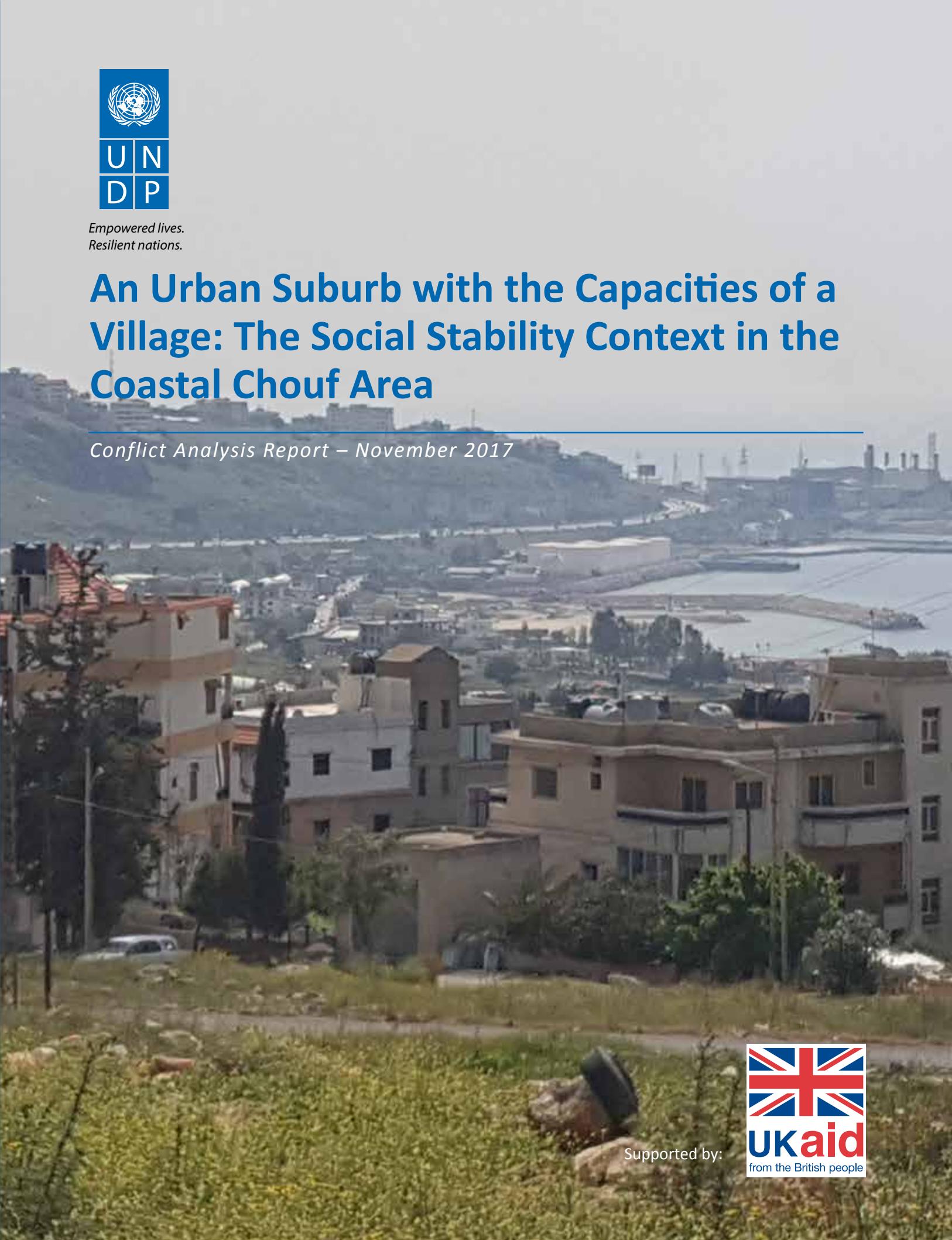
Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

An Urban Suburb with the Capacities of a Village: The Social Stability Context in the Coastal Chouf Area

Conflict Analysis Report – November 2017



Supported by:

UKaid
from the British people

This report was written by a team of researchers as part of a conflict analysis consultancy for the UNDP Peacebuilding in Lebanon Project to inform and support UNDP programming, as well as interventions from other partners in the frame of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). This report is the last of a series of six successive reports, all targeting specific areas of Lebanon that have not been covered by previous similar research. Through these reports, UNDP is aiming at providing quality analysis to LCRP Partners on the evolution of local dynamics, highlighting how local and structural issues have been impacted and interact with the consequences of the Syrian crisis in Lebanon. This report has been produced with the support of the Department for International Development (DFID).

For any further information, please contact directly: Bastien Revel, UNDP Social Stability Sector Coordinator at bastien.revel@undp.org and Joanna Nassar, UNDP Peacebuilding in Lebanon Project Manager at joanna.nassar@undp.org

Report written by Muzna Al-Masri and Zeina Abla
Researchers: Ali Chahine, Zeina Abla and Muzna Al-Masri.

The authors wish to thank all the interviewees, both Lebanese and Syrian, for their time and input. The authors also wish to thank Ghania Fares, head of the A'anout Social Development Service Centre, Bassam Al Kantar, writer and environmentalist, and Zeina Osman of Q Perspective for their support and assistance during fieldwork.

Front page picture: Jiyyeh Coast Line – photo credit Ali Chahine.

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

An Urban Suburb with the Capacities of a Village: The Social Stability Context in the Coastal Chouf Area

Conflict Analysis Report – November 2017

Supported by: UKaid from the British people

An Urban Suburb with the Capacities of a Village:Social Stability Context in the Coastal Chouf Area

Conflict Analysis Report – November 2017

Summary

This report introduces the conflict context in the coastal Chouf area, a semi-urban area connecting the capital Beirut to Sidon in the south, the country's third largest city. The area is largely urbanized with government employment providing the main source of income, in addition to significant industrial and touristic sectors. Its resident population is predominantly Sunni, as a large percentage of the registered Christian population was displaced during the war.

The loyalties in the area are divided between the traditional leadership of Walid Jumblatt in the Chouf area, the dominance of Future Movement over the Sunni areas, and a significant constituency in support of Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyya, a Lebanese Sunni party which is considered to be a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, with a large network of social, educational and health services centres. The church and various Christian political parties also play a major role in trying to sustain the Christian character of some of the villages. Local notables are significant actors, too. Although mostly affiliated with various political groups, they have influence due to family, professional and personal connections. More recently, especially after the last municipal elections in 2016, the region has witnessed the emergence of alternative movements from civil society and independent activists, in response to environmental problems sweeping the region and as a result of long-existing political marginalization.

Key issues fuelling tension are strongly tied to national and strategic problems. A rapid process of unplanned urbanization, in the absence of socio-economic developmental policies and equitable social services, has implications for existing infrastructure and feeds sectarian and political tensions. Major environmental challenges, namely those caused by the Jiyeh power plant, the Siblin cement factory and the Naameh landfill have caused repeated rounds of road blockades and demonstrations and remain a source of tension with a potential risk of escalation. The Syrian refugee population, which is limited in size, is only one component of a larger incoming population from outside the area, and seems to have developed better relationships with the host community than in other areas in Lebanon.

In terms of conflict dynamics, the report highlights the stabilizing impact of the limited electoral utility of sectarian-based mobilization in the region, convergence of interests of key political actors in the area, the conflict mitigation role of local notables, and similarity in background between incoming Syrian refugees and the local host population. It also emphasizes the potential positive impact of emergent community efforts that put the area's environmental concerns at the centre of its agenda as well as of strong networks of solidarity among Syrian refugees. Although the region's geostrategic location and proximity to Beirut facilitates economic opportunities and makes it attractive for housing projects, industrial investment and urbanization remain segregated from the local context. Their contribution to local development has been limited, and they have placed additional strain on resources and the infrastructure. Naameh/Haret Al-Naameh and Damour's peculiar administrative position and difficulty in joining municipal coalitions is another potential divider, in addition to the proposed administrative division of Naamet/Haret Al-Naameh and Damour/Saadiyat into two sectarian segregated communities.

To mitigate the impact of above dividers and contribute positively to conflict issues, the report recommends broad and national level interventions with respect to the environmental and urbanization issues, particularly agreement on sound and sustainable solutions to the environmental crises impacting the area, adequate urban plans, and incentivizing and directing the establishment of eco-industrial parks. Partnership with active Lebanese youth in the area, as well as support of community-led Syrian initiatives to bolster their positive role in the community, is recommended and could serve as a model of grassroots organization for other areas.

I. Introduction

This report provides an analytical overview of social stability in the Chouf coastal area. This includes the region commonly known as the Iqlim al Kharroub located between the Southern Beirut suburbs and Sidon, in addition to the adjacent villages of Damour and Naameh/Haret Al-Naameh. The report aims to give a snapshot of the situation in the region at a specific time, and concentrates on social and socio-political conflicts at the local level to support peace building and social stability programming as well as conflict-sensitive aid delivery.

The analysis is based on a desk review of existing literature, semi-structured key informant interviews, and one focus group. Interviews were conducted with 41 members of the Lebanese and Syrian refugee communities, Lebanese officials, business owners, activists and political party representatives, and Syrian and Lebanese community members. Regarding the gender and national breakdown of the sample, 9 interviewees out of 41 were women and 7 were Syrians[1]. To compensate for the limited representation of women and Syrians, one focus group was conducted with 15 Syrian refugee women. This report also benefits from additional observations and informal conversations during the field visits. All interviews were conducted in Arabic by a mixed male/female Lebanese research team proficient in both Arabic and English between 12 March and 16 May 2017. The structure of the report follows other similar conflict analysis reports covering the Bekaa in 2015 and 2016 and areas located in south Lebanon and Akkar in 2016[2].

The data collection and analysis is limited by the inadequate representation of Lebanese residents who are not originally from the area. As elaborated below, a sizeable percentage of the resident population have moved to the area seeking affordable accommodation but are not on its voting register, and thus not represented by the municipalities, which were a primary source of entry for this research and therefore they were not easily reachable.

This report is primarily an analytical conflict analysis and quantitative data was not always available to support some of the claims made by interviewees about conflict trends and their judgment of the power of different actors or the importance of one conflict issue over the other. Nevertheless, the value of this analysis is that it relies on the input – though understandable often subjective – from key informants who are part of the everyday socio-political processes in the area and whose qualitative assessment provides insights that cannot be otherwise captured.

1 Interviews were conducted in Arabic by three researchers, two females and one male, all of whom were Lebanese. The report though does not provide a mere summary of the key issues reported by interviewees, but also an analysis which does not always take statements by interviewees at face value and rather compares and contrasts various perspectives and opinions to provide this analytical summary. Names of all specific villages visited are not provided in this report to ensure protection of individuals who shared sensitive stories.

