feel less safe. 14% of refugee stories described fears related to lack of legal papers, checkpoints and army raids:

> We're not staying with our children, because we're running away and sleeping in the mountains to escape the army. We can't let them arrest us, insult us, and oblige us to pay fines. This is the problem that the Syrian people suffer from in Al Qaroun.

Another refugee lamented:

> What's more fearful is the army raids on the camp. Once we were sleeping with the door open, and suddenly we saw them inside. They started screaming and they told me to stand and face the wall. They didn't respect the sanctity of the house, nor the kids, nor that I was present. They entered quickly with gunpowder and asked me to face the wall and never turn my face, as though we had killed someone. All of that because our papers were illegal.

Municipal staff told us that the army conducts monthly raids to verify refugees' legal papers. Those refugees who lack legal residency are often taken into custody, where they must be bailed out by their employers or the municipality:

> My brother and two men from our camp are in prison, because they didn't renew their papers. They've been at the station for four days, but they're neither taking them to judgement, nor are they releasing them. My brother is sick, and we don't know what to do. They don't treat us like humans at all in the camps of Al Qaroun.

FGD participants also reported that motorbikes are often confiscated, and penalties extracted from refugees during such raids. They articulated their frustration about the way in which they are 'made illegal' through the residency regime: 'They want us to be legal, but they're not letting us renew our papers to become legal.' Refugees fear the army raids because they lack legal papers, but when they try to renew them, they are effectively told 'if you don't have wasta, you have no chance'[31]. They are trapped in 'illegality'; the only way to become 'legal' is through extra-legal measures ('wasta') or through a very costly and exploitative sponsorship system. Syrians were also confused about the mismatch between the UN messages they receive, telling them that they can renew their papers based on their UNHCR registration, and the reality they face at the General Security Office (GSO). Despite the circular of February 2017 that permits selected categories of Syrian refugees to renew their residency free of charge based on their UNHCR registration certificate, many GSO offices do not implement the circular.[32] As one Syrian WhatsApp respondent pointed out:

> Yes, I'm one of those whom the UN gave proof of residence, which is a proof that the UN guarantees me for my papers. When I went to the General Security, they gave me one month to find a sponsor. Many people went to Jeb Jennine and they gave them six months. I went to Mashgara but they gave me only one month, and I'm unable to find a sponsor. This is the difficulty, which I'm facing.

Another agreed:

> There are no rights; they're completely denied. Three or four months ago, I received a message from the UN to renew my papers. When I took my papers to the General Security, they expelled me from the building, and said that I should come back with a sponsor. They allow people to enter according to the looks, so they tell this one to enter and that one to leave based on their looks. I'm just like anyone else. I received the message and I got the required papers from the UN, and then I went to the General Security and I took my family with me so that I'll be seen as legitimate and disciplined. They expelled me although I entered the country legally and legitimately. They refused me. Why? I don't know. There's great racism from the Lebanese against Syrians.

What also transpires from this and many Syrian stories is their outrage about the everyday humiliation they experience. The concept of dignity - or rather the absence of it - was pervasive in Syrian stories:

> The Lebanese treat us as though we don't have dignity. We've forgotten about our dignity since we came to this country, for they treat us as if we came to ruin or destroy the country, not as Arabs or human beings, but as a group of criminals and terrorists, especially those who live in camps. They think that those who live in informal camps are criminals and came to destroy the country. It's impossible to be treated as human beings. They always treat us as if we're nothing. In fact, we're living without dignity.

This also echoes a finding of an ICTJ study on Syrian refugees in Lebanon: 'Critically, a common word and concept appeared throughout the interviews, karama or "dignity." From the richest to the poorest, from the most integrated to those trying to escape Lebanon's harsh living conditions, dignity

[31] 'Wasta' is an Arabic concept that loosely translates into 'connections' or more formally 'nepotism'.
[32] UNHCR, 'Q&A for Syrian refugees on new requirements for residency renewal in Lebanon', 7 March 2017, available at https://www.refugees-lebanon.org/uploads/poster/poster_148957049554.pdf.

was identified as a common loss, beginning with the very fact of their displacement by a war that has changed their lives forever.'[33]

