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## Executive Summary

The thirty-two focus groups carried out among Syrian refugees in Lebanon aimed at providing an in-depth analysis of the following:

- Main problems that refugees currently face and coping mechanisms being utilized
- Social networks of assistance: type of assistance received and whether they are perceived to be useful
- Key priorities and refugees' means of meeting them
- Sense of safety and security
- Future plans
- Issues with residency permits and civil documentation
- Key aspects of communication

### Main Concerns, Challenges, and Coping Mechanisms

The respondents complained extensively about the problematic issues that they had to deal with on a daily basis. They stressed the fact that life in Lebanon had become a physical and psychological struggle for most of them. They mentioned that their children were also suffering significant consequences, including being ill and depressed.

The main concern of Syrian respondents revolved around the lack of renewal of their residency permits. Other problems mentioned by respondents were: securing end of month rent, the bad state of their housing, the lack of money and high cost of living, poor access to medical care, lack of education for their children, and lack of assistance.

For the majority, and especially the males, the lack of residency permits was a problem that pervaded all aspects of their lives. They highlighted the fact that its absence meant that they could not send their children to school and could not move to seek work. The inability to move in search of better job opportunities affected their income and created a vicious circle whereby they were unable to cover the cost of renewal of their residency permits. Moreover, the new compulsory requirement for a sponsor made matters even worse due to the fact that some Lebanese were either reluctant to sponsor Syrians or wanted to benefit financially from the situation and were charging each refugee US\$ 700 to US\$ 1,000 for a sponsorship.

### Social Networks of Assistance

Most of the respondents indicated that they receive assistance only from the UN. They are mainly given the **Taghziyeh** card, while in the winter months some are given the diesel fuel card. A minority indicated that they receive cash assistance of LL 260,000 per month. The assistance, however, is not given on a continuous basis and the reason why some refugees are given assistance while others are not is unclear. Many stated that there is no clear trend as to who is targeted for the assistance programs.

Respondents complained extensively about the assistance provided by the UN. They mainly accused the UN of not distributing the assistance in a fair manner and not applying a transparent screening process. They indicated that this is due to the fact that the staff responsible for the distribution process are quite corrupt. They also complained about the declining value of the assistance and the continuous disruption in the distribution of the Tagzhiyeh card. Another concern highlighted by refugees is the regional disparities in assistance, leading to some areas receiving more assistance than others. They also complained about the rude staff who never responded to their inquiries.

Respondents across the various focus groups indicated that at times they received assistance from NGOs. However, what they received in terms of assistance was dictated by whether there was an NGO presence in their area of residence. The focus groups revealed that some NGOs were active in certain areas more than others. The Red Cross was more active in Qasr, a village in the Bekaa, while Makhzoumi Foundation and Caritas were more active in Beirut. Respondents residing in the camps such as Dalhamiyeh were exposed to more NGOs than others, and hence received more assistance. Overall, respondents felt that even the assistance from organizations other than the UN had declined over the years and that people were losing interest in the Syrian refugee cause.

### Livelihood

Most of the respondents agreed that work opportunities in Lebanon were scarce and the vast majority were having a hard time finding jobs. This was made harder by the worsening economic situation in Lebanon over the past few years. Moreover, many complained about employers who were taking advantage of the Syrians' situation by paying them lower fees or even not paying them at all. Many of the men were labourers seeking any type of employment that they could find. A few were overqualified for the work that they were doing in Lebanon, but felt obliged to seize any opportunity that would help them earn some money. In most cases, the children too had to work in order to contribute to the household income. They worked at cafés and restaurants, at construction sites with their fathers, in farming, or even selling items on the streets. A few parents admitted that their children had to beg. The vast majority of women said they could not work because they had to take care of their children and because of cultural norms whereby husbands did not approve of their wives going to work.

### Priorities

Altogether, Syrian refugees had a long list of concerns, but the most frequently mentioned was the renewal of their residency permits. This was followed by: the need for medical care; assistance with rent, food and cash; and education. Priorities at times varied depending on geographic location, as some areas had for example better schools or medical facilities than others.

Residency was a clear number one priority for the vast majority of respondents, but the other three priorities fluctuated depending on each respondent's situation. For example, many of the Syrians had been recently dismissed from the UN assistance programs and therefore stopped receiving the Taghziyeh card, which for many was the only source of income and stability. This naturally made assistance an important priority. Medical care was also a significant priority for respondents who lacked proper clinics or hospitals nearby, and children's education was primordial for those who did not have access to a school.

### Safety and Social Cohesion

When asked if they were concerned about security in terms of armed conflicts or instability in their areas, most of the respondents said that they felt safe and did not have to worry about war like they did back in Syria. They were, however, far more concerned about personal attacks and assaults by the Lebanese, sometimes worried about Hezbollah, and feared retaliations whenever there were explosions and terrorist attacks anywhere in Lebanon. Those who were most worried about these included respondents from Halba, Qasr, Hermel and Majdel Anjar, where assaults and attacks were more frequent. Ashrafieh, was an exception, where all respondents indicated feeling quite safe and did not under any circumstance want to leave the area.

Another safety concern mentioned by many respondents was their lack of residency permits which meant that they could be arrested and sent to jail.

### Future Plans / Intentions

The majority of respondents said that they were unable to plan ahead and think of their future because of their dire situation. They hoped to be able to fulfil their priorities in order to improve their living conditions, and for many who felt hopeless about the situation, the optimal solution was to travel.

A large number of respondents could foresee no improvement, were unable to plan ahead and lived their lives day by day, often with the single focus of being able to feed the entire household for one day at a time. Many of them longed to go back to their home country and, if given the choice, preferred that option to travelling anywhere else in the world. However, they were well aware that the Syria they knew no longer existed and, knowing this, they were considering immigration to countries like Germany, Sweden, Australia, Canada and Denmark.

### Residency Permits

The consequences of not having a residency permit were numerous. First, Syrians could not move from one area of the country to another and were confined to their areas of residence, which meant that they were unable to seek work elsewhere. Syrian refugees residing in camps had to always be on the lookout as police forces sometimes raided the camps and arrested Syrians who did not have proper paperwork. The absence of residencies also lowered the chance of refugees of finding employment due to the fact that some Lebanese employers refused to recruit illegal Syrians while other employers at times abstained from paying them their wages and threatened to report them to the authorities. Individuals who acted as sponsors also took advantage by making them work for free.

### Civil Documentation

There was a widespread lack of awareness among refugees about the procedures and paperwork required to register newborns, marriages and deaths. Refugees were also unaware as to whether they needed to register these events with the Lebanese authorities. Most had not registered their newborns, marriages or their dead, and only had birth and death certificates which they had obtained from hospitals, or a contract from the Sheikh in case of marriages. Refugees felt that these documents were sufficient since

getting the proper documentation they felt is costly, complex, and time consuming. Only a few respondents had followed the correct processes and had the proper paperwork.

Refugees revealed that many Syrians had begun burning their dead since they were unable to travel back and forth to Syria. They this indicated was also costly, and most probably illegal, but it allowed them to bypass the burdensome red tape of registration, travel back to Syria, etcetera.

### Communication

Respondents wanted more information about the assistance that was being provided by the UN, the registration of civil documentation, resettlement, and their rights in Lebanon. With regards to the assistance programs, refugees wanted to know why they had been removed from the Taghziyeh program; they wanted to know who was receiving assistance and why; what made people eligible for assistance; and if they would receive anything in the future. They also wanted to know how to register newborns, marriages and deaths, and the process utilized in selecting refugees for resettlement.

They mainly gathered the above information from the UN – either through an SMS or by calling the UN hotline. They also relied on word of mouth and, to a lesser extent, the internet and television.

The vast majority of refugees identified SMS as their preferred and safest communication channel for information from the UN. A large number also suggested the need for representative offices, face-to-face meetings like the focus group discussions, personal visits and telephone calls.

## Introduction

This analysis is based on thirty-two focus groups that lasted one to two hours each. The groups were equally split among males and females, encompassing a total of 664 Syrian respondents, between 18 and 70 years of age.

Most of the respondents were married and had an average of four to five children. They came from different areas in Syria, including the main cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Deir el Zor, Tartous, Latakia, and many other smaller cities and villages.

The group discussions took place in 16 different regions across Lebanon as shown below:

- Odeisseh, Marjaayoun, Nabatieh
- Zein, Batroun, North
- Cité Sportive, Beirut
- Jnah, Beirut
- Aydamoun, Akkar, North
- Dalhamiyeh, Zahle, Bekaa
- Ras el Nabeh, Beirut
- Majdel Anjar, Zahle, Bekaa
- Minieh, Minieh-Dennieh, North
- Ghaziyeh, Saida, South
- Zrariyeh, Saida, South
- Harouf, Nabatieh, Nabatieh
- Ashrafieh, Beirut
- Hermel, Hermel, Bekaa
- Qasr, Hermel, Bekaa
- Halba, Akkar, North



## A. Main Concerns, Challenges and Coping Mechanisms

### Daily Concerns

#### Renewing Residencies

The vast majority, if not all, of the Syrian respondents were concerned first and foremost about their residency permits, which they had not renewed for more than one year and could not afford to do so. Only a few of the respondents, who were lucky enough to have sponsors and able to afford the renewal fee, were legal at the time the focus groups were conducted. This had a profound impact on their ability to move around freely, seek employment and deal with their daily needs. Details about residencies are fleshed out under section G.

#### Housing

##### Rent

Rent was a major concern for respondents and came a close second after the renewal of their residency permits. However, a small minority felt that rent was the top concern. “Rent is probably more important than the renewal of residencies because we have to settle fixed fees every end of the month,” said one male respondent from Ghaziyeh, and many others had similar comments, especially the women, who consistently thought of rent as being their prime concern. “Rent is the biggest problem,” said a female respondent from Aydamoun. Another male respondent from Harouf seemed to agree: “We have too many expenses, including the rent. The rent is the worst.”

Many complained about the inflated prices that they had to pay for small or inadequate spaces. They indicated that there was a UN assistance program which covered rent, but that only a few Syrians were receiving it. In light of all of this, many respondents constantly worried about being evicted from their apartments.

“Rent is our biggest expense. It is as high as US\$ 500 for some,” said a male respondent from Harouf, while complaining about the hefty cost of living and the tremendous expenses that they needed to secure every month. Moreover, respondents added that they were compromising on other expenses in order to secure the cost of rent: “We have to secure the rent before everything else, before food and drink. I pay US\$ 100 each month,” stated a male respondent from Minieh. Males from Ashrafieh shared similar concerns “we cannot pay the rent, medical care, school and all of this every single month.” Female respondents were also aware of the high cost of living and rent. “It is very expensive here. And the rent is expensive too. We pay US\$ 350 for the house,” said a female from Minieh.

Even those who were living in tents complained about having to pay an annual fee: “We pay LL 500,000 per year for the tent, in addition to electricity and water fees,” said one female respondent from Dalhamiyeh. In Qasr, respondents said that could either pay US\$ 100 for one room, or LL 100,000 for a tent. “They [the UN] should speak to the landlords and find a solution, or at least help us cover half the cost.”

Many respondents complained about not receiving assistance with the rent while others did: “There are people who do not pay rent. We can always secure food and drink, but not such a large amount for rent” said a female from Qasr. Another said that “rent is expensive and our income is low, we even have to pay to set-up tents.” One female from Minieh had been offered free rent by the UN saying, “We were paying rent until the UN gave us a house, so we moved in there.”

Some said that they were given housing in exchange for their services. This was prevalent among those who worked as concierges, such as a male residing in Ashrafieh who works in exchange for a room in a building. The same was mentioned by males from Qasr: “We work in exchange for housing or tents.”

Most of the Syrians had never paid rent prior to coming to Lebanon, which is why they found rent to be an unfair and an unjustified expense when they had so many other expenses that they needed to cover. “We had everything in Syria. Education, medical care, everything was for free. No one needed anything there,” stated one female respondent from Ras el Nabeh. Many other respondents confirmed this statement, including one male respondent from Ghaziyeh: “In Syria, they used to take care of everything. Everything was for free, housing, schools, medical care and everything.”

Rent was a true headache for many Syrians, who said that they worried about being evicted if they did not meet the end of month deadline for payments. “If we do not pay the rent for one or two months in a row they evict us,” said one male respondent from Qasr. Females from Ashrafieh had similar concerns: “I did not pay the rent for three months. They were going to evict us. I had to borrow money from a Syrian friend who is a teacher.” One female from Minieh said she had already been evicted once explaining, “I am staying with my brother because my husband is in Syria. My brother’s situation is dire and he cannot pay rent so we were evicted. We have to pay the money due in order to go back.”

### State of Housing

Syrians also complained about the poor state of housing, especially in Cité Sportive and Jnah, as well as in some of the camps, in Qasr and Dalhamiyeh. They had to deal with extreme conditions, in addition to depleted buildings and interiors, poor infrastructure and almost inhumane situations, according to many. Many also complained about the disproportionate price of rents compared to the size or condition of their apartments.

“They are taking advantage of us. I have to pay one million lira for a tiny apartment,” stated a male respondent from the Cité Sportive area. Another participant from the same group also complained about the disproportionate rent rates: “I pay US\$ 700 a month for two bedrooms and one living room,” and a third one agreed: “The rents are high. I have eight children which makes ten of us in the household. We live in a one bedroom flat, on the last floor. The rooftop is always leaking, and despite this, the rent is US\$ 550.” In Aydamoun too, one male respondent complained about the disproportionate cost of rents: “50 square meter rooms that are not worth LL 100,000 are being offered for US\$ 200.”

“My home is full of cockroaches, mice and rats. My daughter is ill because of the filth”, said one female from Cité Sportive. One respondent from the same group, residing in the Chatila camp also complained about the conditions: “I live in the camp and it is in a dreadful state. We live in one room and there is a constant foul smell.”

Many respondents across other groups complained about the state of housing, including females from Zrariyeh who said there was no water or electricity: “It is very humid and we cannot fix anything.” One female from Odeisseh was living in a large house which was humid and difficult to heat. “There are other people who go out all day and do not need heating, but we are always at home and my daughter is very sensitive to cold temperatures.” Males from Jnah complained about the high cost that they paid for unacceptable living spaces: “There are places that are being rented out for US\$ 200 per month that should not be inhabited by humans. Sometimes storage spaces that were never meant for living are being turned into housing rented out to Syrians.”

Females living in tents in Qasr also described their situation: “Our camp [Ghazi Salim Jaafar] and another one in proximity lack toilets. As a result, four families have to share one toilet. They come often to register us for toilets, but nothing has actually been done.”

Among those living in rooms in Qasr, the situation was not great either: “I am living in a room with no access to water. I get water from the neighbors and the landlord is always complaining about it.”

Males living in tents in Dalhamiyeh also complained about the poor conditions, saying that their houses needed repairs and that nothing was being done to help them: “Housing is another problem. Our tents are in a dire state and our children are suffering because of that. We need insulation material such as nylon covering (*chawader*) and wood. If we have those, we will be able to fix the tents ourselves.” Men in this group also complained about the unhealthy water that was being supplied to the camp which was causing everyone to become sick. They also complained about the absence of any adequate sewage treatment, and the extreme weather conditions which were causing them to become sick in the winter and summer time.

Females living in the same camp had similar concerns—they complained about the heat and the lack of insulation in tents, as well as the poor infrastructure: “We are eleven people living in one tent. The water container is not large enough. No one is taking care of us.”

### Money and Cost of Living

While residency permits and rent were the biggest burden for all respondents, they also mentioned many more expenses that they had to cover on a daily basis. Respondents complained that prices were far more expensive in Lebanon than in Syria, while their incomes were much lower. Respondents also complained about not receiving enough cash assistance to cover their daily needs. Many revealed that they could barely cover the basic needs of the household, and only a few respondents could say with confidence that they had enough money to live. “There is not enough money because they do not help us with rent and the cost of living is too high,” said a female respondent from Harouf.

They compared the elevated cost of living in Lebanon to Syria. “We had everything for free for the young ones, like education, and it was even cheaper to buy things for our children. In Lebanon, everything is very expensive,” said a female from Dalhamiyeh. This came up several times across groups. “I hope for my life to get better. Our lives in Syria were more comfortable, everything was more affordable. We had access to medical care for free, education was for free, and we did not pay rent. Our children were happy,” stated a female from Zein.

Some of them also associated the high costs to their area of residency. “Beirut is expensive, the prices are more affordable outside of the city,” according to one female from Ras el Nabeh, and one male respondent from Harouf thought that his area was also too expensive saying, “The cost of living here in Harouf is very expensive and if I could leave I would.”