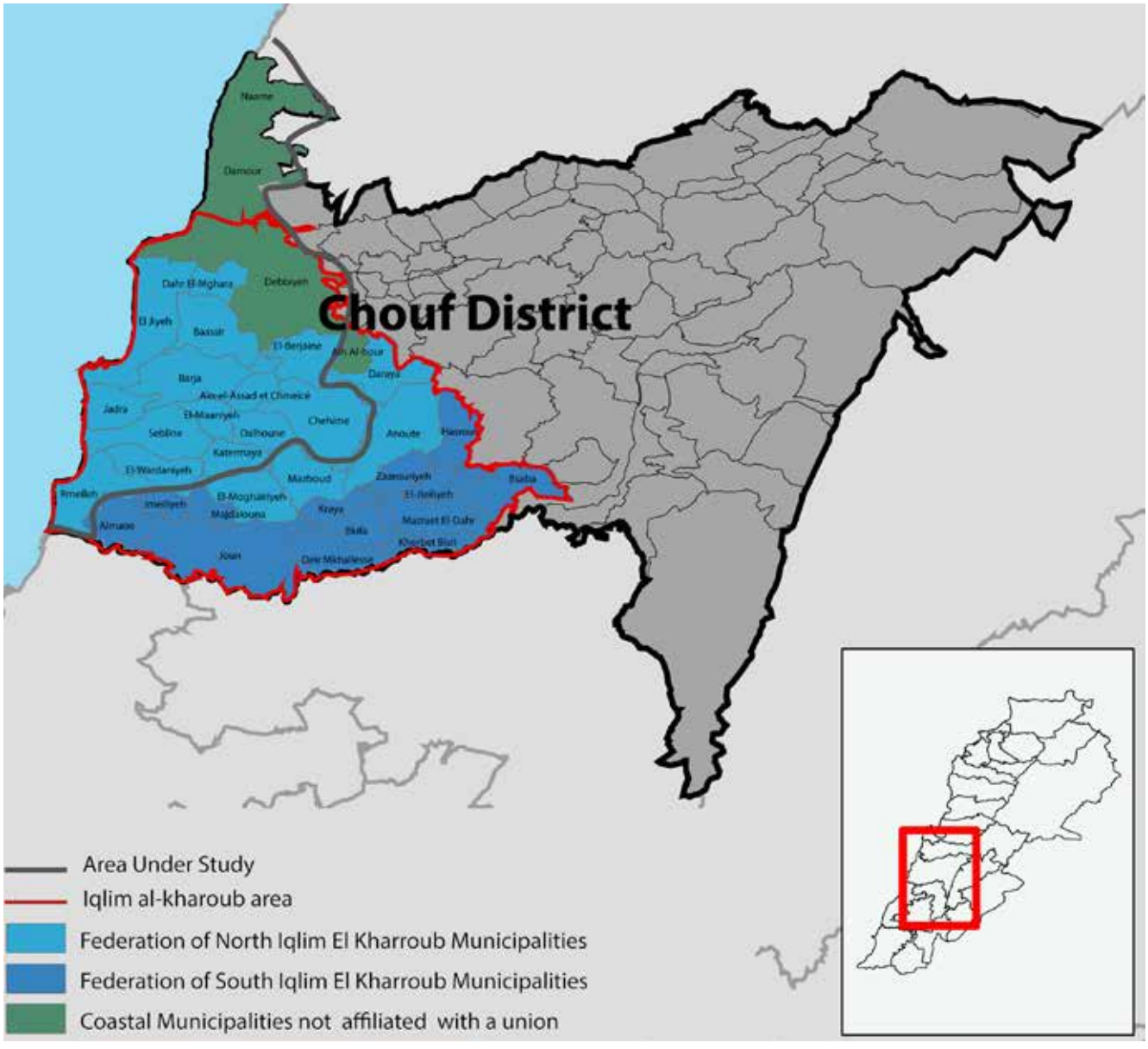
2 Muzna Al-Masri, 'The Social Stability Context in the Nabatieh & Bint Jbeil Qazas: Conflict Analysis Report' (Beirut: UNDP, March 2016), http://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/The-Social-Stability-Context-in-the-Nabatieh-and-Bint-Jbeil-Qazas.html; Muzna Al-Masri, 'Converging Interests of Conciliation: The Social Stability Context in the Marjaayoun and Hasbaya Qazas' (Beirut: UNDP, May 2016), http://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/Converging-Interests-of-Conciliation-The-Social-Stability-Context-in-the-Marjaayoun-and-Hasbaya-Qazas.html; Muzna Al-Masri, 'Local and Regional Entanglements: The Social Stability Context in Sahel Akkar' (Beirut: UNDP, August 2016), http://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/The-Social-Stability-Context-in-the-Nabatieh-and-Bint-Jbeil-Qazas.html; Muzna Al-Masri and Zeina Abla, 'The Burden of Scarce Opportunities: The Social Stability Context in Central and West Bekaa' (Beirut: UNDP, March 2017).

II. Context

The Chouf district (Qaza) of the Mount Lebanon governorate covers 495 square kilometres and extends from the Awali river in the south to Naameh/Haret Al-Naameh north of the Damour river, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Barouk mountains to the east. Its coast, which is the subject of this report, stretches from the Naameh area in the north to Rmeileh in the south.

The Chouf, which had historical significance before Lebanon's independence, was the site of fierce battles and massacres in the seventies and eighties during the Lebanese civil war. In recent times, it became the centre for the Druze community and the Jumblatt family stronghold, although it still hosts diverse sectarian communities.

The Iqlim al Kharroub region, which is located within the Chouf district, is not an administrative division, but a 167 Km2 territory with a shared history and geography and is perceived by locals as one interconnected region different from its surroundings. The Iqlim stretches from the Mediterranean Sea



inwards to the mountainous area. The region's boundaries, as locals identify them, are delineated from the south by the Awali River that separates it from the South governorates, and by the Damour River to the north and northeast, where the villages of Debbiyeh, Daraiya and Gharifeh are located.

The Iqlim al Kharroub's coast makes up most of the Chouf's coast, from Siblin and Jadra going up north to Jiyeh, excluding Damour and Naameh adjacent coastal areas that, administratively, are part of the Chouf district, but not recognized as part of the Iqlim. This coastal strip has a strategic location in linking the capital of the South governorate, Saida, and other southern cities and towns, including Nabatieh and Tyre, to the national capital, Beirut. Residents of the area rely on either Beirut or nearby Sidon for their daily needs and services.

The Iqlim consists of 37 villages, of which 25[3] have municipalities[4]. Of the latter, 17 form the Federation of North Iqlim El Kharroub Municipalities and another six form the Federation of South Iqlim El Kharroub Municipalities[5]. The largest Iqlim villages are Barja and Chehim. In contrast, the neighbouring Naameh and Damour coastal villages have municipalities, but are not part of any federation, neither in the Iqlim nor the Chou

Table 1: Municipal unions in the coastal Chouf area

Federation of North Iqlim El Kharroub Municipalities	Federation of South Iqlim El Kharroub Municipalities	Coastal municipalities not affiliated with a federation
Aalmane - Barghoutiyeh	Hasrout	Naaameh/Haret Al-Naameh
Aanout	Joun	Damour/Saadiyat
Baassir - Haret Baassir	Mazraat ed Dahr	Dibiyyeh
Barja	Mtolleh - Bzina	Ain Al-Hour
Bourjein - Marjiyat (Chouf)	Zaarouriyeh	
Chhim		
Dahr El Mghara		
Dalhoun		
Daraiya (Chouf)		
Jadra - Ouadi Ez Zayni		
Jiyeh		
Ketermaya		
Mazboud		
Mghayriyeh (Chouf)		
Ouardaniyeh		
Rmeileh (Chouf)		
Siblin		

[3] The rest of the villages do not have municipalities because of their small size.

[4] Lina Fakhreddine, 'لينا فخر الدين ا إقليم الخروب يُبعد يد الأحزاب: عائدون إلى «جلباب أبي»! :: لبنان ا جريدة السفير', Assafir, 16 May 2016, http://assafir.com/Article/494421/Archive.

[5] Only Dbbiyeh and Ain Al Hour villages in the Iqlim have municipalities, but don't belong to neither of the federations.

A. Demography

The region witnessed demographic transformations as a result of displacement during the civil war, and later due to economic factors. Different communities from outside the area now live in the coastal villages, as they escaped high property costs in Beirut, thereby transforming the region into a suburb of the capital. In addition, there is a sizeable Palestinian refugee community that has been in the area for decades, and is relatively well integrated in the community. Recently, Syrian refugees settled in either rented accommodation or on agricultural land. There are only two informal settlements in the area under study with over ten tents[6].

Figures on population size at the district level are difficult to estimate: the resident population includes Lebanese nationals from inside and outside the area, Palestinian and Syrian registered and non-registered refugees, as well as foreign – mostly Asian – workers in the local factories[7].

The latest data according to voter registration records in the Chouf was 200,0000 in 2016[8]. This would be the Lebanese population registered in the area who are above 21 years (i.e. excluding the younger population), but the figure also includes registered voters not residing in the areas, a good percentage of whom are those who were displaced during the war and never returned to the area. At the same time, this number excludes the Lebanese who vote in other districts. Chehim, Barja and Siblin account for more than 30% of the Iqlim's Lebanese population. Of the Iqlim's Lebanese population, around 23% is considered poor, based on the latest upper poverty line of $4/day[9]. The number of registered Syrian refugees in the Iqlim is around 32,000[10].

Estimated numbers according to local elected officials on the population of Naaameh/Haret Al-Naameh and Damour – which are not part of the Iqlim, but of the Chouf coast and qaza – might be useful to give an idea about population distribution. In Naaameh/Haret Al-Naameh, the local elected official estimates the Lebanese resident population from Haret Al-Naameh to be 5,50011. He also estimates there are an additional 30,000 inhabitants, including Lebanese from other parts of the country, Palestinians, Syrians and other nationals resident in the area of the municipality. Of those, he claims, Syrians are a total of 10,000, although the number of registered Syrian refugees in the municipality according to UNHCR is 5,30912, indicating the presence of refugees not registered with UNHCR. In the Damour municipality, according to an elected community representative, the number of voters is 10,000, and generally a little more than half of them vote13. Resident voters in Damour, according to the same source, are a little more than 4,000 people, and the size of the Syrian population in Damour is around 1,000 (though again, UNHCR figures indicate there are 2,891 registered refugees in the area), a number which mainly

[6] Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, Refugees in Informal Settlements, December 2016, http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=12398.

[7] The official data available considers the population in the Chouf at around 153,000 Lebanese inhabitants out of which some 70,000 are in the Iqlim, but local estimates as well as the number of registered voters in the area indicate that this is highly unlikely. UNHCR, 'Https://Data.unhcr.org/Syrianrefugees/download.php?id=4596', January 2014.

[8] 'Lebanese Elections Data', accessed 13 June 2017, http://lebanonelectiondata.org/confessions.html.

[9] UNHCR, 'Https://Data.unhcr.org/Syrianrefugees/download.php?id=4596'.

[10] As of 31/12/2016, see UNHCR, Distribution of the Registered Syrian Refugees at the Cadastral Level - Beirut and Mount Lebanon Governorates, 31 December 2016.

[11] Elected community representative from Naameh/Haret Al-Naameh, interview by Muzna Al-Masri and Zeina Abla, 21 March 2017.

[12] UNHCR, 'Distribution of the Registered Syrian Refugees at the Cadastral Level - Beirut and Mount Lebanon Governorates'.

[13] Elected community representative from Damour, interview by Zeina Abla, 21 March 2017.

consists of agricultural workers employed on cultivated land before 2011, who then brought their families after the crisis, as explained by locals.

B. Socio-political composition

The number of voters in the Chouf is 200,000, of which around 29% are Sunnis (the majority of which are in the Iqlim area), another 29% are Maronites, and 32% are Druze14. The Druze population resides outside of the Iqlim, and residents of the Iqlim are predominantly Muslim and Christian. The Christians of the Iqlim are mainly in small villages like Debbiye, Mazraet El-Dahr, Rmeileh, Alman, Aalmane Ech-Chouf, Jadra, Jleiliyé, Mazmoura, Dahr El-Mghara, and Majdalouna, many of which have had the bulk of their original population displaced in the civil war. The villages with a Sunni majority are the largest villages: Chehim, Barja, Mazboud, Anout, Dariya, Baasir, Mghayireh, Dalhoun, Siblin, and Bsaba. In contrast, Jiyeh, Joun and Wardaniyeh are the few villages that have a Shia majority15.