4.8. No Future for Syrians in Lebanon

Against the backdrop of a proliferation of return discourse in Lebanon with politicians openly calling for the imminent return of refugees as the Syrian war is drawing to a close,[34] the study explored how people on the ground see the future of Syrians in Lebanon. The responses were predictably very bleak. Many refugees talked about fears for their children's future as their education and upbringing suffer from conditions of displacement. This was also a key concern in our FGDs, where many Syrians complained that their children were not admitted to the local school due to limited capacity. According to a key informant, 350 Syrian children dropped out of school last year in Qaraoun, because schools are overcrowded and due to the difficulty of securing safe transportation to schools further away:

> We also need schools for our children, for they go to school in the afternoon, and come back in the evening, and there is no transportation to drive them to and from school, and we're not able to pay the bus driver…

There was an overwhelming desire to return to Syria and a clear understanding that Syrians had no future in Lebanon. Many respondents did not only see no future for Syrians in Lebanon, they did not see any future for Syrians at all. Yet, the wish to return was taken for granted and some respondents found the mere question absurd. Many narratives also revealed a strong attachment to Syria where a future outside the 'home country' seemed unimaginable:

> We have no future in Lebanon. First, school children don't get any certificates, and their education has no future. Second, we and the Lebanese are one, but our homeland is precious, so we wish we could return to Syria. There's nothing more precious than the soil of Syria. May God bless you and thank you. But we don't have a future in Lebanon, and our future is in Syria. We like to answer your questions, but you ask us for example "how's our future in Lebanon", but one's future is never outside his homeland. My daughter has died in Syria, and my home has been ruined, so I had to come here. Also, my son is undergoing treatment in Syria for a brain disease. My family is scattered here and there. What future will a lost family have? We wish we could go back to our country. We thank you for feeling with us. You ask us and we answer, and we have no objection. May God bless you.

But amidst emotional attachment to 'their country' also emerged the idea forged through years of displacement that Syrians have no rights and value outside the country in which they can call themselves 'citizens': 'Syrians are displaced and alienated, so how would their future be? Of course, they have no value, and the situation is getting worse. Every year is worse than the previous one for Syrians.'

The main precondition for return was safety: 'As for us, if the situation in our country improved, and bombing and arbitrary arrests stopped, of course we'll return back to our country. We don't accept resettlement or nationalization. We want to return to our country.' Yet, Syrians also articulated that conditions in Lebanon are becoming more and more restrictive for them and that return might be

[33] Rim El Gantri and Karim El Mufti, 'Not without Dignity: Views of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon on Displacement, Conditions of Return, and Coexistence', Research Report, *International Center for Transitional Justice,* 2017, available at https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ_Report_Syria_NotWithoutDignity.pdf.

[34] This is the position of some segments of the Lebanese government. The UN, on the other hand, maintains that conditions are not yet ripe for return. Indeed, events in early 2018 suggest that the war is changing its form rather than ending.