Their daily expenses, excluding major expenses such as rent, renewal of residency permits, school and medical care, ranged from basic necessities such as bread, food and diapers, to communication-related costs for mobile phones, transportation, electricity and generators, and even luxuries such as cigarettes. “We have to pay for electricity in addition to generator access, we worry about food and drinks and daily expenses, and also have to pay in order to recharge our mobile phones,” said a female respondent from Majdel Anjar. Examples of daily costs included:

- **Infant-related costs:** For many of those who had large families, there were many expenses related to providing for their children, especially for the babies who required diapers and special care. “The costs related to our baby are approximately LL 30,000 per week,” said one female respondent from Odeisseh.
- **Transportation:** The price of commuting and using public transportation was another concern. “Sometimes we do not have money to pay for transport,” stated one male respondent from Qasr.
- **Food:** Many Syrians also worried about the cost of food. “Chicken gets more expensive during Ramadan. We are eight people in the household and a single chicken costs LL 40,000 which is a full day’s work for me. How can we afford it?” said one of the men from Zein. Another respondent from Aйдamoun said, “Life is very expensive here. Bread costs LL 1,500 a bag, and I need 5 bags a day.”
- **Water:** Females from Dalhamiyeh complained that there was no clean running water for them to drink, which meant that they had to purchase bottled water: “We don’t mind buying water but it should be healthy. And Sohat bottles are too expensive.”
- **Luxuries:** Some respondents complained about the cost of additional luxuries, such as cigarettes for example. “Even cigarettes are getting more expensive,” stated one male respondent from Zrariyeh.

## Access to Medical Care

### Cost

The main concern with medical care is that almost all of the respondents had to cover at least part, if not all, of the expenses related to treatments, doctor visits, medication, surgeries and emergencies. Medical care is also an expense that most Syrians never had to pay for when residing in Syria, and therefore found paying for it unjust and unfair, especially in light of their refugee status. Only some of the respondents were aware that the UN provided 75% coverage for Syrian refugees, and many complained about the restrictive conditions and complications related to securing the partial coverage.

“Medication costs a lot of money, in addition to which we have to cover the cost of tests and other related expenses,” said a male respondent from Qasr. “I went to the hospital and had to pay US\$ 500 from my own pocket,” said another male respondent from Ashrafiyah. A female respondent from Aydamoun also agreed: “There is nowhere for us to seek healthcare. All clinics and hospitals are expensive, and so is the medication.” Another female respondent from Dalhamiyeh stated that “if anyone gets sick, they have to go to the clinic which is far and it costs money. In addition, they keep us waiting from morning until the end of the day.”

### UN Coverage

Some of them were aware that the UN could cover 75% of their medical costs, but most were unable to access this coverage. Many said that either it did not apply to their specific condition or the clinics refused to assist them. According to respondents, many clinics did not seem to recognize the Syrians’ refugee status which made them eligible for the 75% coverage: “My mother has cancer and we have been ignored by the UN. We went to the clinic where we are supposed to be entitled for the 75% coverage, but they could not help, and I ended up paying 100% of the fees. The tests cost US\$ 600” stated one male respondent from Qasr. Another respondent from Qasr recounted a similar situation: “My wife has anemia, and the tests cost LL 250,000. I went to the clinic and they told me that they had nothing to do with the UN. They sent us to another clinic, where I was told the exact same thing and sent to yet another clinic. Many of those clinics do not recognize our UN status.”

Another concern was that the process to secure the coverage was too lengthy and complex. One male respondent from Qasr said that had been unable to wait until the UN picked up the phone to secure his 75% coverage: “The UN had asked me to call them before paying, but I could not do that. I cannot call them and risk staying on hold for hours when there is an emergency. This is why I had to pay the full fee and did not receive the 75% coverage.”

There were exceptions, such as in Ashrafiyah, where male respondents indicated that they were aware of the UN coverage and one of them confirmed benefiting from that coverage “I paid LL 200,000 instead of the US\$ 1,000 which I owed to the Hariri hospital.”

### Type of Medical Expenses

Medical expenses included treatments, hospitalization, doctors’ consultations, accidents, medication and surgeries:

- **Treatments:** Many Syrians had long term treatments that they needed to follow and that entailed purchasing medication and other key necessities: “I have diabetes and I am sick, my medication costs a lot of money. There is a PHC [primary health clinic - Moustawsaf Chououn el Insen] in Batroun that now helps us,” said a male from Zein. Another male respondent from Dalhamiyeh said he needed syringes for his daughter’s treatment which cost LL 50,000 each time. One of the female respondents’ husbands from Cité Sportive had eczema which required expensive treatment, and one of the females from Harouf needed treatment for her son: “He is given a special treatment every six months and I haven’t done it since I came here because it is very expensive.”

- **Doctors Consultations:** One respondent from Harouf also mentioned the fact that consultations were expensive, especially when compounded with the medication which would subsequently need to be purchased: “Each consultancy would cost LL 50,000 and then I have to pay for the medication-- LL 50,000 or LL100,000. I cannot secure such amounts.”
- **Accidents:** Refugees also worried about what they would do in case of an emergency or accident that required immediate hospitalization or treatment. “If there is an accident and we are admitted to the hospital, it can be very expensive. We have to pay a percentage of the total fee, which adds up to a lot of money,” said a male respondent from Majdel Anjar. “My son broke a bone last week and we had to pay US\$ 1,000,” commented another male from Odeisseh.
- **Medication:** A large number of respondents complained about the cost of medicine. “They wanted me to purchase a medication that costs LL 50,000. I did not wait to go to the UN and ask to be covered. I just paid for it on the spot,” commented a female respondent from Ashrafieh. Another male respondent from Zgharta said that he could not afford the price of medication and was trying to seek help from Caritas. A female respondent from Halba said that the medication was very expensive at Lebanese pharmacies: “The medication is expensive here, and so is everything else.”
- **Surgery:** Many of the respondents complained that undergoing surgery was quite expensive and as a result they had opted not to. “My husband is sick and I am old, he needs an open-heart surgery which costs a lot of money.” One female respondent from Hermel also needed surgery which she could not afford.

#### Availability of Facilities and Services

Aside from the expenses associated with medical care, many refugees also resided in remote areas that did not have nearby clinics or hospitals where they could seek treatment. In many areas, there was no clinic or hospital that the Syrians could get to easily and they needed to travel considerable distances to seek treatment. This included areas such as Dalhamiyeh, Zein, Hermel and Zrariyeh. “There used to be a clinic which was relocated. We need a new clinic in the area,” commented one male respondent from Dalhamiyeh. Another woman from the same area repeated the same concern, saying that the clinic was far and transportation was costly. The same issue was mentioned in Zein: “If a child gets ill or breaks a bone, there are no hospitals to go to. It takes a long time to get there. The doctor comes only once a week. When I went to the hospital they were surprised that I had come all the way from the village.” In Zrariyeh and Hermel as well, respondents mentioned distances to be travelled for medical care.

#### Legal Status and Nationality

Syrian refugees also revealed that the absence legal paperwork often meant that they could not travel distances to go to hospitals or clinics for fear of being arrested. Males from Hermel said that they worried about raids and could not travel to clinics because they had no residency permits: “We have to go to the closest doctors.” In Zrariyeh as well, where there were no nearby facilities, respondents worried about the distance to the nearest clinic saying, “We have to go to Nabatieh. And if we do not have the right papers, we can get arrested on the way.”

Across many of the groups, respondents also complained about not being admitted at the hospitals. “My daughter was playing with the boys she fell and injured herself. I was confused about what to do and took her to the hospital’s emergency room where they would not let us in. We are never admitted at hospitals. So I went to the pharmacy instead. They sent me to a clinic where I had to pay a considerable sum and was left penniless for the rest of the month,” said a female respondent from Odeisseh. Many others reported similar experiences. Females from Ashrafieh said that they were never admitted at hospitals because they were Syrians, and males in the same area agreed saying, “We have been here for years, and they still do not let us in at the hospitals.”

### Treatment

When they were admitted to hospitals and clinics, many respondents complained about being kept waiting for too long, or treated poorly. Many of the comments clearly reflected great frustration, with a female respondent from Halba stating: “My son was shot in the hand. I went to the UN’s Qobayat office. They kept us waiting at the door, next to the garbage. They only spoke to us fifteen minutes later, and I explained what my problem was. They told me that they were not responsible for that, and sent me to a clinic for Syrians in Halba at the Massoud Center. I did not go there. I basically waited from 9am to 1pm, only to be rejected.” Another male respondent from Hermel commented, “If they see a sick child, they should let him in the clinic on the spot. I went to the clinic two years ago with my son, he was boiling hot and they gave me ticket number 48, which meant I had to wait for hours in the sun.” Another respondent from Halba commented that when the clinics became aware that Syrians were being admitted for free, they instantly became rude and aggressive towards them.

### Education

Education was a major concern for respondents with a large number of respondents revealing that they were unable to send their children to school. The most prominent reasons for the inability to send their children to school were school fees, the lack of schools in their areas, lack of places for them at school, and absence of legal documentation.

Respondents whose children were attending schools complained that their children were discriminated against and bullied at schools. Parents also complained that their children also had problems with understanding the material being taught since schools in Lebanon utilized either English or French as a primary teaching language. The fact that their children mostly attended afternoon sessions did not sit well with them, since they felt that the afternoon sessions were not as effective as the morning ones and they worried that their children would not receive official degrees as a result.

Despite the general discontent among parents, a few were thankful for the education that their children were receiving and satisfied with the outcome. One female respondent from Minieh said, “We have schools, thankfully and this is very important,” while others from Aydamoun spoke quite highly of the school their children attended: “The education is very good. There is one shift for Syrians and another for the Lebanese. It is very important to our children.” Another agreed: “The school here is great. I would never leave because of it. I can put up with the rest, as long as the children have access to a good education.”

One of the males from Zein was also happy that his children were doing well at school: “I am thankful for that. They do better than the Lebanese.” Another male from Zrariyeh indicated that the teaching was fine during afternoon sessions.

### Cost of Education

The cost of sending children to school was the major barrier which kept many from enrolling their children. In addition to the tuition fee, parents often had to pay for transportation, as well as books and stationery. “I paid US\$ 300 just for the bus, and that is without the books that we still need to purchase,” said a female respondent from Odeisseh. Another respondent in the same group said that she could not cover the fees for all of her children: “I have four children to send to school, which costs LL 100,000 per month. In addition, we have to pay our monthly rent of LL 300,000, which brings my monthly expenses to LL 500,000 before even buying any food or other necessity.”

The cost of education was also compounded by the transportation fees for many of those who had no schools nearby. For instance, some of the female respondents from Hermel and Qasr complained about the fact that there were no schools in close proximity and as a result they had to pay excessive transportation costs.

In some cases, there was no available transportation whatsoever. “The *service* [collective taxi] does not always pass by our neighborhood,” said one of the respondents from Hermel. Another female from Qasr said, “The closest school is more than half an hour away, and it can take up to an hour. This is why my husband did not want to send the children there.”

This led some of the respondents to choose among their children and only send as many as they could afford to. “Instead of sending all of them to school, we end up sending one or two.” Males from Odeisseh had similar comments in addition to which they complained about the lack of facilities nearby: “There is no education and this is a priority for our children. There are no schools for them to attend.”

### Working Children

Another issue was that the children often had to work in order to help their parents secure all of the monthly expenses, in which case they skipped school altogether.

“My son was an excellent student, he was the best pupil in his class but had to stop going to school to help us pay the rent. I told him I’d rather beg than have him quit school, but in the end we had no other choice,” said one participant. Another female from Ashrafieh gave a similar example from her neighborhood: “My neighbor’s children work with a mechanic and earn LL 50,000 a week instead of going to school. They should be at school but they have to help the family too.”

### Absence of Official Degrees

Many Syrians worried that the education offered to their children was not up to international standards and would not be officially recognized anywhere in the world.



“My relatives who are at school are not granted proper degrees or any form of recognition. They are just given symbolic papers,” stated one male respondent from Minieh. A female respondent from the same area seemed to agree: “My kids did not receive an official certificate of completion at school, although they gave certificates to the Lebanese students.” This was echoed by females from Majdel Anjar: “Even the school is not official because they go to afternoon sessions, and they do not learn much. It is not official—they do not get diplomas.”

### Discrimination

There were further concerns about children being bullied at school, and many respondents were therefore worried about their children attending schools with Lebanese students.

“I do not dare to send my children to school. I know that the Syrians are being assaulted. Some of the students who went to the school in Bhanine were attacked—the Lebanese took their books and hit them,” stated a male respondent from Minieh. Some of the respondents in that same area mentioned a school that was established just for Syrians by “the Kuwaitis,” and said, “It is better because there is racism, bullying and discrimination at the Lebanese schools.”

Females from the same region had similar concerns: “They discriminate between Syrians and Lebanese students at schools, even though what is happening in Syria is not our fault.” Another woman from Harouf also worried about the same issue: “Schools are discriminating between the Lebanese and the Syrians. Our children are not learning anything at school, they are bullied and mistreated, which is why some of us have withdrawn our children from school.”

### Legal Status

Another major problem for many who wanted to register their children at public schools was the lack of residency permits and as a result, the illegal status of their children.

Males and females from Ashrafieh complained most about this: “My children are not legal, although I came in legally. We took them to a school which did not accept to enroll them without residency permits, although we were told that the school was for Syrians.” Males from Ras el Nabeh expressed similar concerns: “They rejected my daughter because she entered the country as a tourist and has no legal residency. The only way is to take her to a private school, where the tuition fee is too high.”

### Availability of Spaces at Schools

Many respondents said that the schools were fully occupied and that there were no openings for Syrian children at most of them.

This was mostly prevalent among Ashrafieh respondents: “I went to four or five different schools in Ashrafieh, all of them had no room for my children. I cannot send them to other areas because I do not have the money for school vans. My son is in [school in] Basta now, and as a result I have to pay for a van to take him there. These schools are discriminating—they are randomly choosing who they want to enroll and rejecting others randomly.”

Females from Cité Sportive said that because of the limited spaces, children could not go to school every day: “There is just one school which has agreed to teach our children, it is close to our home. But there are days when the school cannot cope with everyone and our children have to stay home.”

Another female from Jnah also had difficulty finding space for her children at schools in the area: “Most of my children should be in school but there are no spaces for them. The school administration tells us that priority is given to Lebanese children. They told us that if they have any vacancies, they will let us know.”

### Cultural and Learning Difficulties

The respondents’ children faced problems grasping the material being taught since most schools utilized French or English as a primary teaching language. Respondents indicated that French was more problematic than the English, as one female respondent from Minieh said, “They have to take classes in French, which we do not know.” The same concern was echoed by males from the Cité Sportive area: “There are schools but they are not beneficial. The children do not understand the words nor the letters. It is of no use to them.”

Many other respondents mentioned the language barrier whereby their children did not know the French and English languages and therefore could not benefit from the schools in Lebanon. “My six-year-old son goes to school, but he has to learn French and English. It is difficult for us here,” stated one male respondent from Hamra. “My children had to quit school because they were unable to learn French,” said a female respondent from Zgharta.

A few parents also commented that some of their children had disabilities and therefore needed special care and follow up at school. This was not possible, however, since not all schools had the facilities for special needs students. The fact that they were attending after school sessions was another obstacle. A female respondent from Ras el Nabeh said that her son had special needs and needed more attention from the teachers: “He has learning problems. I had to register him at a different school but he ended up with younger students. He needs special care. He cannot be treated like others.”

Other respondents mentioned that there were cultural differences between schools in Syria and Lebanon which also created dissonance for some of the children. One of the female respondents from Ras el Nabeh said that she was aiming to enroll her children at a school, but that there were no “schools for Muslims” in Lebanon.

### Timing

Some of the respondents disapproved of the afternoon sessions and wanted their children to have regular school hours. “I went to the school to complain about the timing. Our children go to school at 2pm and leave at 5:30 or 6pm. What kind of schooling is this? The teaching standards in afternoon sessions are dire, all but one of them failed classes,” stated one female respondent from Cité Sportive.

## Assistance

All key areas related to problems with the assistance are detailed in the following section (C). It is nonetheless essential to note that the limited assistance and perceived ineffectiveness of the UN and other humanitarian organizations was mentioned as one of the major daily concerns of respondents. Refugees were mostly concerned about the insufficient assistance, which they felt was also unfairly distributed and mismanaged. They also worried about the fact that it was decreasing year after year and had stopped altogether for many of them.