The political allegiances of the people of Iqlim el-Kharoub and the coastal Chouf area are paradoxical when compared to other areas in Lebanon, as they have historically not been based on sectarian identification. As part of the majority Druze district of the Chouf, votes of non-Druze residents historically did not have significant enough impact on electoral results in the district, and thus were not targeted for mobilization through sectarian-based patronage systems. Some of the Iqlim's families still pledge allegiance to the historical political division predating the civil war in the 1950s between the right-wing Christian Nationalist Liberal Party and the leftist camp led by Kamal Jumblatt, especially amongst the older generation in the large villages. The sectarian identity of the Sunnis and allegiance to the Future Movement are a factor, yet tempered by the wider Chouf context with its Druze majority population under the leadership of Walid Jumblatt.

The new election law approved in 2017 for the 2018 parliamentary elections, based on proportional representation, could change the situation in this specific region, allowing for Sunni leaders to take advantage. According to one political analysis, the Future Movement, led by Saad Hariri, could increase their influence in the Iqlim or use it as a bargaining chip in negotiations, which could possibly increase tensions, as they would be competing with Jumblatt's influence[16]. However, given that both Jumblatt and Hariri also have common economic interests, especially with regard to the environmental issues in the area, forging an alliance is a highly probable option as well (see Section IV: Conflict Issues).

As regards the Christians, most of them have been displaced in two waves. The first wave was in 1975 and 1976, after the Damour massacre and the targeting of militants in Christian political groups, while the second wave took place in 1984-1985 during the so-called Mountain War[17]. The main opponent of the militant Christian political groups at the time was the Progressive Socialist Party, founded by Kamal Jumblatt and now led by his son Walid, and their allies.

---

[14] احمد منصور, 'اللوائح الانتخابية في قرى وبلدات اقليم الخروب لدورة انتخابات 2016', بوابة الاقليم, accessed 17 May 2017, http://www.al-iklim.com/_article.php?article_id=98317&sub_category_id=2&category_id=1.

[15] Ramzi Musharafieh, 'تفاصيل المشهد الانتخابي في اقليم الخروب - رمزي مشرفية - النهار', Annahar, 26 April 2016, http://www.annahar.com/article/366307-%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8.

[16] Mahmoud Zayyat, 'انتخابات عاليه ـ الشوف... بانتظار "تكويعة" جنبلاطية', IMLEBANON, 19 June 2017, http://www.imlebanon.org/2017/06/19/election-walid-jumblat-chouf-aley/.

[17] بطرس لبكي, جردة حساب الحروب من أجل الآخرين على أرض لبنان (دار النهار للطباعة والنشر والتوزيع), 2003 and خليل أبو رجيلي.

The wartime events have changed the demography of the area significantly and created a major rupture between the Druze and Christians of the Chouf. Only a small percentage of the Christian population returned to their homes when the civil war officially ended in 1990, having adapted to life elsewhere in Lebanon. This was despite a lengthy reconciliation and compensation process led by the Ministry of the Displaced (also under Walid Jumblatt's patronage), which was concluded with the 2001 reconciliation between Walid Jumblatt, representing the Druze community, and the Maronite Patriarch, representing Christians at the time[18].

Wartime antagonism that took on a sectarian Christian-Druze character did not necessarily extend to the Muslim community. Several of the Muslim residents of the Iqlim interviewed explained how, during the war, the remaining Muslim population stayed in contact with their displaced Christian neighbors and even engaged in efforts to support their return19 (see Section IV.A for current conditions).

Of note is also the peculiar administrative position of the villages of Naameh/Haret Al-Naameh and Damour/Saadiyat. Naameh/Haret Al-Naameh is divided into two parts: Haret Al-Naameh is densely populated and is majority Sunni, with a large number of poor migrants from all over, while the other part of Naameh is mainly inhabited by locals, the majority of whom are Christians. Damour is largely divided into a mostly Christian Damour village and the Sunni neighborhood of Saadiyat. Both villages might soon be administratively divided into two municipalities each to reflect this religious divide. In addition, neither of them belongs to the historic area of Iqlim, and thus they are not part of its municipal federations. Due to their religious composition, they also are not part of other municipal unions in the Chouf.[20]

Table 2: Members of Parliament in the Chouf Qaza (elected in 2009)[21]

Name of MP	Sect	Political affiliation
Walid Jumblatt	Druze	PSP
Marwan Hamadeh	Druze	Allegedly independent but member of the 'Democratic Gathering' led by PSP
Elie Aoun	Maronite	Allegedly independent but member of the 'Democratic Gathering' led by PSP
Dory Chamoun	Maronite	National Liberal Party (Al-Ahrar)
Georges Adwan	Maronite	Lebanese Forces
Nehme Tohme	Greek Catholic	Allegedly independent but member of the 'Democratic Gathering' led by PSP
Alaeddine Terro	Sunni	PSP
Mohamad El Hajjar	Sunni	Future Movement

[18] Harkous, Omar, '«2009 «جبل المصالحات» ترسي 2001 «مصالحة الجبل»', Almustaqbal Newspaper, 4 August 2009, http://www.almustaqbal.com/v4/article.aspx?type=NP&articleid=361080.

[19] Local community notable, interview by Muzna Al-Masri, 12 May 2017; Development worker, interview by Muzna Al-Masri, 28 March 2017.

[20] According to one researcher interviewed, these villages have historically been added to the Chouf Qaza for electoral purposes, whereas their geographic location and connections make them better fit as part of the Aley Qaza. Researcher, interview by Muzna Al-Masri, 10 May 2017.

[21] Source: International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 'The Political Affiliation of Lebanese Parliamentarians and the Composition of the Different Parliamentary Blocs: IFES Lebanon Briefing Paper', September 2009, https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/lebanon_parliament_elections_200909_0.pdf.

C. Security

Overall, most interviewees in the inner villages of the Iqlim, whether Lebanese or Syrians, relayed a relative feeling of safety, considering that inhabitants know each other and have a web of social relations that support this general feeling of safety. The Syrian refugees are occasionally stopped at checkpoints and interrogated. Curfews and restrictions on the movement of Syrian nationals imposed by municipal authorities are not common, and even if they were declared at some point in a few areas, they are not strictly implemented and usually fade away with time.

On the coast, the situation is a little different. The demographic changes and urbanization dynamics of the coastal areas brought in new dwellers. Occasionally, individual clashes take place on the streets, either between young idle men on insignificant personal issues, or between specific communities on political and sectarian issues. In addition, protests have taken the form of blocking the coastal highway linking the south to the capital, such as in last year's environmental protests[22].

The area between Damour and Naameh is particularly sensitive due to the presence of a heavily reinforced military base belonging to a pro-Syrian Palestinian faction, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command. The base, although isolated from the surrounding areas, has been a source of friction and incidents of violence[23]. Locals also worry that its presence makes their area a target for Israeli attacks, as was the case throughout the 1980s, with the last air raid taking place as recently as 201324. That said, it appears dormant at present, and speculation that the situation in Syria might make it a source of tension in Lebanese affairs seems unfounded[25].

D. Economy

Currently, the chief source of income in the Iqlim is waged employment. Many of the locals are employed in the public sector, specifically in the courts, army and security forces, especially in the inner large village of Chehim. Some of these civil servants are historically affiliated to the Chamounist National Liberal camp. Other sources of income are worker remittances from employment abroad, or in the big cities in Lebanon.

The region also has a manufacturing sector with a number of zones either officially or unofficially classified as industrial. Amongst the officially classified industrial zones is the village of Siblin, which is well-known for its large cement factory: 'Ciment de Siblin' (the complex was originally owned by Walid Jumblatt, who historically owns most land in Siblin26). The factory declares on its website that it provides 530 jobs and creates indirect employment for more than 800 people. In addition, there are a

[22] Mohammad Al Jnoun, '26 برجا تهدد بإقفال معمل الجيّة الحراري', الأخبار, July 2016, 2944 edition, http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/262024.

[23] In 2006, two armed men from the Naameh base shot two municipal police officers that were passing by, which triggered some tension. See: 'طلب المؤبد لعناصر في القيادة العامة لمحاولتهم قتل شرطيين في الناعمة', Al-Mustaqbal, 2 June 2006, 2282 edition.

[24] Naharnet Newsdesk and 07:09, 'Israel Targets PFLP-GC Position in Naameh after Rocket Attack', Naharnet, 23 August 2013, http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/95179.

[25] Rouba Mounzer, 'سلاحٌ «غريب» تحت الأرض... يُهدِّد لبنان', Al-Joumhouria, 21 January 2017, http://www.aljoumhouria.com/news/index/347548; Jean Aziz, 'Palestinian Militants From Syria Establish Lebanon Base', Al-Monitor, 15 January 2013, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/01/lebanon-palestine-militants.html.

[26] In the eighties, Rafiq Hariri provided debt financing to the factory and after that became a shareholder. In 2002, a Portuguese company acquired more than half the company and became the major shareholder, while Jumblatt retained a minor share, but remains with his son on the board of directors. The researchers could not find published information on the current composition of shareholders.

couple of large chocolate factories in Siblin[27]. Haret Al-Naameh, a semi-industrial area[28], has long been a site for large factories like the Concord refrigerator manufacturer.

Many of these factories have either been shut down or were downsized in the last decade because of the economic downturn, rising costs of production, and little governmental support. Currently, small- to medium-sized industries still operate in the area[29]. Jadra, a small village, also hosts a $35 million investment by Arwan Pharmaceutical Industries, which began manufacturing medical critical care products in 2013[30]. In Dahr El-Mghara, another small village near Jiyeh, the cosmetics manufacturing company Sadapack, with a wide presence abroad, constructed a large factory in 2011.

In 2012, traders from the Iqlim established an association to support the local economy and created an investment development fund for the region. The Ministry of Industry also chose a 670 m2 area that the monastery in Jleiliyé-Deir Mkhaless donated as part of its plan to establish three industrial cities across the country. The project, which has not been launched yet, is estimated to cost around $21 million and create more than 550 jobs during its two-year construction period, in addition to four thousand jobs once completed[31].

On the coast, private beach resorts and restaurants have spread and create some seasonal economic activity, especially in Jiyeh and Damour. The latter's municipality has an agreement with these businesses to provide preferential services to the local community. Finally, agriculture, which used to be an important sector, has become negligible in size, yet remains a key employer of Syrian casual workers, especially in the large plains of Damour.

III. Actors

Political allegiances in the Iqlim have in recent history gone through various phases shaped by national and regional contexts, including affiliations with nationalist and leftist political parties, mainly before the civil war, and Islamic groups afterwards, as well as loyalties to patronage-based political leaders. Before the civil war, the loyalties were split between Chamoun's Nationalist Liberal Party and Jumblatt's leftist camp, and today some of the Sunni community of the Iqlim still identify with Kamal Jumblatt or his opponent at the time, Camille Chamoun. This is particularly the case for the older generation, while the Sunni influence of Saad Hariri and the Future Movement is more common among a younger generation, though to varying degrees.

In the late nineties, loyalties settled into a sharing of power between what was now the sectarian and patronage-based leadership of the Druze Walid Jumblatt and that of the Hariri Sunni leadership. Unlike the relationship between Kamal Jumblatt and Chamoun, Walid Jumblatt and Saad Hariri are allies and

[27] The luxury chocolate brand Patchi factory which employs around 360 workers is located in Siblin, in addition to another factory built more recently belonging to the Accad chocolate company (brand name: Pogati). Other well-known manufacturers in the village include Khatib Bros. & Co., which produces upscale shoes under the brand name of Red Shoe.