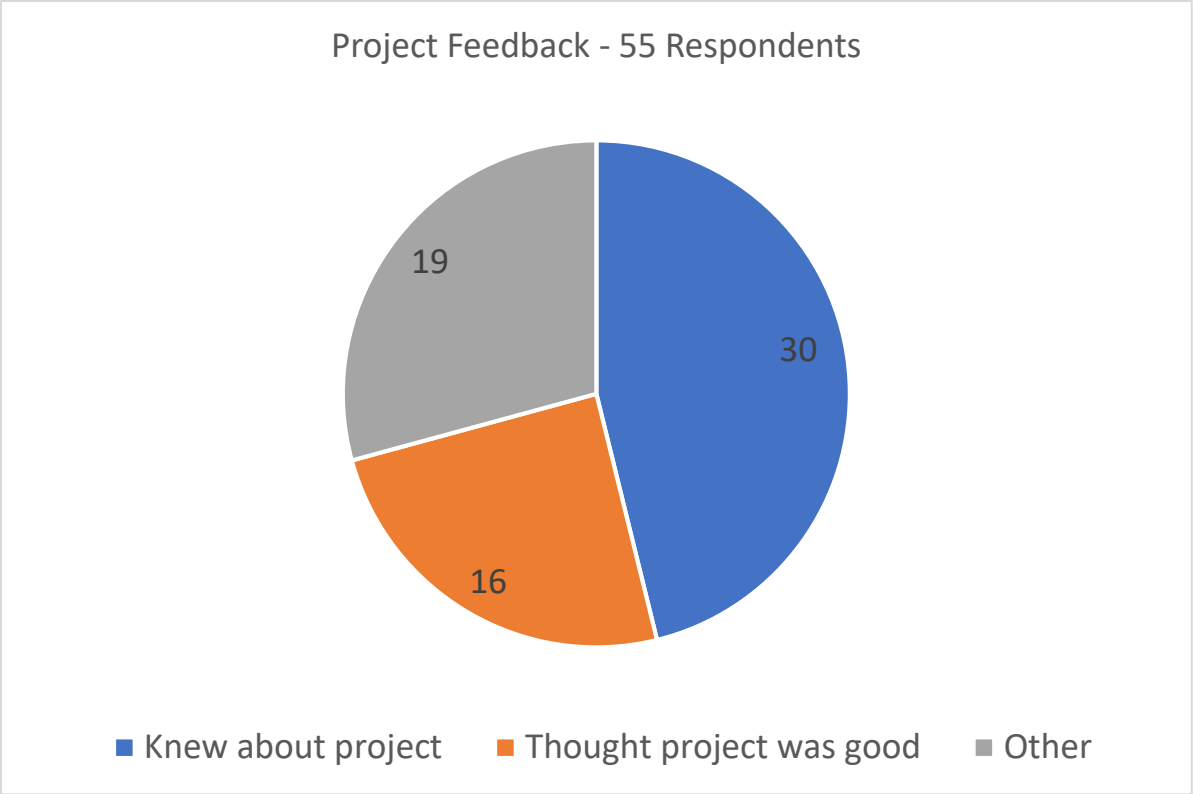
imposed on them before a safe and dignified return is possible: ‘We hope things will be resolved, so that we can rebuild our country and regain our dignified life. The Lebanese have forced lots of restrictions on Syrians, so going out after 8 pm is forbidden, and a Syrian can neither register a car, nor open a shop in his name. So, we wish all of us would go back to our country to rebuild it….’ Others more openly expressed their fear of forced return: ‘How will we have a future in Lebanon while we're immigrants, and we don't know at what time they'll force us to leave Lebanon? If it wasn't for the UN and its help, we couldn't have remained in Lebanon.’

There was also compassion for the Lebanese situation: ‘…The fate of the Lebanese is also similar, for they're of course distressed by the vast number of refugees. Lebanese have millions of reasons to be annoyed with the Syrians. One Syrian respondent asked rhetorically: ‘The Lebanese have university certificates yet they're unable to find jobs, so how would it be with the Syrian?’

Lebanese respondents made clear that they expect Syrians to return to their country once conditions allow: ‘They have no future. They're visitors and they'll go back home.’ Others were less confident likening the fate of the Syrians to the fate of the Palestinians who after decades of displacement have not been able to return to their home-country: ‘We hope that their situation won't become like the situation of Palestinians. We also wish that the crisis in Syria would be resolved, so that its people can return to it.’

4.9. Solar lighting for everyone?

Another rationale for the survey was to use it as a community feedback mechanism for UNDP projects in Qaraoun. UNDP implemented several projects in Qaraoun in 2015 and 2016 under its flagship project, the Lebanon Host Communities Support Project (LHSP). The projects included support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), cooperatives and entrepreneurs, construction of a water drainage canal, installation of a solar lighting system at the promenade of the Qaroun dam as well as installation of a water supply pipeline and the rehabilitation of agricultural roads. As these projects were completed one or two years ago, our survey represented an important opportunity to measure impact and sustainability beyond project completion. We decided that the solar lighting system was the most suitable for community feedback due to its visibility. The project ‘consisted of the installation of 38 +10 = 48 photovoltaic (PV) street lighting units covering a 900-meter road that provide a pollution-free, low-maintenance, efficient and sustainable lighting solution at the community promenade to benefit the residents of Qaraoun and its surroundings and the displaced Syrians.’