## Impact on the Household

### General Feelings

Their current situation is having a detrimental impact on Syrian households, who are suffering psychologically as well as physically. The majority of respondents felt that their children were the most impacted by this situation, because they were being deprived of their childhood. But adults suffered too. For instance, poor access to medical care left many Syrians ill and unable to treat their conditions, while the psychological pressure meant that there was more fighting among family members, as well as despair and anxiety disorders among some. Meanwhile, lack of money and assistance meant that many had to resort to borrowing from corner shops or other places to meet their daily needs, which added to stress levels.

### Most Impacted Individuals

Most of the respondents agreed that those who were most affected by the situation were the children, who were missing out on their childhood, left without education, and forced to work at a young age. They were confined to their homes with their siblings, unable to play, unable to take walks or go on outings, and “living in small prisons” as stated by one respondent. They were depressed, sad and angry, which for some of the respondents, implied that they could turn violent. One respondent said that they were becoming “wild” and that whenever they did take them out, their attitude was unusual and worrying.

“Staying at home all of the time is making them aggressive. When they do come out, they behave awkwardly,” stated one male respondent from Ashrafieh. “All of our children are depressed. They have problems. My daughter always complains and says that she wants to go home,” stated a female respondent from Zein. “The children are demoralized and have lost hope. They do not even insist anymore that we buy them things,” said another woman from Majdel Anjar.

“I have a daughter who is always depressed and sad. She sits in a corner and does nothing. We have already suffered enough in Syria and now this additional suffering is just making things worse,” said a female respondent from Cité Sportive. “They have dreams that you cannot help them achieve, it is so sad,” stated another female respondent from Ras el Nabeh. “We cannot take them out, I cannot even take them to school. All of the schools are far. We cannot send them there”; “They ask for things that I cannot afford, like clothes, outings, while we have barely enough for bread”; “Mine is asking for a proper house and bed, a basic need. It is very difficult to see our children like that.”

The children are also scared and worried because they have taken on the responsibility of meeting the household's basic needs from an early age: "[My son] worries more because we depend on him. He is always in a bad mood," said one female from Aydamoun. Another respondent from Hermel had similar concerns: "It is affecting the family's mental health. My son is 13, he is always sad and worried. At his age, he worries about the rent. He looks for work."

A few of the respondents indicated that men were the most affected: "because they need to secure an income for us to be able to afford things" said one female respondent from Zein. She went on to say that "the husband is the head of the family. He is in charge." Syrian males from Harouf agreed saying, "We are the most impacted. We are the ones who have to commute on the roads, we are the ones who need residency permits." The men also worried because they had to turn down their wives who asked for food, cleaning products or other household necessities. "Our wives ask for things that we cannot secure, and they get angry at us when we are unable to provide for them," stated one male from Zein.

One of the females from Hermel stated that the parents were the most impacted because the children were "too young to realize what is happening, the mother and father worry most."

### Psychological Implications

As mentioned above, there were numerous psychological implications for the children, but also for all family members. The children were being deprived of many things and could not have "normal" childhoods. They were confined to spaces with their siblings and parents, which created tension among them. Some of the respondents worried about the rise of criminal behavior among the younger ones, who could not tell right from wrong anymore. A few worried that they would resort to stealing for example, when they were not given what they wanted.

Females from Aydamoun and males from Jnah and Ras el Nabeh were among those who worried the most for their children's mental state. "We have psychological issues that are affecting our children. They have not eaten meat or poultry for a while. They might end up stealing. They do not know right from wrong," said a male respondent from Jnah.

Additionally, the children fought among each other and their relationship with their parents was compromised too. "There are tensions between the children, they fight together. They blame it on me for taking them away from Syria. They say that we have left a bad situation there for an even worse situation here," said one female from Halba.

Another male from Ghaziyeh talked about the psychological pressure on the family, implying that such conditions had been driving others towards extremism: "There is psychological pressure on the family. No one is worried about us—not our government, not our embassy and not the UN. Does this mean that we need to become extremists?"

The adults also fought among themselves, which made things even worse. "There are problems at home, we cannot bear each other anymore. My children ask for money that we cannot give them," said one male from Minieh. "We have no intimacy at home. It creates problems"; "Staying at home creates issues. We

are bored, and we cannot buy anything for the children”; “We fight with our wives”; “We are always worried.”

### Physical Implications

The situation has also impacted refugees’ health due to the complications associated with medical care. Many of the Syrians could not get the treatment they needed and hence had to suffer and cope with various medical conditions. For some, it was chronic illnesses like asthma, for others, urgent surgeries that they were unable to carry out. Many could not afford the prescribed medication to help alleviate their suffering. In many instances, illnesses and sickness also occurred because of the poor conditions of their housing, pest infestation, or the inability to heat or cool their living spaces properly.

### Borrowing

When asked how they dealt with their low incomes and lack of money, most of the respondents said that they had no choice but to borrow from stores and shops. This was often the only solution that they could think of, aside from trying to find jobs and or attempting to leave the country. They were indebted to shop owners, landlords, neighbors and pharmacies.

In Qasr, most of the male respondents could not secure the basic needs for their families and said that even the Taghziyeh card was not sufficient to cover all of their expenses. As a result, they had to borrow money. One respondent said that they were embarrassed and had never resorted to borrowing from others when they were living in Syria.

For some of the respondents, the cost of living was getting so high that they even resorted to borrow from their relatives who were living in Syria, amidst all of the fighting. “We’ve had to borrow from our relatives in Syria, because we are unable to cover our own expenses. Even under the bombs, they had to send us money. We have no money,” said a female respondent from Zein.

That said, many preferred to avoid debt altogether, such as one male from Dalhamiyeh who commented, “If you borrow something, you cannot pay it back or give it back.”

The respondents said that they needed to borrow for a variety of reasons:

- **Everyday needs:** Many of the respondents felt that they had no choice but to borrow in order to cover their daily needs, although they did not want to get in debt, and sounded humiliated and angry. “They [the shop owners] make us feel bad if we ask for bread, they make us feel poor because we are in debt,” said one female from Odeisseh. “Everything is getting more expensive while our income is still the same. We have more debt and loans,” said one female from Ras el Nabeh.
- **Medical reasons:** Some of the respondents had to get in debt for medical reasons. One respondent from Ghaziyeh said that he needed a surgery which he could not afford: “I had to

borrow money to do it and now I need another surgery.” Another respondent from Aydamoun had a similar problem: “My son got sick and I had to borrow money from the neighbors and from the pharmacy.”

- **Unpaid Debt:** Some of the respondents worried about outstanding debts that they still needed to settle: “We had to borrow money to make it to Lebanon and those who gave us the money still want it back. No one is helping us,” said one respondent from Ras el Nabeh.

This was the situation for many of the refugees, although results show that none have borrowed money from a financial institute or in any illegal manner.

### Comparison to Previous Years

Most of the respondents thought that their situation was getting worse, because of the increasing cost of living and the expensive rent. They also worried about the declining assistance, the new rules and regulations with regards to renewing their residency permits, and the need for a sponsor.

Many respondents thought that the cost of living was increasing every year, including the cost of medical care, rent and daily expenses. In parallel, some of them said that their incomes had declined because of increased job competition and the dire state of the economy in Lebanon. “We used to get US\$ 40 per day. We now get US\$ 20 to live,” said one male respondent from the Cité Sportive area. One female respondent from Dalhamiyeh had a similar comment: “There are no employment opportunities and as a result no income.” Even in Ashrafiyah, where the Syrians generally had more opportunities than in other areas, the situation was getting worse: “Work is very scarce and the salaries are low. My husband gets paid US\$ 10 for working from 7am until 5pm,” said a female respondent. Others agreed saying, “They are not paying them. One of my husband’s employers still owes him US\$ 500 and we cannot complain, otherwise he would be arrested”; “There are fewer opportunities.”

One respondent from Majdel Anjar said that incomes were now lower and expenses higher, in addition to which “we cannot go to other areas to seek work because of our lack of permits” and “there are too many people, too much supply.”

Rents were another concern, as landlords took advantage of the high turnover and demand for apartments. “Rents used to be more affordable. They keep on increasing them,” said one of the male respondents from Qasr, echoing a perception that was mentioned by many, whereby they all agreed that landlords were taking advantage of the situation and asking for higher rents. One female from Jnah explained that this mostly happened when a new tenant wanted to move in: “When someone leaves a house, the next one to rent it will pay more for it. They are taking advantage of the situation.”

There were also complaints about the worsening situation when it came to medical care: “We used to go to the clinic and get full coverage,” said one male respondent from Qasr. Many respondents agreed that the clinics’ attitudes towards Syrians had changed, and that they were being less helpful.

## Solutions

The respondents could think of very few solutions to their problems. They mentioned travelling, borrowing, seeking work more actively or trying to ask for help. Some of them even thought about going back to Syria. “My husband threatens me saying that he will go back to Syria, but we are traumatized by the war and I cannot go back,” said one female from Cité Sportive.

Some of them were desperate. “There is nothing we can do, we are unable to think. Nothing gives us hope. We cannot plan for anything and believe it will actually happen,” said one female respondent from Hermel. “We pray to God and count on our husbands,” said another female from Dalhamiyeh. The men from Minieh complained that there was nothing at all that they could do: “There are no opportunities for us.”

- **Travel:** Many said that their solution was to travel or even return to Syria. “The situation is forcing us to think of either returning to Syria or travelling abroad. There are too many places we are not allowed to travel to. We might end up back in Syria,” said one male from Minieh. “If I had US\$2,400 I would go back to Syria now, but they will not let me leave if I am not registered.”
- **Borrowing:** this is more extensively developed in the previous sections. Many of the Syrians have been borrowing from shops, pharmacies, and other places in order to secure their basic needs. “There is no money and we have to take loans,” said a female respondent from Aydamoun “I owe \$1,000 for the rent.”
- **Work:** When asked about solutions, some of the respondents said that having more work would help them solve many of their problems as this would secure an income. However, they were having a very hard time finding work, which made this solution unattainable for many. One of the respondents even thought about setting up his own business, but said that it was impossible: “If I had my own business I would be able to get by. But I will never be able to find money to set up a business. Without money I cannot do anything,” said the male respondent from Minieh.
- **Reaching Out:** Some of the respondents were trying to seek help from NGOs and from the UN, as further detailed later in the report. “Rania Afif from the UN said she wanted to help me. So I called her. I asked her to help me. But she said there were too many people in need, and that they could not help everyone,” said one female respondent from Odeisseh.

## Recommendations

The proposed recommendations can be categorized according to the different key concerns that the Syrians had on a daily basis. **They were asked to think of one recommendation or more for each of the concerns.**

### Education

Most of the respondents asked for help with school expenses: “Help us with schools. We cannot send all of our children to school. I have 8 children which means that the cost of sending them all to school is very

high.” Some of the respondents mentioned the importance of having schools that are dedicated to Syrians. They felt this would help their children not to be bullied or insulted anymore. They also indicated that this would ensure that they were taught at their pace and therefore would understand the material being taught.

### Rent and Housing

Respondents suggested that a minimal cash assistance be provided to the Syrian refugees either to cover rental rates or for some to help them fix their homes or tents. One respondent suggested that prices be unified for all refugees, so that they all pay approximately the same amount, classified by type of housing.

- **Help them Pay:** All of the respondents wanted cash assistance with the rent or more affordable rent prices. “The UN should pay the whole rent or at least half of it on my behalf,” said one male from Qasr. “The UN has given houses to people in some areas and in some cases they have even fixed their houses”; “They can help us, at least a little bit. I pay LL 300,000 per month.”
- **Create a Pricing System:** One respondent from Ashrafieh suggested that rental rates should be unified for all Syrians and that a pricing system could be adopted depending on the type of housing and area of residence. This solution would help limit corruption and abuse by landlords: “There are too many Syrians. And when they know we are Syrians, they increase the prices. The UN should assign a specific value for the rent to be paid by Syrians, classified by type of housing and area. This could be done through a deal with the municipality.”
- **Provide Cash Support:** Many respondents demanded some form of cash support in order to help them settle the rent every month. “They should know how much each of us is paying, and help us cover the fees,” said a male respondent from Harouf. “We need cash support, there are people who receive LL 220,000 for their monthly rent, but we don’t.”

### Medical Care

Medical care was a major concern. Syrians wished to be admitted to hospitals and to be given free or discounted fees. They also suggested the assignment of dedicated personnel for Syrians at hospitals and the availability of a UN-sponsored clinic.

- **100% Coverage:** Respondents demanded full coverage by the UN. “The UN should make sure that we do not pay anything. We have to be covered fully for any form of treatment. My mother has cancer, I cannot leave her this way,” said a male respondent from Qasr. Many others, including males from Ashrafieh and females from Harouf, had similar comments: “the UN used to pay for everything at the clinic. This is how it should be.”
- **Special Care for the Children:** Some of the respondents only wished that the UN would take care of their children’s needs, including medical care. “I just wish for them to take care of the children and make sure that they are healthy. They should secure medication, milk, diapers or anything that is needed for the children,” said a male respondent from Hermel.



- **Social Security:** One male respondent from Ghaziyeh referred to the social security (*daman*) which was provided to Lebanese citizens saying that this allowed them to be admitted to hospitals right away: “It covers a part of the medical care fees. Yet I was taken to the hospital and had to pay everything. The UN paper should be considered as the Syrians’ social security. It should allow us to be admitted to hospitals.”
- **Dedicated Personnel at Hospitals:** Males from Ashafieh also suggested a dedicated office or personnel at the hospital to provide service to Syrians: “There should be closer scrutiny of hospitals. There should be a section for Syrians in the hospitals. They should come and address our queries once we arrive and take care of us from the very beginning.” This comment was repeated across several groups due to the fact that they felt ignored and unattended when they went to hospitals.

#### Safety or Travel

- **Safety:** Many of the respondents, especially in Hermel, Majdel Anjar and Qasr, wished for more safety, as they worried about assaults and attacks by the Lebanese communities: “respect the Syrians”; “I just wish that no one would assault me.”
- **Travel:** Many recommended that the UN solve this situation by allowing them to travel to another country, or even by sending them back to Syria: “I want to go back to my country. And for everything to stop.”

## B. Social Networks of Assistance

### UN Assistance

#### General Overview

##### General Feelings

The main type of UN assistance available to Syrians is the Taghziyeh card provided by the UN. Other forms of assistance include the diesel fuel card (a winter cash assistance program available to some refugees), and cash assistance to help with their rent.

That said, many respondents complained about never receiving any type of assistance from the UN or other humanitarian organization. The majority believed that the UN was mismanaging donations and that the other NGOs were either corrupt or unfair. Respondents believed that there was widespread discrimination, and they complained about the screening process which they believed was carried out randomly. They also complained about the withdrawal of Taghziyeh for many households in recent months. This is discussed in further detail in the following section about problems with the assistance program.

Nonetheless, despite all of the concerns, some of the respondents were very grateful for the assistance, and a few were aware that the reason why there were disparities was because there were too many Syrians in the country, and that the UN was doing its best. Males from Hermel echoed this feeling: “We are thankful for the assistance that we get”; “I refuse [to believe] rumors about influence and connections. I do not believe this is true at all. Maybe some people are fulfilling their role and others not”; “The UN is doing what they can.” One female from Zrariyeh also said, “Maybe it is true that they have no more funding.” Some in Ras el Nabej and Ashrafiyeh said that they were very grateful for the card and did not know what they would have done without it.

##### Regional Examples

Responses varied with regards to the type of assistance received, however four main types of assistance were identified. The Taghziyeh card was named most often, followed by the diesel fuel card, and a couple of respondents mentioned cash assistance and a winter cash support program. There was no clear trend as to whether the selection process was based on the refugees’ area of residence, type of housing they resided in, or any other criteria. According to respondents, the distribution was random. Below is a summary of the responses from across the various focus groups:

- **Zein:** Some of the female respondents said that they were given the diesel fuel card only. Others mentioned that they were given both the diesel fuel and the Taghziyeh cards.
- **Qasr:** Most of the respondents were receiving the Taghziyeh card. One of the respondents indicated that it was not sufficient: “We get US\$ 27 per person with Taghziyeh, which is LL 200,000 for my family. It is hardly enough for what we need at home.” Another respondent said, “Only two of us from the entire household receive the Taghziyeh card, which amounts to US\$ 54 in total.”
- **Minieh:** Respondents also mentioned receiving the Taghziyeh card and one male respondent mentioned receiving cash support for a monthly value of LL 260,000. “We have the UN assistance

and we need it. Without it we would die of hunger,” said one of the respondents. Another one complained about the fluctuating value of Taghziyeh.