[28] Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL), 'Industrial Zones in Lebanon' (Beirut: Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL), 2013, http://investinlebanon.gov.lb/Content/uploads/SideBlock/130225120821546~Industrial%20Zones%20in%20Lebanon.pdf.

[29] Examples of medium-sized companies are Abido Company for Trade and Industry (spice production) and Usine Laveluxe Industrielle (food production under brand name Yamama).

[30] 'IDAL - About Us - Investment Projects Supported - Projects - Arwan', accessed 24 March 2017, http://investinlebanon.gov.lb/en/about_us/investment_projects_supported/projects?catId=4&projectId=48.

[31] 'اجتماع للجهات المانحة لتمويل إقامة 3 مدن صناعية في لبنان', المستقبل الإقتصادي, Al Mustaqbal, 9 November 2016, sec. المستقبل الإقتصادي, http://www.almustaqbal.com/v4/article.aspx?type=NP&ArticleID=722174.

share economic interests, allowing them to maintain a grip on the region and thus to minimize intra-regional conflict. Since the rise of Rafik Hariri in the early nineties, these two parties never clashed directly in any of the parliamentary elections and always managed to establish electoral alliances in spite of their competition over the same constituency. As one community notable explained, 'when Jumblatt and Hariri are in an alliance, we – the Sunnis – are relieved'. [32]

The Sunni parliamentary representation, which has been unchanged since the year 2000, reflects the notable's view. One seat is reserved respectively for parliamentarian Alaeddine Terro, a Barja native who has been a member of Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party since 1975 (MP since 1992), and the other for Mohamad Hajjar of Hariri's Future Movement, who is from the village of Chehim (MP since 2000).

That said, political life is also characterized by the role of local notables, who though affiliated with various political groups, strengthen their group's popularity through their local presence. More recently, the region has witnessed the emergence of alternatives, like civil society groups, especially after the last municipal elections and in response to environmental problems sweeping the region, in addition to other Islamist movements, who saw an opportunity to increase their influence.

The paragraphs below describe the twelve most prominent actors locally, noted by interviewees as individuals, groups or organizations that play a key role as parties in conflict contexts, or with the power to mitigate conflicts once they break out. While the interviewers probed for information on certain actors, the decision to include them or not was largely based on the extent to which interviewees described their role as influential locally.

One such example is the large percentage of the resident population from outside the area who are underrepresented and seem to have a very limited role in the socio-political dynamics of the area, and thus are not listed as actors. These include the long existing Palestinian refugee community (which seems to be well integrated within the region's social fabric), the Asian and Syrian workers in the region's businesses, the new homeowners moving into affordable housing in the area, and the Syrian refugee population.

Another example listed as key actors in other areas and absent from this report are UN agencies, the donor community, and international NGOs. While a small number of refugees and a limited number of NGOs mentioned aid-funded programs locally, several of these programs were implemented in Sidon by organizations based there and not in the Iqlim. Nor were such activities influential in shaping refugees' everyday lived experience and the conflict dynamics locally.

A. Political Actors

1. Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)

The primary political leadership in the area is that of the Jumblatt family. The leadership of Walid Jumblatt in the area is inherited from his father, Kamal Jumblatt, to which the local community is connected through traditional ties of loyalty to both his family and political project. It is managed through the Jumblatt family's astute knowledge of the local notables and presence in the area. In addition, many residents were affiliated politically to the nationalist and leftist ideals that the PSP championed in the seventies.

[32] Local community representative, interview by Muzna Al-Masri and Zeina Abla, 21 March 2017.

In the nineties, Walid Jumblatt's control of the Ministry of the Displaced – and the funds it distributed to facilitate the return of internally displaced Lebanese – further reinforced his patronage position in the area, which experienced a significant scale of displacement. This paralleled the rise of the political leadership of Hariri in the late nineties, who came to co-share political representation there. More recently, several interviewees mentioned a decline in Jumblatt's leverage in the area, claiming that while support for him among the older Sunni constituency continues, the younger generation leans towards the Future Movement or Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyya, and with the recent garbage crisis away from leading political figures altogether[33]. This trend, according to the same interviewees was particularly notable in the 2016 municipal elections, when political parties shied away from competing and instead supported independent or family-based candidates. Walid Jumblatt is also a key economic player, due to the fact that his family is a major landowner in the area, in addition to him owning shares in many local businesses such as the Siblin cement factory.

2. Future Movement

The Hariri-led Future Movement has been the PSP's partner in the political leadership of the area since 2000, and occasionally its competitor. Its share of power in the area is best exemplified by the representation in parliament of Mohammad Hajjar – in agreement with its ally, the PSP. This alliance is not only political, but also based on business partnerships locally between the leaders of the two political parties, as in joint ownership of the Siblin factory[34].

Nevertheless, the Future Movement has not mobilized as aggressively, possibly because of the area's limited electoral utility. According to several interviewees, there was an increase in the Future Movement's popularity following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, coupled with a rise in sectarian mobilization locally. Community members attributed the waning popularity since to a decrease in its financial support at a time when the political leadership was absent. In addition, variations in popularity in different villages are largely affected by the personal attributes of the local level coordinator.

3. Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyya and other Islamic groups

The main Islamic group in the area is Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyya, which has had a relatively long presence, especially in Haret Al-Naameh and Barja. They also run various social and educational charities, providing social, health and educational services that they run directly or through associated charitable NGOs. The results of the 2016 municipal elections showed that they are popular, and can mobilize voters and field candidates. This is not necessarily the case with the parliamentary elections, due to the scope of political alliances in the region. With a strong position at the community level, they have negotiated their positioning locally in coordination with Future Movement, as they did in the 2016 municipal elections.

At the time that the Sheikh Ahmad Al-Asir phenomenon rose to prominence in 2012/2013, some support for the Islamic fundamentalist cleric was visible in a few villages. Nevertheless, according to a mukhtar of a coastal town, this was a temporary display of loyalty through which Muslim youth in the

[33] See Iskandar Chahine, 'من يمسك بقرار اقليم الخروب؟', Addiyar, 16 March 2016, http://www.addiyar.com/article/1141702-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%83-%D8%A8%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A8.

[34] Rafik Hariri became a shareholder in the company in 1987, two years after extending a loan to Jumblatt when the latter was having financial difficulties. Hannes Baumann, Citizen Hariri (London: C Hurst & Co Pub Ltd, 2016), 43.

area expressed their disenchantment with the Future Movement. They also wanted to demonstrate their willingness to join other political groups. The same mukhtar, as well as other notables in the area, explained that there was little if any actual support for Islamic fundamentalist thought.

4. Hezbollah and the Resistance Brigades

The number of Hezbollah supporters from the local community is limited due to the small number of Shiites in the region. That said, the Shiite constituency in coastal villages is significant, particularly in Jiyeh. With the increase in Shiite residents hailing from the south, or from Beirut's southern suburbs, looking for cheaper housing, several interviewees claimed that Hezbollah is strategically capitalizing on the presence of existing supporters in some villages in a systematic effort to gain control over the coastal road. They derive evidence for this claim from the clashes of May 2008 and other tense periods in Beirut, when Hezbollah supporters were able to seize control of the important coastal highway.

On the other hand, one contractor theorized that demographics play a role, and that Hezbollah opponents are blind to these changes and unnecessarily politicize the increase in the number of incoming Shiite inhabitants. He affirmed that the number of Shiites among the population has increased, and it is natural that they expand geographically. He further observed that homebuyers are mixed; though they usually come to the area through existing social networks with a shared background, which may appear coordinated.

The Hezbollah-affiliated Resistance Brigades also operate in some villages with a Sunni majority, though their presence is usually limited. Several interviewees described their membership as interest-based, and that while some are motivated by political and ideological conviction, many join because of the monthly payment offered by Hezbollah.

5. Christian parties

While historically the Chamoun family and their al-Ahrar party had strong support in the area, particularly as they are from the Chouf, their popularity has waned during and after the civil war. The Lebanese Forces had a strong presence in Christian coastal villages in certain periods during the civil war, and continue to have popular support along with the Free Patriotic Movement. Such support is of more significance at times of elections, as they still form a substantial percentage of voters. Though, in day-to-day politics, this appears marginal, particularly with the limited number of Christians actually residing in the area.

B. Socio-political regional actors

6. Municipalities

Most villages in the area have municipalities, often long existing ones that are largely organized under municipal unions and appear to work well collectively. The primary strength of municipal members lies in maintaining social relations and mitigating conflict locally. In one mixed Sunni, Shiite and Christian village, both the Sunni and Shiite mosques used to broadcast the Friday sermon at the same time, causing much noise and tension. An intervention by local notables and the municipality led to an agreement that mosques broadcast their sermons on alternate Fridays[35]. Nevertheless, these municipalities, with

[35] Local community notable interview. Of note, and according to the same interviewee, is that this same village used to have one mosque frequented by both Sunnis and Shiites, but its administration has been moved to the Sunni awqaf a few years ago, and has

a few exceptions, have a limited role in implementing development. One local notable lamented the 'inability of municipal councils in the area to see a role for the municipality beyond garbage collection'[36].

One clear example is the inability of most municipalities today to engage adequately with finding solutions for the garbage crisis, be it as individual municipal councils or within municipal federations. The role of municipalities in this area seems to be focused on controlling or managing new developments – in terms of land purchases, use and taxation – with an eye to controlling demographic changes, while maximizing return to the municipality from businesses and new residential construction. Nevertheless, several municipalities, regardless of their political affiliation, are coordinating with or supporting civil society and environmental activists, or at least are unable to oppose them, knowing the seriousness of the causes they are advocating for and the popular support for such causes.

Variables specific to the region that could be contributing to a weakening of municipal action are political interference from national level actors[37]. Another variable in mixed villages is the shared presidency of the municipality, where different sectarian groups agree on alternate presidents from different sects, thus weakening the ability of a municipality to achieve much during its six-year term.

7. Local social and family notables

Families and local notables play an important social and political role, as evident in the recent municipal elections, where family coalitions were instrumental in shaping the competing lists and voting patterns. This is particularly true in this period, given the relative decline in the role of the parties and the limited space for other areas of social mobilization. In addition, the area boasts a long history of employment in state institutions, including the judiciary and security services. Such individuals continue to have an important role as mediators in local disputes, as well as in maintaining social order among both the Lebanese and the Syrian refugee community. In one case, for example, a local notable in the rural villages of the Iqlim described intervening on behalf of a Syrian woman who expressed discomfort with a Lebanese member of the Muslim clergy pressuring her to marry her daughter off[38].

8. Contractors, developers and owners of large businesses

The region's proximity to Beirut and Sidon has made it particularly attractive for businessmen and developers, whether or not they are originally from or live in the area. Such businesses are key providers of employment for locals, or more often, foreign labour that moves to the area. They have an impact on the infrastructure, as well as the tax base and income of the municipalities, as is the case of the industrial zones of Naameh/Haret Al-Naameh, not to mention the beach resorts and real estate projects in the coastal villages.

Real estate developers and contractors are a key player in shaping the demography of the area, as they usually attract buyers from within their social context and/or political and sectarian affiliation[39]. Contractors must negotiate with municipalities regarding their construction projects, with the latter

been closed since. Its fate is still subject to litigation. In this specific case, national dynamics have been insensitive to local realities and have negatively affected relatively harmonious relationships locally.