55% of our respondents knew about the project, and 29% said that they thought it was a good project and that they or the village at large had benefitted from it. Most Lebanese respondents were very positive about the project:

> Of course, it's one of the most important projects that have happened, because it opened up a chance for people to go out and enjoy the beautiful scenery there at night. This area used to be deserted during the night, because it had no electricity supply. So, this year was special, and everyone visited Al Qaroun because of the lighting. In my view, lighting should continue to the Horsh area, so that the largest number of people would benefit from it…

Some expressed concern about the maintenance of the project, but it was not quite clear whether they expected the UN or the municipality to ensure the project's sustainability:

> Yes, we knew about the project and we visited it at night and took advantage of it. It's really excellent. We hope it'll be extended to all the main and interior roads of the town. We also hope that there will be permanent maintenance of this project, so that it can do what's required from it 100%, and so that no negligence happens on the issue of maintenance.

Some Lebanese mentioned the project's impact on tourism, which could more broadly help to revive the Qaraoun economy. Several people pointed out that the municipality had actively advertised the project via social media, which helped to establish its ownership. 10,675 people follow the municipality's facebook page alone.

While feedback was positive, the question about the UNDP project more than any other revealed the different life worlds of Lebanese and Syrians in Qaraoun. Syrians were much less likely to know about the project or to have been at the dam promenade. Many pointed out that the project benefitted the Lebanese or the village at large but not the Syrian refugees: 'The solar energy issue isn't related to us

at all. It rather belongs to the village, and we're not considered among its people; we're Syrian refugees living in tents. We barely receive electricity in the tents, so how would we receive solar energy?...'

The quote puts very clearly a sentiment that was more vaguely expressed in many stories, namely that Syrian refugees are not considered as part of the village and its people. For people living in the settlements, their settlement forms the horizon of their lives. Essentially, if the project does not exist in the settlement or the highway leading to the settlement, it does not exist for Syrians. But the problem runs deeper. The curfew regime in Qaraoun means that refugees by definition cannot benefit from a solar lighting project in a public space, because they are not allowed to move in the evening: 'We didn't benefit from this project at all, because it belongs to the Lebanese and not the Syrian refugees. Also, it's in an area that's far from the camps, and going out is forbidden after 8 pm, so we don't benefit from the lighting.'

Another Syrian explained:

> We knew about it, but we can't go and walk there, because there's a checkpoint next to the walkway. So being refugees with illegal papers, we can't go there. On the level of benefitting, there should've been something one can work with. That is, to provide the Syrians with jobs so that they won't be a burden to anyone…

Yet, the survey also revealed less visible barriers to project accessibility that also apply to vulnerable Lebanese. Many respondents mentioned that the project location is only accessible for those who own a car as it is located outside the village. Some people felt that only a small subset of the Lebanese population benefits from the project, namely those business owners who opened small shops and food stands at the promenade and their customers:

> No, we didn't know about the project until it was installed and done. It's a good project, but you made it on Al Sadd, so no one benefits from it. Few are those who benefit from it, for example those who opened coffee shops benefitted from it. Also, there's no need for it at night, because no one goes there. Therefore, this project should be inside Al Qaraoun village, on the highway or on Al Kanat road.

One Syrian respondent put in no uncertain terms that Syrians are not welcome at Al Sadd even if they manage to overcome legal and spatial hurdles in visiting the place:

> You gave money to the municipality, but they spent it on establishing parks and good views for themselves. However, the Syrian isn't allowed to go there. If he takes his family they get annoyed, and if he parks his car they get annoyed, so they speak to him harshly and make him leave the place. You've done something for the Lebanese at the expense of the Syrians, and whomever is in need, you don't even give him a look. For example, I suffer from asthma and cirrhosis, and I told you, but it was in vain.

That said, some Syrians expressed that both communities have benefitted:

> Yes, the project was beneficial for both the Lebanese and Syrian parties in general… We used to go out to this area in summer since it's a tourist area, and we used to sit with the family

> and kids. So, it was an excellent project for Al Qaroun town and for the Syrians in general and the Lebanese…

Other Syrian respondents felt that even though the project did not benefit them directly, it benefitted them indirectly as it employed Syrians as workers.