- **Majdel Anjar:** Respondents only mentioned receiving the Taghziyeh card.
- **Halba:** Most of the respondents stated that they received the Taghziyeh card. One respondent said she was so desperate that she needed to sell it: “I receive US\$ 27 per person for four people. I sell it every other month, to get my son’s medication. That is why I want to leave, either to Syria or elsewhere.” Others in the same group, like in many other groups, complained about not receiving the Taghziyeh card anymore: “When I arrived from Syria, I registered at the UN and received the Taghziyeh card for a few months, and then they just stopped it. There are organizations that come to our homes and ask questions, they say they are from the UN and that they need to assess our situation.”
- **Ras el Nabeh:** Most respondents receive the Taghziyeh card only, although a few also mentioned the diesel fuel card.
- **Odeisseh:** Respondents mentioned receiving the Taghziyeh card. One of the respondents also indicated that the UN had come to his house to fix a few things.
- **Ghaziye:** Respondents only mentioned receiving the Taghziyeh card and one of them said he had been withdrawn from the program: “I only had Taghziyeh and it was stopped.”
- **Ashrafieh:** Most respondents had access to the Taghziyeh card. “What we need the most is Taghziyeh and rent cards [referring to existing UN programs]. Taghziyeh is very important every month.”
- **Zrariyeh:** The Taghziyeh card and cash assistance of LL 260,000 were mentioned by respondents.
- **Hermel:** Respondents in this group referred to a winter cash support program from UNICEF: “We received US\$ 40 per child. The whole camp was registered. I told them I had five young children, but they did not want to register all of them because I live in a house and not in a tent, although my flat is worse than a tent.”
- **Dalhamiyeh:** Respondents mentioned receiving the winter cash support program given in Hermel, “US\$ 40 per child.”
- **Qasr:** Respondents mentioned receiving the diesel fuel assistance and the Taghziyeh card.

## Other Active NGOs

The majority of Syrian refugees indicated that they had never received assistance from an NGO. Those who did receive assistance could not always recall the exact names of the foundations or organizations that had assisted them. The ones mentioned most by respondents were the Red Cross, Caritas, Save the Children and Makhzoumi Foundation. Respondents mentioned that these NGOs usually provided them with boxes or cartons filled with food supplies, or cleaning products in some cases.

- **Aydamoun:** Respondents from Aydamoun mentioned receiving assistance from “Qatar” without providing further detail. They also indicated that Save the Children had given them LL 260,000 in cash.

- **GhaziyeH:** Respondents mentioned receiving cleaning products a few times back in 2011. The NGO “CARE” was mentioned by respondents: “They gave us a few kitchen utensils and cleaning material. We haven’t received anything from them since.”
- **Dalhameyeh:** “Caritas used to give us a card from Abou Khalil Supermarket”; “A French NGO, Solidarite Internationale (*Tadamon el Faransi*) came to fix our home a bit. They did not pay the rent. They fixed many things in the house.” Toilets were also installed but respondents were not sure who was behind the effort. Male respondents also mentioned receiving assistance from the Red Cross.
- **Qasr:** The Red Cross was mentioned by most of the respondents although some did not benefit from its activities: “The Red Cross came to register our names, but we did not receive much assistance.” Some people received food supplies and one respondent also mentioned Care. Action Contre la Faim (*Moukafahat el Jou*) was also mentioned by respondents in Qasr.
- **Cité Sportive:** Respondents were aware of the Makhzoumi Foundation: “We applied to the Makhzoumi Foundation, they gave me an appointment but I have not seen them yet.” They had also heard of Caritas although they had not received any direct assistance. “There was an NGO that gave us clothes for the children,” but they could not recall who it was.
- **Ras el Nabeh:** One of the respondents mentioned the NGO “Ikta” who had come to check on their living situation. The male respondents mentioned Active and Makhzoumi.
- **Hermel:** They had received food from the Red Cross and one male respondent mentioned “the priest from El Qaa” who came to see them in 2015.
- **Majdel Anjar:** The respondents mentioned boxes given to them by the Municipality and Save the Children, and an NGO who gave them diapers once. One male respondent mentioned World Vision, who gave them LL 260,000, and another one mentioned “Al Aytam”, which he was aware of, but had never received assistance from.
- **Halba:** Several respondents mentioned Save the Children, and one of the respondents said he received something from “Saudi Arabia.”
- **Jnah:** Respondents mentioned Dar Al Fatwa and the Makhzoumi Foundation: “Dar el Fatwa used to cover our Rent”; “The Makhzoumi Foundation used to give US\$ 100 from time to time. I think they are part of the UN.”
- **Zrariyeh:** One respondent mentioned Jamiyet el Aamal (*The Organization of Work*) from which she had received assistance five years ago: “they came from Nabatieh, when I first arrived to Lebanon they gave us blankets, pillows and some supplies.” Another one mentioned CARE, who had come to ask questions. They had also received assistance from Caritas.
- **GhaziyeH:** Respondents mentioned “the Saudis” who used to send them food cartons, and mentioned that Caritas used to be very helpful as well.
- **Harouf:** Some respondents mentioned receiving cartons but were not sure who had sent them. They also mentioned Shield who was helping them with the rent. Male respondents mentioned Solidarité who was helping Syrians in Nabatieh but not them.
- **Zein:** Respondents there knew of Caritas and some received boxes from them, one of them also mentioned “Medtiphisia.”

- **Ashrafieh:** Caritas and Makhzoumi were mentioned in Ashrafieh, although many indicated that they were not providing assistance anymore. Some of the male respondents said that the Church was helping them.
- **Minieh:** In Mineh they mentioned Solidarité Internationale who came to fix their flats: “The bathroom was leaking into the neighbor’s flat.”

## Problems with the Assistance

### Unfair Distribution and Mismanagement

A large number of respondents were not receiving the Taghziyeh card and complained about its unfair distribution and management. “There is a Taghziyeh card [ration]. A lot of people have it but I don’t. They said they would only give it to families of up to five children. My younger child died because I did not have enough food for her. I need the card every month,” said a female respondent from Odeisseh.

Other problems, such as Syrians benefiting from the card when they had in fact left the country, were repeated across many of the groups. “There are people who are still receiving funds on their Taghziyeh cards even though they are not residing in Lebanon anymore. They are in Turkey or Syria but still receive the funds,” said a respondent from Odeisseh.

Many of the respondents described their suffering, detailing their situation and wondering why they were not being helped. As one female from Cité Sportive said, “I applied to the UN but no one helped. My husband is ill. He has a slipped disk. I have five children. I have nothing and they are not giving us anything.”

Some respondents also talked about discrimination and “*wasta*” (influence/connections) stating that the NGO staff were actually the ones selecting who they wanted to help. Respondents indicated that refugees with adequate networks of influence could get more assistance than others. “I asked about the assistance tens of times but received nothing. Yet I have seen people with cars picking up their cards when they obviously don’t need them. The UN and all NGOs are discriminating. I saw people who did not seem to be in need, while the poor and miserable like us are getting nothing,” said one respondent from Halba. Another male respondent from Halba said, “It depends on how they feel about you.” In Qasr, respondents believed that the Municipality staff chose refugees that they knew and assisted them: “They do not distribute the assistance fairly. They just give it to those they know.”

One of the angrier respondents from Halba said, “The UN should change its name, they are thieves. They only decide to help you if they like you.” Many others also said that there was “*wasta*,” and that the Lebanese too were benefiting from the assistance by using their influence. “The Lebanese are taking advantage,” said one male respondent from Hermel.

### Corruption

A large number of respondents believed that there was rampant corruption among UN and NGO staff. They justified the lack of assistance to Syrians by blaming it on the organizations, who they believed were taking advantage and keeping the funds and assistance to themselves.

Males from Ghaziyeh complained that the complex process of distribution involved too many people, which meant that it was likely that some of those who were handling the assistance were keeping some of it to themselves: “There are too many different people involved in the distribution process of the assistance, and there are large parts of the donations that are being stolen by the employees instead of being distributed to beneficiaries.”

The same idea was echoed in Dalhamiyeh and in Hermel: “There are people who are living off the funds that are meant for the Syrians. They are stealing from the assistance. We are refugees but have no refugee rights,” stated a male respondent from Dalhamiyeh.

Males in Halba agreed: “The NGOs are taking advantage, they distribute the assistance randomly depending on whether they like the person or not. Those who have beautiful wives or daughters receive more assistance.”

### Unregistered Refugees

One of the respondents said he was not even registered with the UN and could not therefore receive any assistance. “I am not registered with the UN because we thought it would only last a few months or so. I never thought of registering. I thought this situation was temporary. And from what I have noticed, the registration only lasts a few months anyway. I want to go back to Syria when the situation in Syria improves,” said a male respondent from Ras el Nabeh.

Based on this response and on many comments among respondents about not having ever received anything, it is likely that some of the Syrian refugees were simply not registered, and were not aware of the need to register in order to receive assistance.

### Fluctuating and Discontinued Assistance

Many respondents complained about the fluctuating value of the Taghziyeh card over the past few years. However, they did mention that the value has improved in 2016 from US\$ 19 per person to US\$ 27 per person, which they really appreciated.

“Taghziyeh changes all the time. We started out at US\$ 30, then US\$ 19 then US\$ 13. Now for the past two months, its value is back to US\$ 27 per person,” said one female respondent from Dalhamiyeh. “We received US\$ 27 dollars for Taghziyeh. It was down to US\$ 19 at some point and is back to US\$ 27 now. It is only given to a maximum of 5 people. That said, all of the families receive it now, which is better.”

That said, many respondents confirmed being withdrawn from the UN’s assistance programs, after having benefited for some time. Most of them had no idea as to why that happened, or how to get back on the list.

“A lot of people are being withdrawn with no reason and are unable to seek any assistance,” said one of the respondents from Minieh. Another female from Cité Sportive agreed, saying that the UN has withdrawn her from the Taghziyeh assistance program: “I went to complain at the UN and to reapply, but

to no avail. It has been one year. My husband is married to another woman and does not take care of us. I have children and we have a lot of expenses.”

Males from Qasr had similar concerns: “The Taghziyeh card is also a problem. They stopped mine even though I renewed my UN papers. They called me to say that they were coming over and they never did.” Females from the same area also reported the discontinuation of the Taghziyeh assistance: “We are being excluded from the UN assistance programs. Taghziyeh is being discontinued for so many households.” Another female respondent from Ashrafiyeh also commented, “They withdrew me without explaining the reason behind their decision.”

Another female from Qasr complained of a noticeable decline in all types of assistance provided to the Syrians: “When we first arrived, the UN provided us with more assistance, and we received support from different sources and humanitarian organizations. But the assistance has declined and we now have to fend for ourselves, and help our husbands, and make ends meet to feed the children.”

### Inadequate Screening Process

UN and other NGO staff had visited many of the Syrian refugees’ homes to assess their living conditions as part of a screening process to select those that were most in need. Many respondents complained about these investigations which they described as “useless.” They also complained about the type of questions that were being asked by staff members.

“They came to see my home and decided that I was doing fine just because I have a place to stay. I therefore never received any assistance,” stated a female respondent from Ras el Nabeh. Another one from the same group had a similar experience: “My home consists of one room and the bathroom is inside that room. The UN came and saw our dire situation, but still did not give us anything: neither cash support for the rent nor the Taghziyeh card. We live in Chatila. My husband is not working and we hardly have enough money to get by.” Another female from Hermel, who had never received any assistance, said that the UN had come to see her home about ten times over the past two years.

One woman in Halba was particularly frustrated, criticizing the UN’s procedures and the questions that were asked during the visits: “UN employees came to my place to ask me absurd questions like how many times I eat rice and meat. They even wanted to see the toilets. In the end this was all useless since I did not benefit from any assistance. I am ill and need medication, I have a slipped disk in my back and trouble seeing, and yet I am given no assistance.” Many other respondents commented about the visits and questions that were asked, which they felt were quite invasive.

### Sales Points

Many respondents also complained about the points of sale that were imposed by the UN for utilizing the Taghziyeh card. Respondents indicated that they were being sent to more expensive supermarkets and stores than those which they were used to, and therefore ended up with smaller quantities of supplies. Some even believed that the points of sale were increasing their prices when they knew that the Syrians were coming to shop with UN-funded cards.

“The choice of supermarkets where we can use Taghziyeh is not ideal. They are expensive,” said one respondent from Halba. This was confirmed in focus groups across regions, whereby respondents indicated that they had compared their usual shopping outlets to the points of sale they are obliged to purchase goods from, and found the UN points of sale to be more expensive.

### Value and Variety

Respondents who did receive the assistance, and more specifically Taghziyeh, complained that the card was not enough to cover their needs since it only allowed them to purchase consumer items. They also indicated that its value was not sufficient to cover their monthly requirements.

Females from Ras el Nabeh complained that Taghziyeh only covered some of their needs: “We need cash assistance, cash transfer instead of the Taghziyeh card. We do not want Taghziyeh, we prefer cash.” A female respondent from Cité Sportive concurred: “I need money for rent and other types of assistance, Taghziyeh alone is not enough.”

This was mostly mentioned by females, who are usually the ones handling the purchase of household supplies and are aware of needs that are not being met. One female respondent from Halba said, “Medication for my husband costs a lot of money. They told me that they would help me with the LL 260,000 cash assistance card. I keep calling the UN, but they are not getting back to me. I only have Taghziyeh, but I need diapers and medication. If I sell the Taghziyeh card and they find out they will stop it.”

One of the females from Odeisseh said that she could only buy a few things: “If I buy a few things, the money runs out. My son keeps asking me why all other families have milk and not us. What am I supposed to tell him?”

### Regional Disparities

Some of the respondents believed that the assistance varied depending on area of residence and thought that other areas were receiving more assistance. In Ras el Nabeh, females thought that refugees residing in the Municipality of Beirut received less assistance than refugees who were residing outside the city.

In Hermel, males thought that “three quarters of the Syrians have been withdrawn from UN programs and assistance. And here in the Bekaa, it is worse for some reason.” The same feeling was echoed among males from nearby Qasr: “I have it and many do not, many of those in need. There are other areas where refugees receive several trucks filled with assistance every day.” In contrast, respondents in Zrariyeh believed that “they are not coming here. They go to the Bekaa. Everything happens in the Bekaa but not here.”

One respondent from Ras el Nabeh said that Syrians in Tripoli were given free housing for a year: “My sister got this facility through the UN, although she has no children. The whole building was given for free to everyone for a whole year. They are even securing free apartments to Syrians in the Bekaa. Maybe our areas are more expensive because we are in the heart of the capital.”



A respondent from Qasr even thought that more help was being given to those who were in Syria: “Nothing is reaching us here in Lebanon, they are helping those who are in Syria.”

### Rude and Unhelpful Staff

Many of the respondents said that they had gone to UN offices or spoken to staff members to complain about the situation but to no avail. They also mentioned that at times they were insulted and mistreated by the staff.

One female from Odeisseh said that her sister had four children and recently had twins. “She went to ask for assistance and they told her ‘no one asked you to have more children’.” In Halba, one of the respondents said that Save the Children had come, but that they spoke “a foreign language” and could not possibly understand them or their needs.

In Aydamoun, females said that they had complained repeatedly with no feedback whatsoever: “I complained a lot but no one responded. I went to a UN office in Kobeyat”; “me too, I went to Halba to complain. They had no solution for our being withdrawn from the assistance program.”

### Comparison to Previous Years

Generally speaking, many said that nothing had changed and that the situation had been dire since they had arrived to Lebanon. However, nearly all of the respondents agreed that the assistance was better in previous years. Respondents felt that the longer the crisis lingered, the less assistance was given to the Syrians.

“We used to have assistance for the children, with diapers and more. They sent me an SMS to say that I was not eligible for any of these this year. We are refugees and do not receive any help,” said one female respondent from Ashrafieh. Others from Minieh also repeated the same idea: “We used to receive LL 40,000 for cleaning products, we also used to get diapers, and supplies during Ramadan”; “Last year Qataris and Kuwaitis came over and gave us a US\$ 50 card twice. This year they did not give us anything at all. Boxes filled with food supplies were given to many households, but not to us.”

Many said that there were more humanitarian organizations helping the Syrians in earlier years. “There were far more organizations during the early days of the conflict,” stated one respondent from Jnah. Another from Majdel Anjar seemed to agree: “Four years ago, there were many more organizations, now there are almost none,”

“Last year they covered the fee for school buses, but they haven’t this year,” said a male respondent from Harouf, “and they used to give us blankets and heating stations (*sobiya*) too.” Males from Halba said that “the Qataris” used to help them but that they were no longer here. Another respondent from Dalhamiyeh also agreed that there was less assistance this year. “They used to help with our tents, they would give us wood and insulation material, but there was a dramatic change recently. We don’t receive anything anymore.”