[36] Local community notable.

[37] Local community representative, interview.

38 Local community representative.

[39] Two contactors interviewed explained that they never advertised the property they had for sale, and that buyers came through personal and family connections, adding that the early buyers would attract their relatives and friends.

often enforcing conditions such as the number of floors and average size of the unit, possibly to ensure that projects in their area attract upper class buyers. In addition, contractors are often in negotiation with municipalities over taxes related to their projects and those imposed on the buyers, where more often than not residents from outside the village are required to pay higher taxes than those who are from the area and vote in it.

9. Church

After the end of the civil war, the church filled a gap in local leadership and the representation of the displaced Christians at the early stage of their return to the area, when the traditional Christian parties were marginalized. Today, a significant role is played by mayors and the church in predominantly Christian villages to maintain the religious character of certain villages, by limiting land sales and residential construction by outsiders. In one village, for example, the church has issued a call for local landowners not to sell their land, offering support by locating a same sect buyer or providing loans to mitigate the financial need behind the intention to sell[40].

10. Muslim clergy and charities

The few charities that exist in the area are Islamic charities, mainly supported by Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyya, and are important providers of aid to Syrian refugees. Individual imams also have a strong presence as respected figures. That said, their generally sympathetic position vis-à-vis the Syrian refugees – for both political and religious reasons – does not always align with the dominant mood locally. In one example, and in response to protests by some shop owners against Syrian refugees who are starting businesses in the coastal village of Naameh, a local sheikh called for compassion with Syrian refugees who had opened shops. As a result, he was sharply criticized by some villagers for not prioritizing the interests of the Lebanese[41].

11. Local civil society and environmental activists

Environmental activists from different villages and political backgrounds, but most notably from Naaameh/ Haret Al-Naameh and Barja, play a significant, and highly political, role. These groups have emerged as a result of disappointment with political parties, and in response to environmental and social problems, combined with a feeling of marginalization. They are generally composed of young activists and have been able to mobilize popular support and connect across villages and sects. This was especially reflected in their coordination and implementation of the successful campaign to close the Naameh landfill in the area. This particular issue places them in opposition to the political leadership that had underestimated their ability to influence regional politics and weaken their traditional grip on political power. They remain an unorganized and informal grouping of volunteers that connect on socio-political issues, more of a social movement without a structured formal organization, and thus lacking official representation and resources.

12. Arab tribes

There are three groups of Arab tribal origin who are from the various Chouf coastal areas (as in Saadiyat), or who have been displaced to the area from elsewhere during the civil war (like the so-called 'Arabs' of the Maslakh /Karantina area). All of these groups are of the Sunni sect, but their allegiances do not by

[40] Local community notable, interview.

[41] Elected community representative from Naameh-Haret Al-Naameh, interview.

necessity reflect their sectarian belonging, but rather a combination of complex historical and political interests. While they share some cultural traditions and social ties, they do not necessarily form one homogenous group, but can nonetheless be mobilized by politicians on a sectarian basis. The Arabs of Maslakh came to the area following the massacres in Karantina in 1976, largely due to their political allegiances at the time to the PSP. As such, they are a rare example of urban to rural displacement during the war. Despite living in the Chouf, they continue to vote in Beirut, and have allegiances to both Jumblatt and Hariri.

IV. Conflict issues

In light of the agreement between the elites of the area, reinforced by economic and political interests, there is a relative calm when it comes to overt conflict and clashes. The area nevertheless suffers from the impact of national dynamics and policies, as well as the lack of strategic and national planning, not least on environmental issues. The proximity of the region to Beirut means it faces unique challenges of urban to rural demographic movement, causing tensions that feed on unresolved wartime grievances and more recent political Sunni-Shiite schisms. The proportion of Syrian refugees in the area, when compared to other regions, is relatively limited in size. Syrian refugees constitute only one component of a larger resident population from outside the area and appear to benefit from relatively good relations with the host population.

A. Unplanned urbanization feeding sectarian and political tensions

The area under study is characterized by significant demographic changes and a large resident population that is not native to the Iqlim. These changes have both administrative and socio-political implications, causing tensions locally at various levels.

Economic liberalisation policies and the real estate sector's dynamics fuelled a transformation in the character of the region and its social fabric, precipitating a rapid process of unplanned urbanization in the absence of socio-economic developmental policies and equitable social services[42].

Since the war, the proximity of the region to the capital has attracted many factories to move into the region, especially to Haret Al-Naameh, on territories not necessarily classified as industrial areas, but that ultimately were recognized later as having an industrial character43. This move was neither accompanied by supporting national strategies, nor did the municipalities have the required resources to deal with the challenges associated with these industrialised areas.

Likewise, rising property prices in the capital Beirut drove out waves of less well-off dwellers to settle in the Iqlim region, benefitting from its proximity to the city and developments in the real estate sector in the early nineties and later during the second half of the last decade. The coastal part of the Iqlim attracted marginalised populations, such as Haret Al-Naameh, where lower income households from Beirut, refugees and migrants reside. Recently, Syrian refugees also came to reside on the coast and in the largest villages like Chehim and Barja.

The case of the municipalities of Damour and Naameh/Haret Al-Naameh typically illustrates how the sectarian composition of the inhabitants changed in the post-civil war decades as a result of demographic

[42] Khechen, Mona, 'تطوير وإعادة إعمار الدامور ومسألة الهويّة', Legal Agenda Newsletter 36 (5 May 2016).

[43] Investment Develeopment Authority of Lebanon (IDAL), 'Industrial Zones in Lebanon'.

trends. In Naameh/Haret Al-Naameh, the influx of new residents, mainly Sunni, attracted by cheaper property prices, settled mainly in the Haret Al-Naameh part of the municipality, outnumbering the original Christian population concentrated in the Naameh, which used to be the majority prior to the war, before their displacement. Similar trends are happening in Damour (refer to Section B: Socio-political).

Real estate developers from outside the region seized the opportunity of available land at relatively more affordable prices in the Iqlim and the Chouf coast. Affordable real estate was available possibly due to the fact that many of the original landlords were interested in benefitting from the huge increase in the price of their land, while some original property owners did not have an interest in returning to the region, and were selling.

The urban processes were not accompanied with a broad-based economic development, beyond real estate development, despite the establishment of summer resort businesses on the coast and some industrial institutions elsewhere. In addition, the economic slowdown since 2010, and the impact of the Syrian crisis on trade, led to the shutdown or downsizing of many factories in the region44. Interviewees for this report claimed that these semi-urban areas fell short of adequate job creation to meet increasing population needs, because there is no industrial strategy and no preferential treatment for the host community.

Instead, urbanization forces resulted in residential buildings extending towards areas where industries were historically located. Consequently, pressure on the infrastructure increased along with problems stemming from industrial pollution.

Local municipal councils in these regions that are elected by the original and registered population – a large part of which is not resident anymore – have to cater for a rapidly growing population that is not their electorate, and as a result, could be less motivated to deliver services to these populations, even though the latter are taxed. The existing municipal councils also have limited technical and financial capacities to serve a semi-urbanized region in a municipal institutional set-up that resembles more of a village.

Such transformations ignited and reinforced existing tensions and feelings of insecurity between the original residents and newcomers. The majority of the incoming residents buying houses in the area are Sunni and Shia moving out of Beirut and its suburbs. At the same time, much of the land being purchased belongs to members of the Christian community who had left the area during the civil war and established their lives elsewhere. These changes, though largely caused by demographic and market dynamics, feed fears among some of the locals of a change in the religious identity and social fabric of the area, a fear reinforced by the history of sectarian violence and massacres in the seventies and eighties that resulted in large displacements.

The fact that many of those belonging to Muslim sects who were displaced into the area around the same period, not least Arabs of the Maslakh /Karantina area, never went back to their areas of origin, does not help to assuage such fears. From the perspective of the incoming population, an attachment to historic land ownership is not justified today when the demography is changing, and as one contractor expressed it, ‘a Lebanese should be able to live anywhere in Lebanon regardless of his sect ’. He links this kind of tension to that in other areas like Hadath, for example, and explains that contractors try to be sensitive to

44 Interview with member of the Lebanese Industrialist Association, interview by Zeina Abla, 4 June 2017.

certain issues, including when buying land close to places of worship and in village centres.

This situation, in the context of sectarian tensions, has led to divisions in the municipalities of Damour/Saadiyat and Naameh/Haret Al-Naameh. Both municipalities are currently considering splitting into two separate entities to reflect the 'geographic, social and demographic specificities,' as one key informant interviewee explained. Basically, this means separating the Christian community, which has now become a minority, from the growing Sunni part of the municipalities, to form uniform sectarian political blocs.

These concerns are also entangled with more current political dynamics, not least the tension with incoming members of the Shiite community, who are more often than not perceived to be affiliated with Hezbollah. The increase in the number of Shiite residents, particularly in areas that are historically mixed like Jiyeh, are perceived by opponents of Hezbollah as an attempt by the party to control the coastal road[45]. This issue has been behind several violent clashes, not least the clash in July 2015 over an alleged prayer space that Hezbollah was establishing, and which its critics claimed could be a military outpost or weapons storage unit[46]. These claims have been repeated since at least May 2008, when clashes broke out between supporters of March 8 and March 14 political groups[47].

The tension continues to take on a sectarian Sunni-Shiite character and provides fertile grounds for escalation, particularly between incoming Shiite communities and Sunni locals. Tensions are particularly observed between the mainly Sunni Saadiyat and the adjacent land of the Jiyeh municipality, where new residential areas are established and are mostly inhabited by Shiites. Nevertheless, relations between the Shiites of Joun and Wardaniyeh, who are originally from the area, and their local Sunni counterparts did not witness any major incident, even during and after the events of May 2008, due to long-standing social relations.

B. Disputes over management of environmental issues entangled with national, political and economic concerns

The Iqlim and the coastal part of the Chouf have historically and geographically been the stage for a number of environmental hazards with negative repercussions on public health. The three main environmental issues in the area are the Jiyeh power plant built in the 1960s, the Siblin cement factory, and the Naameh landfill established in the nineties and related to the wider solid waste management problem. As detailed below, public opinion generally associated these issues with nepotism and corruption that caused repeated rounds of road blockades and demonstrations regionally and nationwide, and remain an unresolved source of tension with a potential risk of escalation[48].

---

[45] This claim was also publicly made by FM Member of Parliament Mohammd Hajjar in July 2015 following several armed clashes in the area. See: 'الحجار: حزب الله يسعى للسيطرة على أوتوستراد بيروت- الجنوب', accessed 6 July 2017, https://www.lebanondebate.com/news/209393.

[46] Ahmad Mansour, 'اشتباك مسلح بين شبان من السعديات وسرايا المقاومة على خلفية انشاء مصلى والاتصالات السياسية والجيش تنجح في لجم التوتر القابل للانفجار بين لحظة واخرى', accessed 7 July 2017, http://www.al-iklim.com/_article.php?article_id=97339&sub_category_id=97&category_id=7.

[47] See Nicholas Blanford, 'Sunni Backlash Follows Hezbollah's Strike in Lebanon', Christian Science Monitor, 19 May 2008, https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2008/0519/p06s02-wome.html.