> Some Syrians benefitted when they worked in the project during its implementation. The municipality employed a number of Syrians in the project with the UN. So, only those who worked in the project benefitted from it. We didn't benefit from the lighting, because the area belongs to the Lebanese, and not the Syrians.

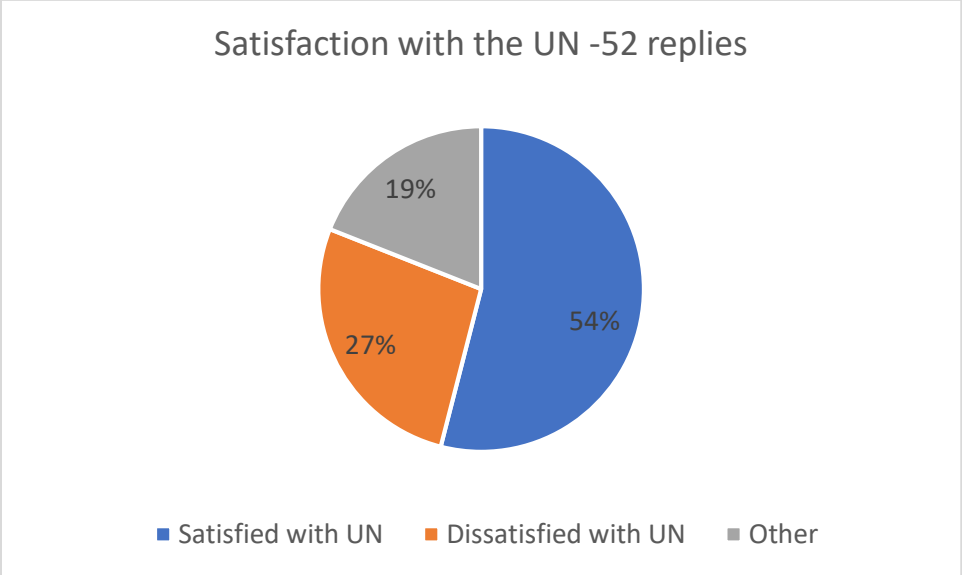
One Syrian respondent essentially laid out the rationale of the Lebanese Host Community Support Project:

> Such projects are good for the country's development and the employment of Syrians at the same time. When the UN participates in such projects, it's good because the country would be satisfied with the refugees, since the UN is doing good projects in their country. God bless them.

The quote posits that UN support to Lebanese communities will make the refugee presence more acceptable especially in light of growing host community fatigue.

Overall, the analysis suggests that it is difficult to design 'community projects' which benefit both Lebanese and Syrians in the area given the different needs and the physical segregation between the two communities forged through informal settlements. The WhatsApp messages also exposed visible and invisible barriers that impede access to the area for vulnerable populations: curfews, checkpoints, transportation, distance and social discrimination. It is also important to be conscious of the subtler messaging of solar lighting projects. These projects are often implemented to improve public perceptions of safety. As such, they may end up reinforcing the assumption that Syrians constitute a threat and that the streets need to be lighted at night to ensure they cannot move around undetected.

5. Satisfaction with the UN



54% of respondents were satisfied with the UN's work, while 27% were dissatisfied. As one respondent professed: 'Of course, we are satisfied with the work of the UN, since it's the supporter of both Lebanese and Syrians at the same time, and it supports both communities: the guest and the host.' Yet, only six Lebanese replied to that question and some Lebanese respondents sent us messages effectively saying that there must have been a mistake with them receiving the survey, because they are Lebanese and not Syrians. The idea that the UN primarily works for Syrians was also articulated in the following story:

> As a Lebanese citizen, I'm dissatisfied with the work of the UN, because they focus on Syrian refugees more than on solving the problems of the Lebanese citizens. So, the UN is non-existent for the Lebanese citizen, although he bears all this load of wars and economic collapse, so he feels that he's abandoned. Of course, the UN is doing a great job with the Syrians and immigrants. However, they should care about the Lebanese people and the load they are bearing.