Some others nonetheless acknowledged positive changes for which they were thankful. “Taghziyeh increased. It used to be US\$ 19 per person and it is now US\$ 27,” said one respondent from Zein. “It is better than last year”. One of the respondents from Majdel Anjar said that the diesel card’s value had increased too, and that this was a positive development. One male respondent from Minieh agreed that things were better in 2016: “More people are receiving LL260,000 and they have also increased the value of Taghziyeh, which is now better. It used to be insufficient.” Females from Aydamoun agreed that both diesel fuel and Taghziyeh cards have increased in value and they were satisfied with this development.

## Recommendations

A large number of respondents had been withdrawn from Taghziyeh, and were receiving very little assistance from other sources. They were therefore eager for the assistance to be equally distributed to everyone, and to be fairly shared among all of the refugees.

### Help for all Refugees

Many believed that if the Taghziyeh assistance was distributed to a select number of household members rather than to all of them, it would allow the UN to secure cards for all Syrian households with no exception. “They should give Taghziyeh to all households, and include all household members who had been excluded. If they remove just one child per family, they will be able to share the card with everyone,” stated one male respondent from Hermel. “They should give the assistance to everyone, maybe not all three cards, but it is unfair for some to receive three cards and for others to receive nothing at all,” said a male respondent from Qasr. Along the same lines, many others believed that the solution was to reduce the value of the assistance that was being sent to each household if it would guarantee coverage for everyone.

### Better Investigation

A large number of respondents believed that the investigations and distribution process were not effective, and had to be done more meticulously. “They should introduce a more effective investigation system,” said one male from Qasr. A male from Ashrafieh concurred, “The UN should assess our situations more effectively, and send reliable staff to check on us.” One female from Cité Sportive said that she wished for the UN to pay closer attention to the Syrians: “I wish that the UN could show more compassion towards individuals in need. They have to know us better, and know who is in real need and who is not. They should find out. They should call everyone.”

### Cash Assistance

Some respondents also said that they preferred cash assistance to the cards that were being distributed. “If we could withdraw cash from the card and use it wherever we wish, it would be better than being limited to a few specific points of sale, all of which are usually more expensive than others,” said one respondent from Halba. Another male respondent from Qasr said that there was a cash-based system at the beginning of the crisis which he preferred to the Taghziyeh card: “We used to go to the UN and they would give us a paper for us to get money from the bank. Each case was studied separately, and we each received the adequate amount based on our situation.” “Money is better than anything. Even just a little money helps,” said a respondent from the same group. “They should send all assistance in the form of cash.”

### One Single Card

A couple of different respondents from Qasr and Halba also suggested one single card which would allow them to cover all of their needs, rather than having one for the rent, one for diesel fuel and one for Taghziyeh. “Each card’s value would be decided upon depending on the family’s needs. Maybe LL 400,000 per family for larger households,” stated one respondent from Qasr.

## C. Livelihood

### Employment and Income

#### Available Work Opportunities

##### General Feelings

There were widespread concerns about declining employment opportunities due to the struggling Lebanese economy and large number of Syrians in the country. Many agreed that there were fewer jobs available for the Lebanese population, and that the situation was even worse for refugees. Many Syrians also mentioned being confined to a single area because of their residency problems, unable to seek jobs in other areas. Some of the respondents said they were not allowed to work and could get arrested if they did. A male from Majdel Anjar confirmed the above, indicating that it was altogether forbidden for Syrians to work: “It is forbidden to work. If we do work, we are arrested.”

“There are no more jobs in Lebanon, the situation is dire, and there are too many Syrians,” said one of the male respondents from Hermel. Agriculture, which is one of the sectors where men, women and children could work, was currently facing a decrease in production according to respondents. “The lands are getting worse. There is no production,” said one male respondent from Hermel. “There are fewer opportunities in agriculture, fewer jobs and lower pay is being offered,” said a respondent from Zein. “There used to be peaches in our area. But their quality has declined in the past two years and we’ve had to throw them away,” said another female respondent from Zein.

One female from Harouf said that “there are too many workers and it affects our income.” Another male participant from Qasr said, “The problem is that there used to be much fewer refugees, now that there are so many, there is oversupply in Qasr, it is impossible for all of us to find work. And we cannot travel outside of the area because we have no residency permits. We are confined here. There are soldiers who are nice and allow us to get through checkpoints, but others do not.” One other female respondent from Minieh also said that because of the lack of residency permits, men could not commute anymore. “Before we did not need a sponsor and they were able to travel to get work”.

##### Opportunities for Men

The majority of respondents, both males and females, indicated that there was a lack of employment opportunities for men in Lebanon and that they were having a very hard time finding employment. The opportunities sometimes varied according to regions; in Zein, Minieh and the Bekaa, it was possible for the men to work in agriculture, while in Ashrafieh there was a high demand for concierges. Generally

speaking, most of the respondents worked as “general laborers,” taking on any employment opportunity that was available, anything that they were physically able to do.

- **Examples by Area:** Most of the opportunities available to refugees are in the construction sector, in masonry, as unskilled labourers, farmers, domestic workers, painting houses, and as concierges. Exceptionally, one of the respondents had a hairdressing salon in Halba.
  - **Majdel Anjar:** The men worked as farmers, as domestic workers, or in trade according to one respondent. Women in the same region mentioned that their husbands were working in construction, painting houses, growing vegetables, and “anything” that they could find. Many agreed that their husbands worked sporadically and that they were often paid amounts less than what had been originally promised to them.
  - **Cité Sportive:** The men worked in clothing outlets, in the construction sector and in tiling.
  - **Ghaziyeh:** The men in Ghaziyeh worked in carpentry, construction, or any opportunities that they could find. “My husband waits at the main square for offers.”
  - **Zein:** Men mainly work in agriculture and masonry.
  - **Minieh:** Participants mainly work in the agriculture sector, construction and concrete. One of them wanted to work in a company in Beirut: “I took a sponsorship from the company. It did not work. They said I needed a Lebanese person who had assets or a company in their name to sponsor me.”
  - **Hermel:** The men mainly work in construction, painting houses, as mechanics, in cement, in carpentry and agriculture. A couple of respondents indicated that the work opportunities available to them were “the ones that the Lebanese don’t do” or “hard labor jobs” which were the worst kind of jobs. Females mentioned that their husbands were selling vegetables, working in the fields, or “anything they can find.” They also mentioned working at cafés and petrol stations.
  - **Ashrafieh:** Men worked as unskilled laborers or concierges. They also worked in the construction sector or painted houses.
  - **Dalhmiyeh:** Females mainly mentioned that their husbands worked in the construction sector, while some worked in agriculture.
  - **Halba:** Some opportunities in agriculture included growing olives and potatoes. But generally, they worked in anything. They “throw themselves at anything” according to one of the female respondents. One of the men had a hairdressing salon. “I rented the salon for US\$ 200, which I have to settle each month in addition to my rent.”
  - **Zrariyeh:** In the orchards (*basatin*) and in construction.
  - **Aydamoun:** They mainly worked in the construction and agriculture sectors, as porters, and picking almonds.

## Opportunities for Women

The vast majority of Syrian women did not work, either because they had to take care of their children or due to cultural norms which dictated that women should not work outside the house. Most of them had never worked while in Syria. But many of the single or widowed women had to work to cover their own expenses.

One female respondent stated, “It is very rare for women to work. It is frowned upon. And, employers would take advantage of us. I prefer not to work even if it means not being able to eat.” And many of the male respondents felt that there were no adequate opportunities for women. “There are women who are working, but our wives do not know about agriculture and construction. What work can they do?” said one male respondent from Minieh.

In Ashrafieh, one male respondent said that 99% of Syrian females did not work, and another respondent said “You Lebanese do not let Syrian women in your houses.”

- **Examples by Area:** Most of the opportunities available to working women are in agriculture and farming, at shops, restaurants, or bakeries in one case, as domestic workers, or knitting from home. Whether they could work in agriculture was also largely dependent on their area of residence.
  - **Majdel Anjar:** Some of the women are working in restaurants, agriculture, knitting, and as domestic workers.
  - **Zrariyeh:** There is a knitting factory in Zrariyeh, where many of the female respondents are employed throughout the year.
  - **Ghaziye:** A few of the women worked in Ghaziye: “Women can work in shops. You have to know how to read and write and cannot work if you have children.”; “I have worked as a domestic helper for a while. I worked without telling my husband. If he knows about this, he would go crazy.”
  - **Minieh:** Some of the females worked in agriculture and farming, but many did not work at all: “We have to take care of the children.” One woman said, “I tried to work in shops. My sister and I wanted to work, but we are both in poor health: I have blood poisoning and my sister had an allergy, which makes it impossible for us to seek employment.”. Another tried working in agriculture, but “I tried to work in the plastic houses but I got sick from the heat.”
  - **Ras el Nabeh:** Females from Ras el Nabeh worked in the vegetable market, in houses as domestic help, or even begging on the streets.
  - **Aydamoun:** There were opportunities in agriculture or as domestic workers, as babysitters, or at the town bakery.
  - **Hermel:** As females, respondents in this group worried about finding safe employment, somewhere where they would “preserve their dignity.” One respondent said that she wanted a “respectable job,” and many agreed saying that they could not trust anyone.
  - **Halba:** One respondent worked as a domestic worker at a restaurant and another one worked in a clothing store.
  - **Odeisseh:** One of the respondents in Odeisseh worked as a waitress in a restaurant.

### Opportunities for Children

Way too often, children had to work in order to boost the household's income and help cover daily and monthly expenses. "We are forced to send our children to work instead of to school," said a female from Halba. This was the case for many Syrian families across Lebanon. Moreover, they were underpaid and overloaded with long hours of work, in exchange for low pay: "They take advantage of children and give them very low wages," said another female respondent from Halba.

One male respondent also reported that an employer had hit his son: "I went to complain, and he answered me that if I don't like it, I should just take him away." Syrians reported many cases of abuse and physical assaults, which also caused some not to send their children to work at all, especially the girls.

- **Examples by Areas:** The children usually worked in agriculture, construction and a variety of other sectors. Girls could help their mothers to knit or were sent out to the streets to sell various items or beg.
  - **Zrariyeh:** Some of the female respondents said that children - both girls and boys -worked in the fields or in supermarkets. Girls also worked in knitting while boys worked as electricians or as blacksmiths. Interestingly, there was a knitting factory in Zrariyeh, which employs many of the adult females as well as younger girls and boys.
  - **Majdel Anjar:** Children usually work in shops or sell biscuits and other items on the streets. The boys also paint houses, work in cement, and at mechanic shops.
  - **Halba:** Children could work in agriculture and at shops. "Children work 18 hours per day at such a young age, they have lost their childhood," said one participant.
  - **Aydamoun:** The children work in shops, agriculture and bakeries.
  - **Ghaziye:** Children work in restaurants and shops.
  - **Harouf:** The children work in restaurants/cafés, shops and mechanic shops "where they get hands on experience," according to one male respondent.

### Income

Respondents indicated that they never had a steady stream of income due to the fact that they only worked occasionally and depending on what they could find. Some of the men could not work, and when they did, they were sometimes not paid on time, or never paid at all.

Very few had monthly salaries and any other income that they could rely on to cover their monthly expenses. "We do not have a regular income and that impacts everything: our lifestyle, our children, our expenses, we are under a lot of pressure and always stressed. We might have enough money to eat one day but not the next," stated one female from Zrariyeh. Moreover, many of the husbands were sick, disabled and unable to work, which left the entire household with no income at all or forced the children to work, or the women to seek employment.

"My husband has a psychological and physical illness. My son took over and he works sometimes but not always, and when he does, employers take advantage and either pay him a low rate or do not pay him at all. We cannot complain because we are illegal," said a female from Ras el Nabeh. Some of the females

also resorted to working themselves. “I was working in a school. I would leave my son at my sister’s because she has no children of her own,” said a female respondent from Harouf.

### Low, Unfair Wages and Abuse

Many complained about the low wages paid to Syrian workers: “LL 30,000 a day is not enough. There are fewer opportunities this year, and the pay is decreasing, employers say they have no more money,” said a male respondent from Hermel. Another male respondent from Hermel said that he was working “from 7am to 6pm for a LL 20,000 wage.” One female respondent from Halba worked for LL 20,000 per day, “which is not enough for anything.”

Refugees also complained about the low wages that were paid in exchange for very long working hours. In Dalhamiyeh, one female respondent said that her 60-year-old husband worked all day for LL 6,000. Others in Dalhamiyeh also said that they worked all day, without a lunch break, for LL 6,000, which seems to be the allocated fee for farming and agriculture.

Many respondents also complained about the abuse by Lebanese employers who did not feel compelled to settle their dues with the Syrians anymore, because they had no residency permits. “If we work for an agreed upon fee of US\$ 1,000, it is likely that we would only be paid half of this by the end of the month. They are taking advantage and we cannot complain for fear of being reported to the authorities.”

Another female respondent from Harouf mentioned her brother had a salary of LL 260,000 which was not being paid in full: “they are taking advantage of us and not paying us our wages, they blame us for destroying the country and taking their jobs.” Many other respondents across groups voiced similar concerns, including one male from Hermel: “they are taking advantage of us. Each of us works the equivalent of ten Lebanese workers, and we are paid a miserly amount. In addition, if someone assaults us at work, we cannot complain.”

### Differences in Income across Gender and Age

Some of the respondents believed that women and children were paid lower wages than the men, but others thought that wages did not always vary. Some of the men also thought that younger boys received higher wages because they had more endurance and were able to work longer hours, as opposed to older men who had less strength.

One male respondent from Hermel said that average wages ranged between LL 15,000 and LL 30,000 per day, and that this depended on the sector of employment and type of work undertaken rather than the age of laborers. Another respondent in the same group said that they were all being paid US\$ 20 a day on average, regardless of age or sector of employment.

Others did believe that children were offered lower fees. “Sometimes children are paid a weekly fee of LL 50,000 or even as low as LL 10,000 when they are undergoing on-the-job training.” said a male respondent from Hermel. Another male respondent from Ghaziyeh said that his son had a very low income too: “My son works at a restaurant for LL 50,000 a week.” One female respondent from Halba confirmed similar fees for children: “My son works from 6am to 6pm for LL 10,000 a day.”

Many respondents commented about employers taking advantage of children, including a male respondent from Harouf who said that they worked from 12pm to 12am at restaurants, for very low salaries. Another respondent said, “My son works at a petrol station. He is 16 and they pay him in installments. Sometimes they pay nothing until the second half of the month, although he is always on time.”

Everyone agreed that women were consistently paid lower fees, as low as LL 5,000 a day to LL 10,000 at most. Men from Ras el Nabeh also said that working women were offered far lower wages “They beg on the streets. They work in houses, they are paid at least 50% less than we are.” One male respondent from Hermel said that a lot of women worked in olives and agriculture, but that they were being paid LL 5,000 or LL 10,000 a day, or even LL 1,500 per hour.

### Aspired for Opportunities

When asked about which sectors of employment they could work in or which talents and skills they could be making better use of, responses varied among men and women. Many of the men and a few of the women referred to their previous experiences in Syria. Some of the women expressed a desire to learn and become productive members of society if they are able to. That said, the majority of women preferred not to work at all and said that they had to take care of the children.

#### Men

A few of the male respondents were educated and had degrees and yet worked as laborers in unskilled jobs, hoping that they would someday resume their own careers. “My nephew is a skilled, well-educated individual who is now working in cement,” said one respondent from Aydamoun. A few others also had degrees, but could not work in offices or companies in Lebanon, and had to seek any other type of employment to provide for their families. One female respondent from Qasr said that many of their husbands were “engineers and architects, but they can only work as construction workers in Lebanon.” Another woman from Ras el Nabeh complained about the salary offered to her husband who is an engineer: “My husband is an engineer and has degrees. They want to pay him a salary of US\$ 700, which is way below his value”.

But the majority of male respondents had always worked as carpenters, painters, construction workers and in related fields. When asked which sectors of employment they would like to be employed in or where they could have a positive contribution, most mentioned working in construction, carpentry, masonry and house painting. A few respondents mentioned positions such as driver, porter, security guard, car mechanic, or in an office.

#### Women

The main concern for women was that they had to take care of the children and therefore only a few aspired to be employed. That said, there were a few interesting suggestions, such as a female from Hermel who recommended the creation of “a sewing workshop, where all women could work instead of sitting at



home, and benefit the economy in tandem.” This was in line with the women’s skills and capabilities, as many of them mentioned being able to sew, although most of them wanted to do this from home rather than leave the children alone. Females from Dalhamiyeh also stated that they were willing to work from home, and that they could learn skills such as sewing. This was repeated constantly when the mention of employment was brought up, including by women from Jnah, Zein and Odeisseh. One respondent from Zein said that she just needed electricity in order to be able to sew at home.