[48] See for example 'Lebanon's Rubbish Crisis Exposes Political Rot', Reuters, 7 September 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-protests-crisis-insight-idUSKCN0R70GO20150907; Myriam Mhanna, 'ملف إدارة النفايات في لبنان: شركة سوكلين. الفساد والتعدي على صلاحيات البلديات وأموالها', Legal Agenda Newsletter, 10 December 2015, http://www.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=1245; 'اعتصام للمجتمع المدني وشباب برجا أمام معمل كهرباء الجيّة احتجاجاً على التقنين', Addiyar, 21 September 2015, http://www.addiyar.com/article/1042346-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%B4%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%AC%D8%A7-%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%83

The Jiyeh thermal electricity plant is more than fifty years old and is considered a major contributor to air pollution, emitting different forms of toxins. According to one expert interviewed, the plant is actually obsolete and needs to be dismantled and replaced[49]. While the government is allegedly aware of the problem, it has not taken action yet[50]. Plant emissions are not controlled or measured periodically, even though they are known to be causing severe medical conditions. Activists from the region, especially from Barja, have been protesting against this situation over the last two years and, in 2016, citizens and the municipality of Barja filed lawsuits against the electricity company[51]. In response, political leaders used different tactics of persuasion and pressure to contain the protests. Recently, activists were obliged by the court to settle medical treatment expenses of general security officers who claimed to have been injured during a 2016 protest[52].

The Siblin factory is another source of toxic emissions in the region, assumed to be causing multiple health problems and serious diseases. Citizens of the area have been urging the factory's management to install filters to contain at least part of the emissions. Back in 2011, it was promised that the factory would use filters, but this did not happen until five years later in 2016, in response to popular pressure and demonstrations[53]. The filter was installed in the Siblin factory just after the solid waste crisis peaked.

Until 2016, the solid waste sector was managed in Beirut and Mount Lebanon according to an emergency plan that the government and the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR)[54] designed back in the mid 1990s. The plan contracted Sukleen, a local company, for the collection, transportation, treatment and disposal of Beirut and Mount Lebanon's waste in the Naameh landfill, situated on the borders of the Naameh district in the area Abey-Ain Drfil. Sukleen's contract was renewed year after year, even though its charges were considered excessively high and rising, and even though treatment methods were questioned[55]. Sukleen was accused of corruption that benefitted some politicians[56]. The landfill's capacity was eventually surpassed, causing locals great suffering in terms of environmental and health hazards[57].

The first signals of the solid waste political and environmental conflict surfaced in 2014, when a few activists from neighbouring regions took to the streets to shut down the landfill. They staged a number of protests and blocked the access to the landfill, which triggered a crisis in the capital and its suburbs, as garbage piled up on the streets. According to two interviewees, the political leaders of the

%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%A7-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%82%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%86.

[49] Political and environmental expert, interview by Zeina Abla and Muzna Al-Masri, 2 May 2017.

[50] 'أبي خليل: معمل الجية ذاهب الى الفك والمياه الجوفية الى تناقص', Al-Joumhouria, 26 January 2017, http://www.aljoumhouria.com/news/index/348641.

[51] Mohammad Al Jnoon, '14 القضاء يلاحق معمل الجية الحراري', الأخبار, May 2016, http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/257877.

[52] Mohammad Al Jnoon, 'متظاهرو برجا مطالبون (أيضاً) بدفع كلفة قمعهم ا الأخبار', Al-Akhbar, 16 March 2017, 3129 edition, http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/274216.

[53] '27 سُموم معمل ترابة سبلين: ختامها «فلتر»', الأخبار, February 2016, 2824 edition, http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/253070.

[54] The CDR is the national official institution in charge of planning and funding the country's infrastructure development. Administratively, and unlike other authorities, the CDR has extended jurisdiction and is directly accountable to the Council of Ministers (www.cdr.gov.lb).

[55] Mhanna, 'ملف إدارة النفايات في لبنان'. And Sami Atallah, 'Garbage Crisis: Setting the Record Straight', August 2015, http://lcps-lebanon.org/featuredArticle.php?id=48.

[56] 'Lebanon's Rubbish Crisis Exposes Political Rot'.

[57] Abu-Rish, Ziad, 'Garbage Politics | Middle East Research and Information Project', Middle East Report 277 (Winter 2015), http://www.merip.org/mer/mer277/garbage-politics.

region attempted early to appease and then coerce the activists in different ways, but in vain[58]. The government, promising to find an alternative, was able to gain some time through negotiations, but the activists soon realized nothing was changing and took to the streets again, closing access to the landfill.

The political dimension of the conflict exploded in the summer of 2015 and marked a turning point, as members of the wider Sunni and Druze community in the region, showing political defiance to their traditional sectarian leadership, joined the independent activists. Politicians realized that the rift with the people was real and significant, when the government and the ruling political leaders in the Iqlim agreed to dispose of the waste piling up on a large plot of land in Jiyeh. The possibility of creating a landfill on the new plot was lucrative for the property owner. However, as trucks were transporting waste to the new site upon official instructions, protestors again took to the street, obstructing the trucks from entering the Iqlim region and forced them to return.

Activists were able to mobilise people based on their material living conditions and in response to the prevailing feeling of neglect. The environmental and health risks, along with the disappointment with political leaders' performance, fuelled a feeling of marginalisation that one of the protestors in a demonstration against the Jiyeh power plant expressed in the media by saying: 'Beirut is not better than us, we get the negative effects of the plant and they get electricity [referring to Beirut][59].' Such statements carry not only sentiments of regional marginalization, but also that of neglect of the Sunni communities in the Iqlim by the leadership of the FM more broadly, largely because of their electoral insignificance, when compared to the Sunnis of Beirut.

The attempt to establish a new landfill in Jiyeh failed, and the Naameh landfill was shut down. The government, nevertheless, still could not offer an alternative, and by March 2016, the Naameh landfill was opened temporarily for a couple of months after which it closed permanently. Ultimately, two new temporary landfills in Beirut's suburbs were set up.

The limited enforcement of environmental laws – specifically the lack of legislation to regulate the solid waste sector – and the weak role of the central authority to direct the adoption of integrated sustainable management approaches have fuelled these political-environmental conflicts. Instead, Lebanon's waste handling practices largely consist of disposing the totality of the generated municipal waste and charging high rates on the basis of the weight of the waste. There are only few efforts to encourage waste reduction and recycling by discouraging disposal. Under such conditions, the sector has been considered lucrative for politicians who were competing to keep a stake in it[60].

In contrast, popular discontent and youth community-based activism crosscutting sectarian divisions formed an unexpectedly powerful opposition to the political class. While the core driving groups of these activists are not associated with any of the mainstream political factions in the region, many of those who would normally align themselves with the local political parties have joined the activism on

[58] Political and environmental expert, interview by Zeina Abla and Muzna Al-Masri, 2 May 2017 and Environmental activist, interview by Zeina Abla, 4 June 2017.

[59] 'اعتصام للمجتمع المدني وشباب برجا أمام معمل كهرباء الجيّة احتجاجاً على التقنين'.

[60] See for example Maha Yahya, 'Taking Out the Trash: Lebanon's Garbage Politics', Carnegie Middle East Center, 25 August 2015, http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/61102; Nicholas Blanford, 'Beirut Garbage "Mafia" Torching Lebanese Governance', Christian Science Monitor, 26 July 2015, https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2015/0726/Beirut-garbage-mafia-torching-Lebanese-governance. More recently, there are reports of another lucrative practice of using waste in land reclamation, see Timour Azhari, 'The Lucrative History of Lebanese Land Reclamation', The Daily Star, 19 July 2017, sec. News , Lebanon News, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2017/Jul-19/413250-the-lucrative-history-of-lebanese-land-reclamation.ashx.

this issue and expressed discontent with the political performance related to it.

The municipalities are unable to resolve the issue due to limited human, financial and administrative capacities, and the lack of a unified vision. And instead of the central authorities providing a national strategy to manage the waste problem, the two federations of the Iqlim, just like other municipalities elsewhere, have been searching independently for solutions[61]. This has also been the case of the highly dense Naameh and Damour municipalities that are also struggling separately with the problem. The latter started a plan for sorting to recycle, yet was still dumping on the riverside in the first couple of months of 2017[62]. In the absence of a national strategic direction, the vast majority of municipalities has been resorting to any solution within reach, including illegal open sites that are raising tensions among nearby residents. Locals estimate that there are around forty illegal dumpsites in the Iqlim, causing health and environmental problems[63]. For example, the Naameh municipality was throwing its waste on a plot facing the Dawhet al Hoss residential neighbourhood, which outraged locals and led them to voice their anger[64].

These conflict drivers continue to date, especially the solid waste management question. However, while other areas in Mount Lebanon have had access to sites to dispose or store temporarily their waste, the Iqlim and Chouf coast were excluded from the district level solution, or any other agreement. When a private company contracted to collect waste from the Chouf – Aley and Baabda districts started their operations in June 2017 – it excluded the Iqlim (as well as the Chouf and Aley) and worked in Baabda, under the pretext that they have no place to transport their waste to, keeping the region's municipalities trapped, with waste piling up in open sites.

The situation appears paradoxical: the solution to the waste crisis needs to be guided by a national strategic policy, before delegating it to local governments (municipalities). At the same time, there appears to be local mistrust of any proposal that comes from the political elite who are perceived to push for the options that serve their interests, notwithstanding how detrimental that is to the environment and public health[65]. Many of the variables related to this crisis risk escalation, be it at the municipal level in relation to specific areas where waste is being collected, or at the regional and national level, if and when a new waste management policy is put in place and around the time of the planned parliamentary elections in May 2018.

C. Limited economic and social Syrian-Lebanese tension

In prioritizing key conflict issues in the area, most Lebanese interviewees did not highlight the

---

[61] Mohammad Al Jnoon, '8 نفايات الإقليم: الخلاف على موقع معمل الفرز لا يزال مستمراً', الأخبار, April 2017, http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/275502.

[62] Nada Andraos, 'LBCI News | مشكلة النفايات عادت الى الواجهة من باب مجرى نهر الدامور', LBCI News (Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI), 2 March 2017), http://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/d/305325/%D9%85%D8%B4%D9%83%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%89-%D9%86%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84/ar.

[63] 'ما قصة "مكبّ" الدامور؟', Annahar, 2 March 2017, https://www.annahar.com/article/547640-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D9%82%D8%B5%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%83%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B1.

[64] Edmond Sassine, 'LBCI News | دوحة الحص حوّلت الى مكب جديد للنفايات', LBCI News (Beirut), accessed 10 May 2017, http://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/d/285236/%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B5-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%84%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%85%D9%83%D8%A8-%D8%AC%D8%AF-%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%86%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA/ar.

[65] The most recent proposal involves incinerators as a solution to the solid waste problem. Incinerators are the least environmentally favourable, most expensive, and have the riskiest health impact in the local context.

relationship with the Syrian refugee community or their residence in the area as a significant source of tension. In addition, complaints by Syrian refugees repeatedly heard by the researchers in other areas, including labour exploitation and sexual harassment against females, were not as common according to Syrian interviewees. In addition, several Syrian interviewees reported being invited to weddings of Lebanese community members and having amicable relationships with some Lebanese neighbours.

While recent perception surveys report worsening relationships between refugees and the host communities in the Mount Lebanon area, governorate level surveys need to be approached with caution when discussing Mount Lebanon.[66] Mount Lebanon includes Beirut's poor and densely populated suburbs, including the southern suburbs, Nabaa and Bourj Hammoud areas, in addition to several qazas/districts, each with residents from different sectarian and economic backgrounds. Within this varied governorate, the Chouf coastal area provides the most favourable conditions to refugees compared to other areas of the governorate, including semi-rural living conditions, but with the ability to access work opportunities in Beirut or in large establishments.