Many Syrians shared the view that aid does not go to those who need it most. Overall, 21% of replies to that question expressed the idea that assistance was unfairly distributed:

> We are really dissatisfied, because the UN is unfair. It oppresses many people, including me. They give aids to people who are not in need, while they don't give them to the needy ones…

People were particularly frustrated when they received aid at some point, which was then discontinued, even though their sense of vulnerability and need had not changed:

> Your question is very good. Regarding the UN, it must provide full aid and protection to anyone, but it's not helping everyone equally. Some people receive a lot of aid, while others do not receive any aid from anyone. On the personal level, my father is helpless and sick, and my siblings are all sisters, and I have a family. Is our situation appropriate to be dismissed from the UN and not be able to receive anything? I had a card through which I received food aid, but it's been disabled for seven months, and whenever I call them they'd say that they'll

> reactivate it this month, but the month ends, and another month arrives… It's become like any other organization. It's become full of favouritism…

Some of this frustration was attributable to lack of communication: 'Of course, we're not satisfied, not even by 1%. Whenever you need help, you can call the emergency number, but we kept calling it for two days with no answer.' Better communication was also regarded as important to protect Syrians from fraudulent organizations that feign to be part of the UN:

> There should be awareness campaigns regarding the UN, because some organizations contacted us and took some money, about 5$, in order to activate our papers, and they told us that we're going to receive aids. This is robbery and fraud, because they took money and disappeared, and we haven't seen them since then. Also, many organizations take papers from us, claiming that they are from the UN, so we deal with them. But in the end, we discover that they aren't related to the UN. So, there should be awareness campaigns from the UN… so we can know which organizations are under the UN cover and which aren't.

5.1. WhatsApp Survey Feedback

Many respondents expressed interest in receiving feedback on this study mostly via WhatsApp (32 out of 37 replies), confirming its relevance to peoples' every day communication: 'Yes, of course we would like to know everything about this study... It's better to do it via WhatsApp. That's because some people don't know how to read a text message, because they are illiterate…'

Some respondents said that WhatsApp is also less costly for them than replying to text messages. More generally, people told us that the WhatsApp survey tool opens important channels of communication between them and international organizations, which did not exist previously. One female Syrian farmer, for example, expressed: 'We are grateful that you've done this so that we can communicate with you and tell you our concerns, what goes on, and the situations we face every day.' Another said: 'Thanks for this program that you're doing to communicate with people and families.'

Our introductory message to the survey stated that we will compensate survey participants for their data use and time. Eventually, we compensated everyone who replied to at least one question with 10 USD in phone credit, taking into account that some people combined several questions in one long voice note. Some respondents made clear that data compensation was necessary to make communication possible. One respondent explained, 'I always like to answer your questions and I have so much to say, but my problem is credit and megabytes.'

Finally, we asked people how they knew about the survey. Two thirds of respondents (24 out of 36) said they knew about the survey through a sms message we had sent to phone numbers registered in the area. Announcing the survey via sms was thus an effective way of building the credibility of the subsequent WhatsApp communication. Around a quarter of respondents learned about the survey from the municipality and only 8% through friends and family.

6. Conclusion

WhatsApp clearly emerged from this study as a suitable tool for creating two-way communication between people on the ground and international organizations. Rather than inventing a new app or form of communication, we tried to pick up people where they are by using an application that already forms an integral part of their everyday life. This made communication more natural and may explain why many people felt sufficiently comfortable to talk about sensitive issues such as army raids, detention and harassment. From our side, we also tried to shed the image of an overly technical and removed bureaucracy by personalizing our voice messages ('Hi, this is Sarah from UNDP' – Sarah even received a marriage proposal by one WhatsApp respondent). Yet, we also buttressed the WhatsApp communication through other outreach efforts such as organizing a community workshop, putting up posters in Qaraoun and sending sms messages to phone numbers in the area to announce the survey. Our response rate of 17% and the fact that many people took time to tell us their story suggests that there is considerable interest in communicating with the 'UN', especially among Syrians. For our second pilot in Bar Elias, we have tried to improve our outreach strategy to host community members and women to ensure a more balanced gender and nationality make-up.