One respondent from Zein also suggested that she could teach to young Syrians: “I can teach young students as I know a bit of French and English. I can teach them to read letters and so on. But there is no school or a place to teach the Syrian children. The children would be so happy to go to school and feel normal again.” Another agreed saying that they could learn to read and write and then teach others: “We were told that there is a learning center in Batroun and advised to go there. There was a workshop in the North (in Tripoli) for the women to learn and earn LL 120,000 per month.” When asked which sectors of employment they would like to be employed in or where they could have a positive contribution, respondents mainly mentioned sewing, teaching, cooking from home, cleaning houses and doing office work.

## Internal Migration

All of the Syrians were more or less likely to move within the country, or had already done so more than once. They went to wherever rents were cheaper, costs were lower and job opportunities were greater. Only a few exceptions did not want to move, such as respondents from Ashrafieh and in some cases women, who tended to be warier of moving to new areas than their male counterparts.

### General Feeling

Almost everyone agreed that Syrians would migrate internally if they were able to find better employment opportunities and lower rent.

Males from Hermel said that they would move if they could find “better employment opportunities, more affordable housing, and safer areas to reside in.” Females from Odeisseh said that the rent was lower in some areas, and “we would look for places where the rent is lower and move there. If we could pay LL 100,000 per month for rent, it would be fair.” Females from Qasr agreed: “If we found better living conditions elsewhere we would definitely move. If there are work opportunities for the men, we would go with them. We would not stay here”.

Others had already moved many times because of the elevated rent prices and recurrent evictions when landlords refused to wait for belated payments. “I have moved many times and my new landlord is insisting that I secure the monthly rent or else be evicted again. He does not care if I sleep on the streets,” said a male respondent from Minieh.

There were also safety concerns which prompted refugees to move: “There are sometimes raids in the tents and they chase us out. They point arms at us and ask us to leave.” A similar concern was voiced in

Hermel: “Those from Homs are considered to be terrorists for example. They are often not tolerated and have to leave.” There were safety concerns in Halba as well: “There are checkpoints and they can arrest us. There are raids, they come to the camps and take the young men. They are being taken away for months.” Respondents from Majdel Anjar also said that they would seek areas where they would feel safer.

In some cases, respondents felt that they were already in an area where rents were low, such as in Cité Sportive: “This area is the least expensive, but if there were even better rent prices, we would move, especially if it were somewhere where the community is more tolerant of us.”

Respondents residing in Ashrafieh were the only ones who said that they would never move from their current area. This might be due to the fact that they are Christians and felt more comfortable residing in a predominantly Christian area. Moreover, comments made by respondents that the church was assisting them might also play a role in their wanting to remain in Ashrafieh. “I would never go anywhere, Ashrafieh is the safest for me and my children”; “there is no reason that would make me leave this region”; “Even if we find work elsewhere, we would commute and come back to Ashrafieh.” They did not want to move even if rents were lower, prices were more affordable, or for any other reason.

Many of the women residing in Dalhamiyeh were also less enthusiastic about moving. They worried about re-integrating in a new neighborhood and having to adapt once more. One of them gave the example of a man she knew who found a job on a farm and took his family to live there. “Once there, the owner of the farm said that he wanted one of the man’s daughters, which he disapproved of and had to leave and come back to Dalhamiyeh,” said a female respondent. Others voiced concerns about leaving Dalhamiyeh, without knowing where to go. One respondent said that she would not split her family.

## D. Priorities

### Key Priorities

#### Ranking of Priorities

The Syrians had many priorities related to their daily concerns and most pressing issues. While most of their priorities have been the same for years, the renewal of their residency permits and sponsorship issues were more recent and far more worrisome for the majority of respondents, especially the males. The absence of assistance was the second largest concern as it was deemed to be getting worse for many, and with their situation worsening, they increasingly needed cash support and other forms of assistance.

One statement by a male respondent from Aydamoun encompassed all of the priorities and the general feeling among most of the Syrians: “the leading priority is for things to get better in Syria so we can go back. But if we are compelled to stay here, we need to have legal and official documents, be able to send our children to school, and secure medical care for those in need. For those who do not have jobs, we need the adequate assistance that would help us deal with our expenses. Otherwise, travelling may seem like a better option.”

The following are the respondents’ main priorities by order of how many times they were mentioned, and how serious their comments were:

1. Obtaining and/or renewing residency permits / Having sponsors
2. Receiving more cash and other types of assistance (more specifically the Taghziyeh card)
3. Paying rent
4. Having access to medical care at affordable prices
5. Accessing more effective education
6. Having more work opportunities
7. Creating opportunities for women to work
8. Getting help with travel arrangements
9. Accessing adequate, clean and respectable housing
10. Having better infrastructure and hygiene, particularly in the camps
11. Having clothing for children
12. Covering school bus fares
13. Understanding and completing civil documentation and registration
14. Having human rights (one mention)

The priorities varied in intensity depending on the area of residence. In Qasr, winter assistance was more important because they required heating in the winter. In the camps, like in Dalhamiyeh, their priorities also included having clean camps and better infrastructure. Some respondents in Minieh thought of education as a very important priority, most likely because they had no nearby schools. The same was true of respondents residing in Ras el Nabeh, where only few spaces were available for Syrian children. In Halba, many preferred to travel because of the appalling behaviour of the Lebanese communities towards them, which constantly made them feel unsafe, unwelcome and oppressed.

## E. Safety and Social Cohesion

### Attitudes and Behaviours

There was a strong feeling among Syrians that the Lebanese population's attitude towards them had changed, and that there was more hatred and bitterness as time went by. The recent bombings in Qaa did not help, and many Syrians complained that the Lebanese had retaliated with hate crimes, burning refugee tents and assaulting the refugees. "When the Qaa explosions happened, they got even angrier at us," said a male respondent from Hermel. "They burnt our tents."

One female from Qasr said that Lebanese communities were insulting and demeaning the Syrians: "Their attitudes have changed. They insult us and state 'you are just a Syrian' in an insulting manner." Males from Halba seemed to agree: "They are treating us all like criminals. They stare at us and express disapproval wherever we go."

"They are not compassionate anymore. They do not care if we are unable to pay the US\$ 300 or US\$ 400 rent a month. They tell us to either pay or find other lodging. We are going to end up living in the streets," said a female respondent from Harouf.

### Perceived Safety in their Areas

The majority of respondents felt safer in their areas of residence than in Syria with the bombings and physical danger that they and their families had faced. Their concerns, however, were related to the population's attitude and behaviour towards them, whereby they were often being attacked or assaulted, in addition to worrying about commuting and going out because of their lack of legal papers.

In Dalhamiyeh, Minieh, Ras el Nabeh, Ashrafiyah and many other regions, respondents indicated that they felt safe: "Ashrafiyah is expensive, but it is very safe and there is work here"; "We can go out. Our children, our sons and husbands can go to places. In other areas, Syrians are confined to their villages or neighbourhoods and can go nowhere." That said, a few respondents from Minieh did complain about discrimination at school between the Lebanese and Syrian students.

### Residency Papers

A major safety concern for the Syrians was their lack of paperwork which caused them to fear being arrested and sent to jail. "Aydoun is safe, but we worry about getting arrested because of our residencies," said one respondent. That sentiment was repeated in Ras el Nabeh: "We used to be able to go out any time at night without being afraid. But now we cannot move after 7-8pm because of the lack of residency permits." And in Hermel: "The situation is fine, but we worry about our children leaving the house because they have no residency papers. They can be arrested and we would not be able to free them from jail". Females from Zrariyah also worried about the lack of paperwork and being stopped at checkpoints.

## Assaults and Attacks

There were many examples of assaults and attacks across several areas.

One female from Zrariyeh said that Syrians could be attacked after 6pm. “My son was attacked once on his way back from work. He was alone and was attacked by a group of six. There are thugs in the area.” In Ghaziyeh too, some of the men worried about their children and did not want them to leave the house after 4pm.

In Majdel Anjar, a few respondents did not feel safe although they were comfortable because they had no curfew in their area: “I heard about a Syrian who was very badly beaten by a group of Lebanese citizens.” Respondents from Halba also worried about the attitude of local communities towards them: “There are random assaults, raids and arrests”; “Even old men are being attacked and arrested. One 80-year-old man was taken away one day before Ramadan.”

Another male respondent from Halba said that the Lebanese refused to integrate the Syrians and rejected them: “They blame all of the explosions on us. Every time something happens here, we feel unsafe and fear being attacked.” Another agreed, suggesting that the government should protect the Syrians: “The UN has to find a solution or come to an agreement with the army and the police, to protect us. We are living in fear, all of us: our neighbors, everyone. We are even afraid of the authorities now.” A respondent from Halba agreed saying, “They generalize, and treat us all like criminals. They forget that there are good people too. In their eyes, there are no more good Syrians.” A female respondent from Halba said that her son had been assaulted: “they assaulted him on the way back from work, accusing him of stealing work from them. They told him they were watching him and would hit him every time he was paid for work.”

Respondents from Harouf also said that they were being randomly attacked and assaulted, and feared for their children: “We are always afraid”; “When a martyr is brought back from Syria, none of us dare to leave our houses. We fear that a war could break out here. If there is a war here, we are lost.” In Odeisseh too, the respondents had similar concerns, and said they were afraid of Hezbollah. Females from Qasr also felt unsafe, and one of them said that they could even hear the bombings in Syria sometimes.

One female from Ghaziyeh described her ordeal while crying: “I usually leave the house at 6am. I once left at 6am instead, I was alone on the street and a couple of individuals told me to follow them because they could offer me food. They led me into a building and I was very scared. They assaulted me. I ran back home.”

## Lack of Trust

One male respondent from Jnah said that the Lebanese people and the authorities did not trust the Syrians: “I once saw a Syrian who was arrested at a checkpoint, the authorities were checking his phone to see who he was communicating with and what he was saying. It makes us feel unsafe--there is a lack of trust.”

## The Environment

In Dalhamiyeh, female respondents complained about pest and animals, saying that they worried for their children's safety: "There are snakes and it is hot. There are a lot of pests. We fear for our children with these animals around."

## Perceived Safety in the Region

When asked how they felt about developments in the region, the Syrians were mostly pessimistic and had no hope for any positive changes in the short term. They were sad about the situation in their country, and thought that the Middle East in general was increasingly dangerous and unsafe.

## Syria

All of the respondents were concerned about the situation in Syria, and knew that it was not improving, and even getting worse.

Females from Minieh said that the situation in Syria was deteriorating, that there were more bombings, and that all of their villages had been destroyed: "The world should interfere and stop this war." Males from Cité Sportive seemed to agree too saying, "Things are going from bad to worse." One of the females from Ghaziyeh also said that Syria was suffering from the absence of food, water, and electricity. "People in Syria are begging for water. The country has become expensive and there is no work. There is nothing left in Syria." Males from Zein also discussed the situation in their country, agreeing that it was also deteriorating: "We have all seen the news. We hear from our families there. It is not getting better." A male respondent from Ras el Nabeh said there was no need to even discuss it saying, "The situation is dire. We hope that Lebanon will stand on its feet."

In Cité Sportive, one of the respondents talked about Idlib: "My relatives in Idlib have all left now. They all had to leave. They lost their homes." Another respondent mentioned Aleppo: "ISIS (*Daesh*) is there now. My parents are there and they are stuck. I talk to them on the Internet."

## The Middle East

Most of them felt the same about the Middle East as a whole, and when asked, answered negatively.

One male respondent from Minieh said that the region as a whole was in a worrying state, because terrorism was now targeting civilians, even more than before. Another respondent believed that the entire region's stability depended on the situation in Syria, and that nothing would get better until the war there came to an end: "Everything is affected, Lebanon is suffering, and all other countries are suffering." Another added: "our entire region is under fire".

Females from Ras el Nabeh also agreed: "There is no safety across the region, there are wars everywhere. Even Lebanon's situation is uncertain."; "The Middle East in general is unstable."

## F. Future Plans / Intentions

When asked about their future plans, most of the Syrians were confused and unable to think ahead. Some said that they could only “pray to god” or were “waiting for something to happen.” They all lived their lives one day at a time, because it was impossible for them to make any plans. “We cannot think ahead. We have too many concerns,” said one female from Qasr. “We live day by day and try to survive each passing day while securing all of the necessities.” Males from Hermel had similar comments: “Nothing will get better”; “We hope it just does not get worse”; “I don’t even know what I will do about tomorrow.” Males from Ras el Nabeh concurred, saying there were no opportunities to think ahead: “It is too difficult. We just want to secure our needs for today and tomorrow.”

Exceptionally, one respondent from Hermel thought he might be able develop his work and business.

Many of the respondents wanted to travel because of their dire living conditions in Lebanon, the people’s attitude towards them, the lack of work, the elevated cost of rent, and all of the reasons outlined under their main concerns. Many had been feeling worse in recent months because of the new laws pertaining to residency permits and the need for sponsors, and had recently started thinking of travelling. That said, the majority of those who wanted to leave had not heard any feedback from the UN.

“This is the first year that I think of leaving, because the situation is getting so much worse; I am scared of raids. There is too much pressure. I am ready to leave anytime” said another respondent from Qasr. Females from Qasr felt the same “I would go anywhere that they would take me to. But I did not do anything about it, I did not apply. My nephew works at the embassy, but my husband did not want to apply. One female respondent from Majdel Anjar only wanted to leave for the sake of her children “I might go for my children although I prefer to live in an Arab nation like Lebanon”.

The vast majority of Syrians wanted to go back to Syria if given the choice, but they knew that this was not a likely short term prospect. They considered destinations in Europe, Canada and Australia but made no mention of travelling to other Arab countries. Some of the respondents were so desperate that they said they would go anywhere: “Sudan, Mozambique, Israel, any country. I want to go somewhere else, anywhere. What we have experienced in Lebanon is worse than anything I have seen on television. A respondent from Halba stated, “When you go anywhere where there are no Arabs, they treat you like a human.”

Most of the information that they knew about other countries was from hearsay, or through relatives and friends.

A large number of respondents preferred not to travel and said that they would wait here in Lebanon, until the war ended in Syria. A female from Ras el Nabeh said that she would never be able to travel because her daughter was now scared of planes: “She is scared that the plane will throw a bomb. They are traumatized.”

Respondents who wanted to travel complained about the UN’s attitude towards them and said that the selection of families sent abroad was unfair, although some seemed to be unaware or misinformed about the procedure. “Some of those who did not need to travel are being sent abroad. They were living in safe

areas in Syria. They are choosing the wrong people, there is a lot of discrimination in terms of who is being prioritized,” said one respondent from Halba.

Males from Odeisseh said that they were waiting for phone calls: “I was told that they call people who they might choose for migration. That it was not up to us to apply.” Others had been looking for a way out since arriving to Lebanon. “We have been wishing to leave since we arrived. Now it is so much worse,” said one respondent from Zrariyeh. “If they call me, I would go. I want to travel but they never called me. They called him [referring to another respondent in the group] although he does not want to leave,” stated one of the male respondents from Qasr.

## Going back to Syria

Syrian refugees still spoke highly of their country and wanted to go back home. They still had friends, relatives and loved ones there. “If the situation gets worse, I would also leave. But I prefer Syria. My family is still there,” said a male respondent from Hermel. “I would go back to Syria. Even in this situation, my mother is still there,” said another one. “I love my country and want to go back.”

Males from Minieh also preferred going back: “There is no place like home. Where we have spent our childhood.” Others in the same group said that they were only in Lebanon because it was close to Syria. “I am used to Lebanon. I want to stay close to home. We are among Arabs here.”

One female respondent from Hermel said that she wanted to go back to Syria too: “We are already miserable here, what would happen to us elsewhere? Even if there is a war, I prefer my home, my village.” A male respondent from Ghaziyeh said he wanted to go back too: “I live here [in the region] and have daughters who are married here. Why would I leave? I want to go back to Syria.”

All female respondents from Minieh also agreed: “If the situation in Syria improves, we are all going back.” Males from Minieh concurred: “I hope to be in Syria in six months. All of us want to go back.”

“We are just waiting for things to get better, for this region to be better,” said one female from Harouf. All respondents in the group concurred and indicated that they would prefer to go back and never leave their country again. “I want to go back to my home country, even if I have to live under a tree,” said a female respondent from Hermel. Females from Cité Sportive also agreed: “we hope that things will get better for us to go back. We are all unhappy here, we just want to survive until we can go back home.” Females from Harouf agreed: “We think of going back to Syria. It is what keeps us going.”