The majority of the Lebanese resident population belongs to the Sunni sect, like the Syrian refugees they host, and the ratio of the Syrian refugee population to the resident Lebanese population is not very high. In addition, the economic activity of Syrian refugees is often complementary to, rather than in competition with, the Lebanese population, which relies mostly on government employment and services. Many of the Syrian men in the area used to work in it before the crisis and were forced to bring their families as the situation in Syria worsened.

The background of the Syrians in the area also has a positive impact on relations as most Syrians are from urban or semi-urban regions in Syria, and are relatively more educated – a profile largely similar in terms of lifestyle to that of the local Lebanese residents. They also reside in rented accommodation, and not in informal settlements. Most Syrian residents, as per our observations and interviews, are families, with only a minority of unaccompanied men or female-headed households. In the families of all the Syrian men and women we interviewed, the man was the main breadwinner and women were housekeepers. The profile of the families as such might explain the relatively limited complaints of sexual exploitation of women or accusations of harassment by men. That said, the women interviewed were active at the community level and in relation to their children's schools. Many had taken part in vocational training activities and lamented their inability, because of the nature of the training activity, to translate such training into a real opportunity to supplement their income[67].

Nevertheless, some areas of tension do exist. In summary, according to Syrian and Lebanese interviewees, as well as Syrian focus groups, the main sources of tension are economic competition in some sectors, day-to-day management of life issues (including accommodation and strain on water and infrastructure), and some social differences in lifestyle (particularly children's use of outdoor spaces next to their homes as elaborated below). Such sources of tension rarely escalate into overt conflict, largely because Syrians mostly adopt a conflict avoidance strategy and keep a low profile, for as one Syrian refugee expressed it, 'we Syrians do our best to stay on the side-lines, for whatever happens, we are strangers here'. Another Syrian interviewee expressed an appreciation of the difference between

[66] ARK Stabilization Survey 2017 (first wave). For the narrative report of the survey, please visit http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=14276. For the next wave of surveying, results will become available at district level.

[67] For example, focus group participants described taking part in sewing workshops, which they appreciated, but explained that they did not have access to sewing machines after the workshop.

the Syrian and the Lebanese position: 'The Lebanese does not have to live like the Syrian. The Lebanese is in his country and has the right to dream…to have a job, build a home, and form a family.' In addition, maintaining a Syrian presence is in the interest of several of the Lebanese residents, including those who are renting houses and shops to Syrians and/or are employing them in agriculture.

In terms of economic competition, the main area of friction is over small businesses. Shortly before data collection for this report started, local papers reported protests by shopkeepers in Chehim against what they described as competition from Syrian shop owners, who were accused of running 'unlicensed establishments by 'foreigners' that they say undercuts their business'[68]. The problem, as the protesters and several interviewees described it, is not only the presence of shops owned or run by Syrians, but also the belief among many locals – which we have no evidence to support - that Syrians are benefitting from smuggled goods, which allow them to offer lower prices particularly in one dollar shops.

In addition, several interviewees cited lower living costs and aid from the international community as factors allowing Syrian shopkeepers to sustain a lower margin of profit and compete with local shops. While some municipalities, like Haret Al-Naameh and Chehim, tried to take measures against shops owned by Syrians, many of those have managed to get a Lebanese partner or have their Lebanese landlord front for the business. In Haret al-Naameh, where this issue has the most negative impact on the local Lebanese population because of the economic context, a local elected official estimated that there are 80 to 90 shops owned or managed by Syrians. Whereas the municipality has taken a decision, in line with the Ministry of Labour, to close these shops, that decision was not yet enforced at the time of writing. In Chehim, Syrian focus group participants gave examples of three different shops that managed to overcome the decision to close, because of a mukhtar's or a landlord's intervention, though the number of shops that actually closed was not clear.

Nevertheless, the extent of negative impact of shops owned by Syrians on the local economy according to several interviewees appears limited, particularly as most residents rely on other sources of income, not least government employment. As one Lebanese interviewee explained, local shop owners employ Syrian labour while at the same time complaining of Syrian competition[69]. In addition, the presence of Syrian refugees has contributed positively to the local economy, through rent of otherwise vacant houses and shops, many of the owners of which have actually sponsored the Syrians renting them and legalized their businesses. In addition, Syrian refugees provide cheap labour in agriculture, construction, manufacturing and services. As one owner of the many coastal restaurants and resorts in the area explained: 'I am a businessman and can tell you: Without the Syrian workers, we can do nothing, and if they leave now, we will have no economy'[70]. While such statements show appreciation for the economic role of the Syrian workers, a defence of the Syrian refugee can de facto be a defence of the business owner's interest in employing cheaper labour at the expense of providing fair economic opportunities to both Lebanese and Syrian workers. Indeed, Syrian interviewees mentioned cases of exploitation, as they receive shelter and sponsorship for their labour time, without being paid by employers who do not allow them to work elsewhere.

[68] 'Iqlim Al-Kharoub Residents Protest against "Illegal" Competition', The Daily Star, 30 January 2017, sec. Lebanon News, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2017/Jan-30/391582-iqlim-al-kharoub-residents-protest-against-illegal-competition.ashx; 'Iqlim Al-Kharroub Traders Call on Authorities to Organize Syrian Businesses', The Daily Star, 12 February 2017, sec. Lebanon News, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2017/Feb-12/393311-iqlim-al-kharroub-traders-call-on-authorities-to-organize-syrian-businesses.ashx.

[69] Boardmember of local charity, interview by Ali Chahine, 12 March 2017.

[70] Owner of a business in a coastal village, interview by Muzna Al-Masri, 27 March 2017.

In terms of day-to-day management of life issues, Syrian refugee women participants in a focus group in one of the larger villages of the Iqlim highlighted the problem of finding appropriate accommodation. The dense areas of the larger villages have few spaces for rent, and where available, lack adequate amenities like water and electricity. Because of the scarcity of space, Syrian refugees feel vulnerable to exploitation by landlords who can afford to ask for higher rents.

Water, given its scarcity in the area, is one of the issues that continues to cause disputes. Many households are forced to buy water in the summer, and the responsibility of buying water between landlord and renters is often a cause of conflict. In some cases, the rent to Syrians highlights existing problems because of long-standing administrative and legal constraints. In some cases for example, the apartments rented to Syrians are built without a legal building permit and thus cannot have a legal electric meter, leaving Syrians with little choice than to rely on generators or illegal sources of electricity. In another similar case, the Lebanese landlord had a large unpaid electricity bill and thus electricity was cut in the house, which he was renting to Syrians. In the same way, the strain on resources caused by the increase in population highlights pre-existing infrastructure problems, including lack of adequate sewage and garbage collection systems.

Another area of tension is the use of space in the villages by refugees, particularly children, who, according to Syrian refugees interviewed, are often criticized by Lebanese neighbours when they use shared outside spaces or make noise. In one case conveyed to the researchers, a Lebanese assaulted a group of Syrian children who he claimed were being too noisy next to the house. When the Syrian father of one of these children objected, he was severely beaten by the same Lebanese man and his friends and needed to be hospitalized.

On the same issue, two Syrian mothers interviewed explained how neighbours have objected to them renting close by, though generally landlords would come to their defence. Those same mothers explained that some noise from the kids is inevitable, because there are no spaces for children to play as their houses are not very big, adding that keeping their children calm at home for fear of neighbours complaining was not easy. Syrian female focus group participants and one mother of a teenage boy interviewed also complained about the limited opportunities available for their teenage children, most of whom have been out of school for several years now but have no skills for work. They give examples of these children attempting employment with the hope of learning a certain skill or profession, noting that they are poorly paid without being given the opportunity to learn the skills needed.

In most of the above cases, it is women who take on the role and burden of complaining or objecting to unfair treatment by landlords or neighbours. Focus group participants explained that complaints by men more easily escalate into a quarrel with their Lebanese male counterpart, and to prevent that, wives and mothers are those who are vocal in the community, knowing that Lebanese men would feel obliged to deescalate if a woman is intervening.

Seen from the Lebanese perspective, one interviewee expressed a popular feeling of discomfort that villages 'have lost their rural character'[71], explaining that before the Syrian refugees arrived, people knew most of the village residents, whereas now, there is a large new population not known to the local residents, thus causing insecurity. This feeling is not by necessity linked to the nationality of the incoming population, but to the change of the village's 'nature' linked to broader demographic changes cited earlier. In some villages, Syrians reside in neighbourhoods largely abandoned, thus redefining them as

[71] Development worker, interview.

Syrian neighbourhoods. In addition, any display of wealth among the Syrians causes sensitivities among the Lebanese, and as some Syrians are working and making considerable income, Syrians owning a new phone or spending time in a café or having a relatively elaborate wedding feeds an anti-Syrian grudge.

V. Dynamics

Conflict dynamics include: 1) dividers that fuel tension by creating a rift between communities or groups, and 2) connectors that facilitate cooperation between actors, thereby nourishing local capacities for peace. The table below summarizes the main connectors and dividers in the region, subdivided into three broad sectors.

	Connectors	Dividers
Political and administrative	Limited electoral utility of sectarian based mobilization in the region. Key political actors in the area, namely the PSP and FM, stand on the same side in national politics, which minimizes sources of competition and tension locally. Organizing locally around environmental issues shows the potential for community action, which puts their shared concerns at the centre of its agenda.	Naameh/ Haret Al-Naameh and Damour's peculiar administrative position and difficulty in joining municipal coalitions. The Sunni community's frustration with its political leadership – in the region as elsewhere in Lebanon - and with being considered 'second class' makes it receptive for mobilization by Islamist groups. Proposed administrative division of Naamet/Haret Al-Naameh and Damour/ Saadiyat could contribute to a deepening of sectarian divisions and provide support for claims of the difficulty of ensuring sound municipal development efforts in mixed communities.
Economic	Geostrategic location and proximity to Beirut facilitates economic opportunities. Relatively high rate of employment in public administrations and opportunities to benefit from Syrian refugees labour (to reach for some Lebanese a case of economic dependency on this cheap labour).	Industrial investment segregated from local context limits its contribution to local development and strains resources and infrastructure. Limited available housing in rural villages of the Iqlim.

Social and cultural	Strong influence of and conflict mitigation role of local notables (families, political parties, high ranking government employees, local governments, etc.). Similarity in background between incoming Syrian refugee and local host population facilitates positive relations, especially in the absence of segregated refugee camps (except for a couple) and the common practice of renting apartment units. Strong networks of solidarity among Syrian refugees (friendships between Syrians of different origins and living in different neighbourhoods in the Iqlim).	Mistrust between some villages and communities still burdened by the civil war legacy. Resident population from outside the area not represented through current governance structures. Discourse of cultural difference to justify Lebanese-Lebanese and Lebanese-Syrian antagonism. Change in the rural nature of socialization in region as new inhabitants are settling in the area without opportunities for them to become part of the local fabric.

VI. Recommendations

The main conflict issues in the region are rooted in the national political and sectarian problems, and aggravated in the absence of socio-economic development strategies that deal with countrywide challenges, such as the environmental and urbanization issues, which require national policy level interventions.

At the local level, social stability actors, development and civil society organization projects could alleviate some context-specific tensions and improve social relations between the Lebanese and Syrian refugee communities, especially as this region has witnessed successful collaboration models connecting and protecting people.