Qaraoun emerged from the survey and further research as a hospitable place where tensions are mitigated through historical relationships with Syrian workers as well as compassion for their situation. The municipality has also played an important role in organizing assistance and shelter for refugees. That said, as in many other villages in Lebanon, public and state anxiety about losing control have given rise to many restrictions on Syrians including curfews. This underpins a problematic dynamic where Syrians are made feel less safe to make Lebanese feel safer. These dynamics are by no means unique to Qaraoun. More than 50% of Lebanese municipalities are implementing curfews against Syrian refugees, yet Syrians were more than twice as likely to feel unsafe during the night than Lebanese (20% compared to 9%). Such measures are popular with Lebanese citizens with 91% agreeing in the ARK survey that some restrictions on foreigners can help to keep the area safe. Yet, the WhatsApp survey also revealed that peoples' analysis was mostly differentiated, with both Lebanese and Syrians avoiding generalizations and stereotyping of the other community. Most people reported positive social relationships in Qaraoun which co-exist uneasily with transactional relationships that are often more exploitative. Overall, the analysis suggests that Lebanese/Syrian relationships are not set in stone. Rather, they are continuously shaped and reshaped by both negative and positive changes in the environment, including perceptions of the fairness of assistance. As such, some room exits for improvement through dedicated peacebuilding interventions that bring people together, more livelihoods support as well as more conflict-sensitive approaches to aid distribution.

7. Annexes

7.1. Questionnaire

Hello, this is Sarah from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). We would like to ask you a few questions via voice message to better understand the needs and concerns in your area. Your messages will only be read and heard by people who work for UNDP and at no time will this information be released to anyone outside the study. We will protect the confidentiality of your data. Taking part in this study is voluntary and you have the right to choose not to take part in this study. If you agree to participate in this study, we will send you two to three questions each week for one month (November) that you can simply answer by sending us a voice message. We would be very grateful, if you could give us examples and tell us stories about your everyday experiences in your area for us to better understand your situation and the situation of people like you. Please do not leave any answers blank, instead tell us why you prefer not to answer a question. At the end of the month, upon completion of the survey, we will provide you with phone credit to compensate you for your data use to participate in the survey. This is a one-off compensation and there are no other direct benefits to you in participating in this survey, even though it is possible that information from this study could be used to improve public safety and community well-being in your area, now or in the future.

Please note that this phone number exists purely for the purpose of conducting this survey. This number does not provide any emergency services. For emergencies, please contact the police (112). For protection needs, refugees in the Bekaa/Baalbek area should contact UNHCR under the phone number 76611811. If you have questions about the survey, please call UNDP under this number: xxxxxx.

Questions:

1. Please give us some basic information about yourself: your sex, your age, your nationality, your occupation and whether you are currently working. Please don't provide your name or any other personal information to help us to anonymize your data.

2. What are the main needs in your village and why?

3. Are there any tensions or conflicts in your area? If so, what are the reasons behind these tensions and can you give us an example of when you or people you know encountered these tensions or conflicts in your area?

4. Have you or your family and friends been affected by unemployment or job competition in your area? If yes, could you tell us what happened? What are the reasons behind unemployment or job competition in your area?

5. How are relationships between Lebanese and Syrians in your village? Have they improved or worsened during the last year? And if so, why have they improved or worsened? What do you see as the main sources of tension between Lebanese and Syrians. Could you give an example of how these tensions manifest themselves in everyday life in your area?

6. What are your main fears and concerns? Do you feel safe in your area? And if not, what makes you feel unsafe? Could you tell us a story of a situation where you or some of your friends or family felt unsafe (without giving any names)? Has safety in your area improved or worsened over the last three months?

7. About a year ago, UNDP together with the municipality installed a solar lighting system along the dam of Qaraoun. Are you aware of this project and have you personally been to the dam area and

benefitted from the solar lighting? If not, why not? What change/improvement of the project would have been necessary for you or people like you to benefit from the project?

8. How do you see the future of Syrians in Lebanon?

9. Are you satisfied with the work of the UN and NGOs in Lebanon? If not, can you identify the main problems you see with their work and suggest how they could be addressed?

10. Are you interested in receiving feedback about this study and if so how, for example via WhatsApp or text message?