When asked if they would go back despite the war, very few of them answered positively. “We are afraid,” said a female respondent from Aydamoun. “There are places where the situation is ok, but it is still very unsafe.” Some argued that they could not go back even if they wanted to: “We have no money anyway for the residency and cannot go back to Syria”. Many Syrians repeated this comment: “They won’t let us go back, because we came here illegally.” Some did not want to go back to Syria for fear of being drafted to the army: “If I go with my son, they will draft him to the army. He will either have to die or to kill people. I prefer to protect him and stay here.”



Females from Ras el Nabeh also had concerns about going back: “There is war. How can we go back? After all of this destruction, there is nothing to go back to.”; “I would not go back because we cannot be on anyone’s side. If we are with the government, the opposition and terrorists will attack us, and if we side with them, the government will attack us. My house is gone anyway.” “There is no safety at all there even if the war ends. Syria will never go back to the way it was before.”

A few respondents wanted to go back despite the fighting, especially if their material situation in Lebanon worsened. One of the female respondents from Cité Sportive said: “if they can assist me with cash and other types of assistance, I would be grateful, but if they don’t, I might go back to Syria.”

## Europe and the West

Many preferred to travel to western countries and had no more hope for Syria or Lebanon, such as these male respondents in Ashrafieh: “There is no hope here or in Syria. Even if the situation gets better in Syria, it will take another ten years before the country is functional again.”; “We have been here for five years and have done nothing. We’re not able to save money. There’s nothing we can do.”

Among Western countries, there was a clear bias towards Germany, Sweden, Australia and Canada, mostly because of the positive things that respondents had heard about them.

One female from Halba said that she would choose any country “that is respectable. Not the US. Maybe Sweden or Germany. In fact, Germany is better. There is a good social life and it is also financially more rewarding. There is no life in the Nordic countries and no one on the streets.”

One respondent from Minieh mentioned Belgium saying, “I have relatives who are there.” A respondent from Ghaziyeh mentioned Germany: “My children want to study. Germany provides them with free rent and education.” Another male respondent from Zrariyeh wanted to go “to Germany because all of my relatives are there. All of the Kurds are in Germany.”

In Cité Sportive, one female respondent mentioned “Germany, Canada or Sweden. I have heard positive feedback about these countries.” Another said, “I know someone in Germany who was treated for free.” Another female in the same group said that her husband wanted to get a loan for travel purposes because he felt that the family would be more comfortable abroad: “He said we would go to Sweden.” Females from Minieh mentioned the same countries saying, “Sweden, Canada, Germany: life over there is good.”

One male respondent from Hermel said that he would only leave if the situation was miserable, and that he would maybe go to Canada because of what he had heard. “I would go to Australia, I have friends there,” said a respondent from Minieh. Another female from Minieh said she knew someone in Denmark: “They are educating refugees there. They have tremendous respect for us, although I am against travelling.” One of the female respondents from Aydamoun said that she had applied to go to Holland where she would meet her husband. “My husband was smuggled out by sea and took the risk. He now has a legal status there as a refugee, and I can follow him by plane.”

One female from Ghaziyeh did not have a specific country in mind but also mentioned Canada “because we know a lot of people who went there and are doing great. The government has secured housing and residencies on the spot and they pay good salaries. They teach refugees the language too”.

## Remaining in Lebanon

Despite the large number of refugees who wanted to leave, some of the respondents preferred remaining in Lebanon over travelling to a third country. “I would stay here. We are the same people, us and the Lebanese” said one female respondent from Ashrafieh. A male respondent from Hermel stated that “Syrians and Iraqis or Jordanians are not that close, but we have a shared history with the Lebanese. We have always come to Lebanon for work, even before the war. But the refugee crisis has impacted our reputation. We used to be respected, now we are attacked, assaulted and insulted.”

One of the females from Minieh said she was given the opportunity to go to Sweden but did not go. “After Syria, Lebanon is the best place for us. We feel at home.”

“They called me to travel, twice, but I don’t want to... Lebanon is the best, because it is close to Syria” said one respondent from Qasr, with whom many agreed. A lot of the refugees felt closer to home in Lebanon. For others, they thought it was too difficult for large families to just pack up and leave: “When you have a responsibility and many children, it is difficult to leave. It is easier for people who are single and small families.” A female from Qasr agreed and one female respondent from Majdel Anjar had a similar comment: “Lebanon is better. We are better here.” Many among the female respondents from Ghaziyeh did not want to leave either: “I do not want to go. I want to stay here”; “Me too, I don’t like to travel.” Some of the respondents hoped for better living conditions while in Lebanon and hoped that this could happen in the next six months.

“I don’t want to travel. I just want official residency.” said one female from Majel Anjar. “We are only asking for better conditions here in Lebanon,” said another female from Qasr. Females from Cité Sportive also wished to have access to better services: “Help us live in better conditions until we go back home. We wish we could live better lives over here. We thank Lebanon for welcoming us, but we live in such misery. We only want the basics, until the situation gets better.” Males from Minieh concurred.

## Reasons for Leaving

The reasons which were the most recurrent among respondents for wanting to leave Lebanon included mistreatment and rejection by the Lebanese population, poor living conditions, better conditions abroad and “for the children’s sake.”

### Mistreatment and Poor Conditions

Mistreatment by the Lebanese were mentioned by Syrian refugees among the main reasons for wanting to travel. One female respondent from Hermel said, “Mistreatment by the local communities is among the many reasons why I would choose to travel. But I never thought of any specific destination. I prefer to

go back to Syria.” Another male respondent from Minieh confirmed this statement saying, “Any country is better than Lebanon, we are mistreated and ignored here.”

The majority of respondents from Halba felt the same, indicating they were under too much pressure from the local population who was abusive, disrespectful and unwelcoming to Syrians.

### Better Conditions Abroad

Many of the respondents were convinced that they would be able to live better lives abroad: “We will be comfortable and happier. We will be taken care of for the next ten years,” said one female respondent from Hermel.

Some of the male respondents from Minieh believed that the Syrians could integrate into foreign societies better than they had in Lebanon: “Canada is welcoming refugees and integrating them easily until they find work for them.” Many others thought that Western countries could provide refugees with all of their needs, for free: “Education is free and so is housing. Everything is taken care of.” “They are solving illiteracy by teaching the children. They are also providing free treatment for the sick,” said another respondent from Ashrafieh. “They are giving them houses that are in good condition,” said another male from Minieh, and a female respondent from Minieh also argued that they could live better lives abroad: “They are giving houses for free, education and much more Independence, but I am unmarried and cannot leave.”

All of this ideal depiction of western nations was mostly based on hearsay, and very few concrete examples were mentioned by respondents: “We have heard that the situation is better abroad. I heard about Sweden, Germany and other countries who have treated refugees with care and compassion, better than they are being treated here in Lebanon. Housing and education are for free, and the refugees receive different types of assistance.”

Males from Ashrafieh hoped to acquire a foreign passport if they travelled: “We could get a nationality from there.” Another respondent in the same group said, “We have been here for years and can never hope to achieve anything or receive anything in return. If we migrate, we are likely to get a permanent residency.”

### For the Children

A large number of respondents were concerned about their children’s education and wanted to secure a brighter future for them, educating them and helping them fulfill their ambitions. “We need to safeguard our children’s future, their dreams and ambitions,” stated one female from Ras el Nabeh.

“My children are not attending school in Lebanon. In the West and Europe, they respect children and humans. They take care of us,” said one male respondent from Minieh. One female respondent from Ghaziyeh said, “I would only leave for the sake of my children’s education. I want to travel to Germany. I heard they are educating children for free over there.”

Many others agreed that one of the leading reasons for travelling was to make sure that the children received the appropriate education. “The most important aspect is for our children to learn things,” said a female respondent from Cité Sportive, and a male respondent from Ashrafieh shared a similar opinion: “I want to go for the children, we all think of the children... my daughter holds a baccalaureate and cannot go to university. I cannot go to Damascus either which is why I want to travel.” Another female respondent from Ashrafieh worried that she would not be comfortable abroad, although she knew it would be better for the children to travel.

## Illegal Travel

The majority of respondents did not want to be smuggled into another country illegally. They were aware of the ordeal that refugees on the boats went through, and feared for their lives and for their children’s lives. Many said that they had seen the news and were not prepared to risk their lives. There were nonetheless a few exceptions among the refugees who were prepared to risk everything in order to leave, because they were frustrated with the current situation and felt hopeless about their futures.

When asked if they were willing to pay money to someone who would organize their travel arrangements, many respondents said that they had no money to begin with: “if I had money, why would I travel?” This was also relayed by the male respondents from Ashrafieh: “We have no money.” Females from Qasr said that they too had no money to pay for anything. “If we have money we would buy food supplies for the children.” Females from Minieh and Dalhamiyeh felt the same. “The UN told us not to pay money to anyone, because we should be able to travel for free with the help of the UN,” said one female respondent from Qasr.

Only a few respondents said that they would pay someone for illegal travel including a couple of respondents from Halba and two male respondents from Ashrafieh. One male from Jnah also said that he would get on a boat “because I am alone and do not have the responsibility of a family. I might find a better life. If I can secure the money, I would probably leave.” One female from Hermel said that her son wanted to be smuggled out but that they refused to let him go: “He would, but we would never let him. His father would not let him.”

That said, most of the respondents were well aware of the dangers of smuggling via illegal channels. “I would not risk my children’s lives,” said one male from Minieh. “Those who are leaving through the UN are safer and guaranteed to reach their destination.” A male from Qasr said, “We see what is happening to people. They can’t swim, and they are dying.”

Some of the men from Ashrafieh said that they preferred organized travel and only wanted to travel with the UN and not in any other way saying, “there are people who are lying and stealing.” A female from Qasr said that the UN had specifically told them not to pay money to be smuggled out: “They approached me and I refused to pay.”; “I would never go on a boat, I prefer to die here but not in that boat.”; “A lot of people died at sea.” One other respondent said that there were Lebanese people smuggling refugees illegally: “they had fake Syrian papers.”

Across all groups, there was a majority of respondents who said that they would go “only through the UN.” One female from Cité Sportive said she would only travel if it was organized by the United Nations: “If someone approaches me I would not pay. I applied to travel through the UN.”

## G. Residency Permits

### Problems with the Residency Permits

#### General Feelings

The majority of respondents were illegal at the time of carrying out the focus groups, and this a major source of concern which impacted everything else in their lives. For many of the male respondents, this was the single most important concern, which kept them from working, commuting and claiming their rights and wages from employers. The biggest difficulty, in addition to settling annual renewal fees, was that they also had to secure a sponsor as per the new regulations introduced by the government. That was the most challenging aspect of renewing residencies for most of the Syrian respondents.

One statement by a male respondent from Minieh summarized the situation: “I have no identification card. I only have a temporary document given to me by the UN, and no sponsor. I worry every time I see a checkpoint, I fear being arrested.” A male from Ras el Nabeh said, “The sponsor and the money are both problems. We need to secure a sponsor first, and then we have to cover the renewal fees, and possibly even sponsorship fees.” A female from Jnah complained that most of the Syrians had not been able to renew their papers for two years.

“The documents are a main problem. Our families are scared,” said one respondent from Qasr. A male respondent from Zein said “Our families cannot move. They are all illegal.” One of the female respondents from Aydamoun said that her husband could not go anywhere because he had no official documentation: “He is stuck within the village.”

#### The Sponsor

The most troubling aspect when it came to renewing residency permits was the recent compulsory requirement for a Lebanese sponsor, without whom no Syrian could renew his or her residency. According to many respondents, the Lebanese had become reluctant to sponsor Syrian refugees, or were taking advantage of the situation by turning it into a money making business. As such, some of the potential sponsors were charging Syrians at least US\$ 400 and up to US\$ 700 per person, as reported by many male and female respondents.

“They are taking advantage, charging us at least US\$ 500 per person. If they own a company, they can sponsor as many Syrians as they want under the company’s name and generate additional profits. They basically take advantage of our situation,” said one male respondent from Ras el Nabeh.

In addition, it was difficult for them to even find sponsors: “No one wants to sponsor us, and we have to pay the sponsor if we find one,” stated one respondent from Qasr. “If a Syrian refugee gets into trouble, the sponsor is held responsible,” said another male respondent from Ghaziyeh, implying that this was discouraging potential sponsors from helping them.

Another respondent said that this was only made worse by the fact that sponsors had to be dragged along for two or three days in a row sometimes, in order to complete the procedure at the appropriate offices. That too made them reluctant to sponsor Syrians: “I had a Lebanese sponsor, he had to come with me for two days and help with the papers. It is time consuming and that’s why the sponsors are discouraged from helping us,” said a male respondent from Qasr.

In addition to having to find a sponsor, recent changes state that the sponsor needs to own a company or have an asset registered to their names, which makes this even more troublesome for Syrians, according to many respondents.

Respondents also complained that even when they did want to renew their residencies, they sometimes faced problems with the authorities, as described by one female respondent from Zein: “We found a sponsor and completed the documents which we presented to the General Security. They said they needed a signature, and we got that signature but they rejected our application, and we now have to find another sponsor.”

### Associated Costs

According to all of the respondents, the cost per person is US\$ 200 for the renewal of the residency permits, in addition to the supplementary fees for supporting documentation. One respondent from Minieh said, “None of us can afford to pay US\$ 200 to renew our papers, and we are unable to find a sponsor. In addition, the sponsor is charging us, and he/she now needs to own a company or any asset that is registered to his/her name. Altogether, the renewal can cost up to US\$ 1,000 per person.”

Some of the Syrians had decent sponsors who did not charge them. Despite that, many were unable to settle the residency renewal fees: “We have a sponsor, a very nice person who does not charge us for sponsorship. We still need to pay US\$ 200 for each one of us every year, and do not have sufficient funds, which is why we did not renew our residencies.”

Another respondent from Ras el Nabeh said that she could not possibly cover the renewal fees and the sponsorship fees which were even higher: “Even if we had a sponsor, we have no money to pay him or her. The sponsor is charging us up to US\$ 700. It has become a business.”

For large families, the total cost was beyond their imagination, and something they could only dream of being able to cover. One male respondent from Majdel Anjar said he has seven children which meant that the cost of renewal by itself would come up to US\$ 1,200 for the whole family, excluding any sponsorship fees, and supporting documentation. Across all of the 32 groups, many of the respondents had large families with more than five children, and were unable to renew their family’s papers. “We have to pay US\$ 200 per person and we are ten people in the household,” said one respondent from Zein.

### Paperwork

The procedure for renewing residencies was lengthy and complex according to many respondents. They had to have their Syrian identification cards, and pay for additional legal paperwork that they needed to acquire from the *mokhtar*. All of this required them to travel within the country which was a further source

of concern. One male respondent from Qasr said that they feared being arrested, ironically, on their way to renewing the residencies.

Many others were discouraged from even venturing into the process: “We need to have legal documentation which is costly and complicated,” stated one male respondent from Hermel.

One female from Majdel Anjar who had renewed her residency also complained about the burdensome procedure: “Both my husband and I have renewed our residencies and the associated fee was US\$ 200 per person. In addition, getting there and collecting all of the required documentation was complicated. Thankfully, the UN financed my renewal and my husband is a trader and has a commercial registry which helped him renew his, but it is not generally easy.”

### Going to Syria

To add even more complexity to the process, refugees often needed their Syrian Identity Cards, and many of them did not have one, either because they had left it in Syria, or because they had never applied for one. They also needed to go back to Syria when changing sponsors or before they were given final approval by Lebanese authorities.

The majority of respondents did not want to go back for fear of not being allowed into Lebanon again, or of being drafted into the army. One male respondent from Hermel said that he had to pay LL 1 million for the sponsor and had to go for twelve days to Syria: “The problem is that they might draft you into the army there.” Another male respondent from Ashrafieh echoed the same concern and revealed a compulsory rule to return to Syria when changing sponsors: “Syrians have to go to Syria in order to change sponsors, and re-enter Lebanon upon receiving an approval. Often, we might not be allowed to come back. Changing sponsors is therefore an issue because we risk being stuck in Syria.”

One female respondent from Cité Sportive highlighted the same issue: “The problem is that when the sponsorship expires we need to get a new sponsor, or go back to Syria until we find a new one.”

One male respondent from Cité Sportive said that he had finally found a sponsor but that he needed to go back to Syria while awaiting the approval: “I asked for a lawyer to help me but he wanted to charge me US\$ 1000, then offered me a discount price of US\$ 800. He said I could stay here and that he would arrange everything for US\$ 800.” Another female from Cité Sportive had the same concern: “My husband has to go to Syria so that the sponsor sends him an official request, but if he goes they might draft him into the army. He is everything I have left, and we cannot risk him going to Syria and not coming back.”