1. The concerned Lebanese central authorities should agree on environmentally sound and sustainable strategic solutions to the environmental crises facing the area, not least the solid waste management crisis. These conflict issues have been historical and are being aggravated with time, population pressure, and mismanagement, and continue to harm inhabitants of marginalized areas. It is imperative for national authorities to implement comprehensive and environmentally sustainable strategies, specifically with regard to solid waste management, and enforce solid environmental legislation that protects people from environmental harm and health risks. International organizations, such as UN agencies, should advocate in this direction and support civil society actors to monitor closely the implementation of such strategies, especially given the lack of trust in decision-makers, due to repeated failure and the damage caused.

2. Development organizations should assist Unions of municipalities and individual municipalities and build up their capacity to act as developmental local governments, in order to facilitate their role in managing root causes of social tensions. Although the municipalities in the region have a positive track record in conflict mitigation, they are facing significant socio-economic development challenges, especially as a result of urbanization forces and the waste management issue. These factors are conflict

drivers and require strong governance, development planning and long-term programs, in addition to technical and financial resources. Furthermore, development organization projects need to ensure that the municipality caters equitably for all the resident population on a needs basis, minimizing potential bias in favor of the original population i.e. the municipal electorate, at the expense of 'new comers' (i.e. Lebanese who do not vote in the area and non-Lebanese residents).

3. Municipalities, in coordination with the Directorate General for Urban Planning, should develop adequate urban plans, especially in areas with a rising population density. The planning should take into account the social and demographic changes happening in the region and be implemented in partnership and consultation with local actors, including the municipalities, the church endowment, and contractors in the area. It should organize the physical development of the area (zoning) according to consistent norms and measures that reflect the demographic shifts and urbanization dynamics, and ensure planning for the provision of adequate services, including waste water management, water and electricity. This would reduce the tensions resulting from the haphazard property development operations taking place, which could lead to the formation of ghettos and slums, as well as reduce urban and environmental challenges.

4. Along the same lines, local authorities, Lebanese government and development organizations need to consider planning ahead, directing and incentivizing the establishment of economic and industrial parks.[72] Economic projects and businesses have been attracted to the region and could stimulate economic activity and create employment that reduces social pressures. At the same time, they could be detrimental to local communities, increase environmental risks and trigger tensions, if not well designed. The model of economic and industrial parks ensures that adequate physical infrastructure on designated land plots is in place and allows participating enterprises to benefit from geographic proximity by cooperating with each other and with the local community, efficiently sharing and managing resources, while dealing jointly with industrial pollution and unfavorable environmental impacts[73]. This could improve the region's economic performance and the wellbeing of the community, if well planned and implemented subject to favorable results in environmental, social and economic impact assessments.

As these are essentially private sector investments, they require strong oversight and monitoring systems of local and national authorities. Municipalities thus need specific capacity building on dealing with this type of project governance, to ensure that the benefits from the investments are reaching the local communities equitably and are not harming social stability.

5. Social stability actors and development and civil society organizations should partner with and invest

[72] An economic zone is being proposed for the Iqlim by the "Iqlim Fund for Development and Innovation", "The Chamber of Commerce Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon (CCIA-BML)" and IDAL. The proposal as presented to the writers of this report appears to be promising, and includes an integrated plan for the development of both agricultural and industrial initiatives, joint environmental assessment, and marketing; though it is beyond our expertise to evaluate its viability. See http://www.lfdi.co/uploads/funds/ifdi-brochure2017-06-01-11-15-57.pdf.

[73] According to United Nations Industrial Development Organizations (UNIDO), an eco-industrial park is "a community of businesses located on a common property. Members seek enhanced environmental, economic and social performance through collaboration in managing environmental and resource issues, and thus, seeking opportunities, and eventually engaging in industrial symbiosis activities within or outside the eco-industrial park." For more information on eco-industrial parks see: 'Eco-Industrial Parks', accessed 2 August 2017, http://www.unido.org/environment/resource-efficient-low-carbon-industrial-production/eco-industrial-parks.html. 'Eco-Industrial Parks'. and Suren Erkman and Cecile Van Hezik, 'Global Assessment of Eco Industrial Parks in Developing and Emerging Countries: Achievements, Good Practices and Lessons' (Vienna: United Nations Industrial Development Organizations (UNIDO), 2016).

in socially active Lebanese youth. Disenfranchised Lebanese youth, who were able to organize locally on environmental and political issues and act accordingly, might be at times subject to political exploitation and pressure. They can become an agent for positive community change if they are supported in the right direction and could deliver on the real needs of communities. The fact that they are informal groupings should not obstruct their cooperation and support from formal organizations.

6. Development and peacebuilding organizations should support and partner with the community-led Syrian initiatives that are proving to have a favorable impact on both the Lebanese and the Syrians. The case study at the end of the report presents two models of a potential partnership along these lines. One of them is the case of community support groups, and the other is that of community efforts to improve school conditions for their children. The latter initiative could, for example, be developed into forming parents' committees in public schools that could advance children's access to extracurricular activities, educational material, etc. Other similar initiatives should be identified and supported, for instance amongst the youth or women and mothers that share a common interest, and could provide a model of partnership with members of the refugee community that can be replicated in other areas.

7. Development and peacebuilding organizations should include in their programing spaces for Lebanese and Syrian children where they can enjoy and benefit from extracurricular activities and interact together. Such initiatives will offer children a safe and healthy environment to play and enjoy their time in highly dense semi-urban areas where such spaces do not exist for Lebanese and Syrians alike. These spaces would reduce tensions between parents in crowded neighborhoods where noise is not tolerated, and allow children and parents from different communities to build social relations.

8. The international aid community and Lebanese civil society should lobby the Lebanese government to ease and clarify the administrative policies and procedures governing the daily lives of Syrian refugees. The Lebanese system of legal residency and access to work for refugees is very complex and unclear, and remains an area for exploitation. While there has been a waiver of residency fees in place for Syrian refugees who meet certain criteria since February 2017, the implementation of the waiver has been erratic and most Syrian refugees still lack legal residency[74] . This leaves many refugees with little choice but to remain illegally in the country or secure residency and work through very costly and often-exploitative sponsorship measures. According to the Vulnerability Assessment Report of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon in 2016, no more than 20% of Syrian refugee households had legal residency permits for all members, lower than 28% in 2015, and even lower than 58% in 2014. The percentage of households with no members at all having legal residency permits was 29%[75].

9. Development and peacebuilding organizations should work with the municipalities that are considering to split administratively, in order to ensure this process - if implemented - does not trigger tensions or conflicts across the different communities. This is the case for the two municipalities of Damour/ Saadiyat and Naameh/ Haret Al-Naameh. In particular, in Haret Al-Naameh, the overall impression from the fieldwork for this report was that not many residents are in favor of this move. In contrast, the step was generally more accepted in both Damour and Saadiyat areas.

[74] For more details on the residency renewal policy, see 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; Federica Marsi, 'Hurdles impede implementation of residency fee waivers', Daily Star, 1 April 2017, available at http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2017/Apr-01/400101-hurdles-impede-implementation-of-residency-fee-waivers.ashx.

[75] UNHCR, UNICEF, and World Food Program (WFP), 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2016' (Beirut, 16 December 2016).

Case study: The positive impact of collaborative refugee initiatives[76]

Mazen, a young head of household of five children, moved with his family from Aleppo to Lebanon in 2015, following the Syrian crisis. This was not his first time. He had worked in Lebanon before 2006, as a self-employed apprentice, which is what he continues to do today, even though he has a degree in commerce and administration. His connections in Lebanon helped him find a decent apartment in a building on the Chouf coast, south of Beirut.

Upon his arrival, Mazen registered his school-aged children (6-10 years) in a public school, yet moved them the following year (2016-2017) to another public school that has a better reputation in the same neighbourhood. As the academic year started, he realized that his children, like some other fellow Syrian students of the afternoon shift, were sitting on the floor during class time, because the school was short of desks. This was the case in two classes of the afternoon shift, with around 40 children needing seats. In fact, even before the start of the academic year, the school administration had raised the issue to the department in charge following bureaucratic procedures. The school received very few tables after some time, but these did not offset the shortage of seats in the afternoon classes.

The seating conditions remained unchanged as winter approached, causing Mazen to worry about his children. The idea of simply buying a couple of desks for his kids crossed his mind, but he dismissed it, considering the situation a collective problem that needed to be settled by the school. He contacted a few other parents facing the same problem – classmates of his children, relatives and neighbours – and formed a 'WhatsApp' group to discuss the issue. Parents joined in immediately, and the group expanded to include more than a hundred Syrian parents willing to communicate and cooperate on the matter.

Mazen, along with four other parents, addressed the school administration, offering money or any possible assistance to resolve the shortage quickly. The school turned down the suggestion, considering it against its policies, and explained that it should follow the administrative procedure. The school's administration did not want to override formal procedures, even though some school administrators were sympathetic and wanted to find a quick solution, and thus were communicating with the parents.

The parents, as a result, looked into a number of ideas to deal with the matter, including fixing the old broken desks themselves and benefitting from the expertise of another parent who was carpenter. In addition, parents considered requesting local NGO support, and reached out to a UNHCR representative, to no avail. Finally, Mazen found someone who sold used desks and suggested to the group that they collect a small amount of money from all parents to purchase used desks that would be donated to the school. Parents responded promptly and favourably. Every day, Mazen stood outside the school entrance to collect contributions of 5000 LBP (3.33 USD) from every student for this purpose; he became known as the 'money collector'. He explained that the positive response from the parents was expected, particularly given that the amount was very small. Nada, another parent, confirmed the willingness to contribute: 'Of course, we would,' she said, 'it is after all our kids who are in need'.

Mazen's action was successful in cutting through the bureaucracy, prompting a swift reaction from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education through the school administration. The latter consequently set a meeting between Mazen and the ministry's representative, who was unhappy with what was happening. The ministry's representative and school administrators were concerned that the school could be perceived as 'taking' money from parents. Mazen calmly explained the parents' perspective and concerns, appealed to the ministry representative's sympathy, and committed to return the money if the desks were made available, while also insinuating to escalate the issue otherwise. The representative was responsive and, within a few weeks, the school received the required desks, and the money was returned to every contributing parent, as another member from the parent group confirmed.

Mazen felt it was his duty to resolve such an issue, even though he said he would not do it again, because it was a difficult experience, unless it is a crucial matter. Mazen believes other Syrians could build on personal connections and develop persistence and negotiation skills to do the same job, supported by a strong sense of solidarity amongst Syrian refugees in the neighbourhood. He thinks that collective initiatives could help the Syrian community, especially in improving public education services delivered to them. He explained that Syrian

parents' and students' rights in Lebanon are not easily realized, and depend on the school administration, which in this case was relatively favourable.

A similar sentiment of cooperation is evident among other Syrian refugees in the area. Building on traditional collective ways of interest-free lending, women in one village explained how Syrian refugees contribute 10,000 LBP monthly to a collective fund that is given to any paying member in need. The contributors are families that come mainly from one village, and the fund is managed by three of the older men in the group, and has been used so far for paying medical fees.

Compared to other areas in Lebanon, Syrian refugees in the Iqlim show significant willingness to work together, possibly given their background, but also because they have relatively more comfortable living conditions. This can be capitalized on and supported as a model to empower refugees to play a greater role in the management of their social and education concerns. One example could be through supporting parent committees established within the formal schooling system. A parent committee could play a significant role in realizing opportunities for children, if given an official mandate and the Ministry's endorsement, including: improving education for the afternoon students beyond the basic teaching courses, opening up access to school facilities, enriching existing programs, and cooperating with non-governmental organizations that do not have a presence in the region to implement external children's activities.

[76] The case study is compiled based on interviews with three parents of Syrian refugee children in the same school and the Lebanese school administrator. The names in the story have been changed to protect their identities.

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.