### Banned from Working

A few respondents also referred to a new regulation which they believed was recently introduced and which stated that Syrians have no right to work. The renewal process required them to get an official signed document stating that they would abstain from working in Lebanon. “There is a new document (*aadam el aamal*) which states that we are not allowed to work, which costs LL 50,000. It asserts that we have no right to work, when in reality, we are all working. How else would we get by?” stated a male respondent from Ras el Nabeh.



One female respondent from Halba who had renewed her residency also referred to this new regulation which forced Syrians to abstain from working: “I renewed my residency, I had no choice, because my son goes to school. According to the new regulation, we needed an official document stating that my son has no right to work. The paper costs LL 35,000. I told them he had just finished school and was not going to work anyway, but they still wanted me to get that paper for him. Overall, the renewal cost me US\$ 1,200.”

Another male from Harouf also mentioned the new prohibition on Syrians working: “There is a document that states we are not allowed to work.”

### Implication of the Lack of Residency Permit

As discussed in the previous section, the majority of respondents were illegal in Lebanon and this was making everything else very difficult for them. Their problems revolved around the difficulty of finding a sponsor, and the absence of funds to cover all of the related costs. The absence of legal residencies impacted Syrians in many different ways: they could not commute or travel distances, they had difficulties finding work, could not send the children to schools, and could not register newborns or marriages.

### Mobility

Most of the respondents worried about travelling distances, and knew they could not go anywhere without legal documentation, which meant that they were confined and unable to leave their regions. “Our husbands cannot leave the neighborhood to seek work because they have no residencies,” stated a female respondent from Ras el Nabeh. Males from Majdel Anjar had the same concern: “We are confined. We cannot go anywhere,” and so did the males from Harouf, “I went to Tyre some time ago and was arrested for half an hour at the checkpoint. I told them I was on my way to renew the residency.” “We cannot go anywhere. We cannot pass through checkpoints. We have to choose the way carefully in order to avoid checkpoints,” said female respondents from Ashrafieh. “What if we need to see a doctor or go somewhere?” said another female respondent from Harouf.

The absence of legal documentation also made it impossible to go back to Syria: “I have not seen my family in years because I have no legal documentation to travel,” said one male respondent from Ghaziye.

### Raids and Arrests

Respondents were also worried about the raids and arrests that were taking place. “The police came a few weeks ago and they took 11 young men,” stated one female respondent from Cité Sportive. Another said, “They do not cause much trouble to women, but they can come after the men. We never know what will happen tomorrow and what will happen to our husbands.”

Many respondents complained about these random raids, especially in Qasr and Hermel, where camps were being raided on a regular basis.

## Work and Income

The absence of paperwork also affected the respondents' capacity to find work: "We are not legal. Our work is not legal," said one male respondent from Harouf. But they also worried because there were very few opportunities within their areas, and they could not seek work elsewhere: "There is little work and too many people in this area"; "We cannot seek work anywhere else but here." One respondent from Harouf also said, "If I had a job in Nabatieh, I would not be able to get there and would most probably be arrested at a checkpoint."

A male respondent from Ashrafieh said that sometimes employers refused to offer jobs to Syrian refugees who did not have legal residencies: "They prefer to recruit Lebanese citizens rather than unregistered Syrians."

## Abuse

Instances of abuse were also reported, in which employers and sponsors did not feel compelled to pay the Syrians' salaries since they were now illegal: "They force us to work longer hours and pay us lower wages. We cannot quit our jobs because they can withdraw their sponsorship. It is like they own us." Moreover, many respondents said that the sponsor could impose work which was not within the Syrians' scope of work or responsibilities. "We do not want sponsors who can impose duties on us," said one respondent from Odeisseh.

Other types of abuse were described such as assaults and attacks at checkpoints. "I saw four to five people arrested at a checkpoint because they had no residencies. They were being beaten by the soldiers. We are being assaulted for any reason," said a male respondent from Ghaziyeh.

## Registration at Schools

The refugees were also concerned about the impact that the absence of residencies were having on the children's education. "My daughter is not at school because of the absence of legal residencies. We have been illegal for 2 years. They do not even want to give her a statement of completion," said one female respondent from Ras el Nabeh. Another female respondent said, "We cannot register at schools. We cannot travel in the country."

## Registering Newborns

This is discussed in more details in the following sections, as respondents were concerned about not being able to register newborns because they had no official papers. One female from Minieh even said she did not want to have children because of that.

## Free Renewal Period

Respondents were all enthusiastic about a possible free renewal period and knew of previous instances when the registration fees had been waived for Syrian refugees. Nonetheless, many respondents felt that

this would not solve the issue in the long term, as they would still struggle to find a sponsor and collect other legal documentation required for the residency. Some also believed that this was a short term solution rather than a long term one because the same problem would recur in the coming years. They wished for a sustainable solution and some mentioned a permanent change in the system.

At first, respondents were very motivated by the prospect of being able to renew their papers for free. “We would all go, we want to be legal, and we would be thrilled,” said one female respondent from Cité Sportive. “I would definitely renew my papers and I would go to the beach,” said one male respondent from Odeisseh, and another from the same group said that he would go because he had already benefited from such a free renewal period before.

Many others referred to the previous grace period. “They did this two years ago, and we benefited from it then. We would all go again this time,” stated one respondent from Zrariyeh. Another from Ras el Nabeh shared a similar opinion: “They gave us a grace period three years ago. All of the Syrians went and completed their renewal. They gave us a 15-day timeframe back then.”

One male respondent from Halba said that despite the grace period, he still had to pay about LL 50,000 to complete the renewal a few years back, implying that there were other complications which many Syrians could still face aside from settling the renewal fee. Another respondent also worried about other legal documentation. “Waiving the renewal fees is just a small incentive, we still have many documents to complete and sponsors to secure,” said one male respondent from Ashrafieh.

Securing a sponsor was a major concern that would still have to be dealt with despite waiving the fees. Many of the respondents insisted that any renewal that would still require them to have a sponsor would be of no help at all. “It should also exclude the need for a sponsor,” said one respondent from Halba. Another respondent from Ghaziyeh echoed the same idea: “The problem is that we have no money of course, but they should also remove the requirement for a sponsor which is an additional source of concern.” Many other respondents across groups shared this concerns “It would not solve the problem of the sponsor” said one respondent from Odeisseh. “The problem is still the sponsor. They might force me to work as a domestic helper and I cannot do that,” said one female from Dalhamiyeh.

Females from Odeisseh, Ashrafieh and Minieh, as well as male respondents from Ashrafieh and Dalhamiyeh, all had the same concern, commenting that the authorities needed to withdraw the need for a sponsor. Most respondents stated that it was harder to secure a sponsor than to find the money for residency renewals. “We are willing to pay, we can find the money. But we cannot and do not want to secure a sponsor.” One of the female respondents from Ashrafieh suggested that the UN sponsor all Syrian refugees, because the organization was responsible for them.

Some of the respondents worried about the continuity and long term impact of such an effort. “It may work for one year, but what about the following years? Many of us will be once more unable to pay, despite this one time exemption.”; “The exemption is only a momentary solution. It’s not long term,” said a couple of male respondents from Odeisseh. Females from Qasr also worried about future developments saying, “Instead of a one-off solution, they should think of a longer term, permanent plan,” but another respondent in the same group argued that for now, they had no choice but to go with the one-off solution.

One of the female respondents from Hermel referred to Arsal, where she said that refugees had been given free residencies: “they paid LL 15,000 for the stamps, we should all have such facilities. US\$ 200 is too much. In Arsal, the process is easier in addition to always being free. People there only deal with the *mokhtar*, not with the general security.” This statement was not confirmed by any other respondent.

Very few did not want to benefit from the grace period, and despite the hurdles, most welcomed the idea. The reasons for not wanting to benefit from the free renewal period was mainly that respondents were unable to find sponsors or complete other legal documentation. One of the respondents from Odeisseh said that she would not go because she worried it might be a trap to arrest all the Syrians.

### Comparison to Previous Years

Respondents across all of the groups complained about the complicated renewal procedures which had become worse in the past year because of the compulsory need for a sponsor. Renewing their residencies had become almost impossible for most of the Syrian refugees.

“Two years ago it was easy. We would go to the border and renew our residencies there. Now the border is closed,” stated one female from Majdel Anjar.

Some of the respondents acknowledged that there were too many Syrians in Lebanon and that this was the cause for the changes. “Too many refugees are coming to Lebanon, and that is why new regulations have been introduced,” said one male respondent from Harouf. Another female respondent from Ras el Nabeh said that the sponsors had begun charging Syrians a few months ago “US\$ 500 or more.” She also said that they had to settle the fees of other legal documentation too, and that all of this meant that the majority of Syrians were illegal. “I have been illegal for a year and a half. There are more checkpoints on the roads, and we cannot travel distances anymore, like we used to before.”

### Recommendations

The main recommendation suggested by most of the respondents was to cancel the requirement for a sponsor, waive the fees, or at least reduce the renewal fees, in addition to facilitating the procedure and centralizing all of the legal documentation in one single office. Most of the respondents wanted to avoid commuting for several days, and wished that things could go back to “the way it was done before,” which was simple and easy.

One respondent from Harouf said that it was essential to cancel the need for a sponsor, echoing all of the respondents’ feelings about the sponsorship request. “We can pay for the renewal fees, but the sponsor is an additional cost and burden.” Others from Hermel said that the UN should be the sponsor, and should take care of the residencies on their behalf saying, “the UN should give us the residency.” They also believed that the UN papers should be legally recognized and that they should be able to move around in the country with these papers saying, “we should be able to commute using the UN papers.”

A few others suggested better support from the UN, such as one male from Hermel who suggested creating a UN “circulation card” which would allow Syrians to at least commute to other areas. Another

male from Ashrafiyah said that there should be a lawyer at the UN “to protect us whenever we are arrested, if we are only illegal but have not committed any other crime.” One female respondent from Ashrafiyah said that the UN should help Syrian refugees deal with residencies: “They should help us renew the residencies, without having to pay, and the organization should be our sponsor.”

Some of the respondents suggested lowering the fees. “If we absolutely have to pay, then we should pay a symbolic fee and not LL 300,000,” said a male respondent from Qasr. Another male respondent from Ashrafiyah said that he was prepared to pay US\$ 200, but not the additional fees for sponsors: “We can pay by post, we can renew the residency for US\$ 200, but I refuse to pay US\$ 700 for a sponsor.” Others did not want to go to General Security or have to commute from one office to another to complete their documents. “We are ready to pay but not to find a sponsor, nor to commute endlessly in order to complete the documents,” said one female respondent from Majdel Anjar.

“There is no solution aside from waiving the fees for all Syrians and facilitating the procedures. Alternatively, they may open the Syrian frontiers for us to renew our documents there, like we used to do before. But regardless, they are requesting all men under the age of 50 to join the army, which means our children and husbands are demanded for duty, and are afraid to go back to Syria,” said a female respondent from Dalhamiyeh.

Another respondent from Dalhamiyeh suggested that it would be best to have a regional office deal with all renewal procedures, at more affordable prices: “They should open an office nearby, where we can go and complete all of the requested documentation at reduced prices.”

## H. Other Civil Documentation

### Newborns

There was a lot of confusion, misinformation, and neglect among refugees when it came to registering their newborns. Many have had children while in Lebanon and yet some had no idea about the official registration process. The majority were aware that it was important to register, although they were often unable to do so because they were illegal themselves, or because it was costly and entailed complicated procedures. A few had gone through the official process, but the majority only had birth certificates and said that they would eventually register their children in Syria.

### Nature and Understanding of Newborn Registration

According to the majority of respondents, children were rarely officially registered. “Many of the Syrians are not registering their newborns,” said one respondent from Jnah. Another from Dalhamiyeh stated that none of them registered the newborns although they knew that they should, a feeling echoed across all groups. “I did nothing. I just brought my child home,” said one female from Zrariyeh.

However, there was a minority who did register their newborns. One of the female respondents from Ras el Nabeh said that she had registered her newborn with the local authorities and in the Syrian Embassy because she felt it was very important for Syrians to register their children. Another respondent from Zein said that he had registered his newborn at the border: “I registered with the Lebanese authorities. I then collected all of the documents from the *mokhtar* and registered her at the Syrian Embassy.”

A large number of other respondents had done what seemed to be a ‘partial’ registration. For example, one male respondent from Halba said that he only had a birth certificate which he then registered with the UN, like many others did, without informing local authorities. “I registered my newborn through the *mokhtar*” said one respondent from Jnah, and another one had registered at the Syrian Embassy. Many did not feel it was important to be officially registered with the Lebanese authorities. “We just take the birth certificate to the Syrian Embassy,” said one respondent from Odeisseh, and that was the case for a large number of other respondents.

Many had registered newborns in Syria when they could still cross the border and return freely. “Mine was born here but I registered him in Syria using a family proof of identity (*Ikhraj Qaid*). All documents were done here and I was able to register him in Syria,” said a male respondent from Cité Sportive.

Another respondent from Ghaziyeh indicated that he had done the same thing: “I had a child here. We prepared the requested documents and went to register the baby in Syria three years ago. We cannot do this anymore. If we go to Syria, we might not be able to come back.” One male respondent from Jnah also registered his child in Syria and said, “I went to register my daughter in Syria three years ago, when I had legal documents.”

## Costs and Procedure

Those who wanted to register their children worried about the associated costs and the complicated procedure, which could take days to be completed. “I did not register my baby because there were many expenses that we needed to cover and my husband’s identification card is in Syria,” said one female from Odeisseh. A male respondent from Jnah said that it was too expensive and complicated to complete the registration.

A female respondent from Hermel said that although she knew that it was essential to register newborns, she also thought that the procedure was too complicated and argued that notifying the UN was sufficient: “I know someone who went to inquire about registrations. He was told that it was fine for us to just notify the UN about newborns if we are unable to go through the full procedure.”

Cost-related issues were prevalent. “Our financial situation is dire, we cannot afford to spend money on everything,” stated a female from Halba. A respondent from Hermel said that it could end up costing as much as US\$ 1,500 to register one child: “We have to travel to Syria and back in order to issue all of the documentation, and cover both the transportation and the documentation’s cost. On the other hand, we can use the birth certificate and go to the UN, where the registration is completed at no cost.”

Many explained the complex procedures which required Syrian refugees to refer to several different parties in order to complete the registration. “We have to go to the *mokhtar*, the clinic, the doctor, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Saraya, and so on”, said one male respondent from Ashrafieh “the process is long. It is costly and will take up to 10 days”. “I have three newborns in Lebanon. I did not register them. I cannot afford it in addition to which it is time consuming and requires us to travel to several different places from where we need to gather documents for the registration” said one male respondent from Minieh.

One of the female respondents from Jnah had attempted to register her daughter and found it too complex: “my husband went twice and had to wait for several hours. When they let him through, he was requested to prepare several documents. They wanted to see the child too. He thought it would end up costing us too much money, and refused to go back.”

One respondent from Cité Sportive also insisted that the costs had increased in recent years: “the *mokhtar* is taking advantage. He used to charge us US\$ 15 and is now charging at least US\$ 50. The General Security charges us US\$ 200 and the sponsor US\$ 300. Altogether it is too much money.”

## Lack of awareness

Another main issue was the widespread lack of information and awareness among all refugees about the official registration process and its related costs and procedures. Many seemed unaware of the implications of not registering their children.

For example, male respondents from Aydamoun did not know that they needed to register newborns with the Lebanese authorities, saying they were never informed and never asked for such information: “There are probably some 40,000 unregistered Syrian children in Lebanon.” A respondent from Halba said that

she only had a paper from the notary and sent it to the UN, then went to the embassy because she was not aware of the full procedure: “I did not know that we needed to register the children with the Lebanese authorities.” Females from Harouf were also unaware of the need to register children with Lebanese authorities.

There was further confusion regarding the children’s legal documentation and procedures. “The legal status of our children is not clear. We have insufficient information about how to register them for an identification card or official ID. The Syrian Embassy said it could not help us, although it is able to help Syrians with passports. We have to go to Syria for the ID, and if we do, there are chances we may never be able to come back,” said one respondent from Majdel Anjar. Female respondents from Ashrafieh had similar concerns: “We do not know how to register our children and that is the problem. The authorities need a family statement. Without it, we cannot proceed with the registration. We would need to go to Syria for the family statements, and are unable to do so.” All of the respondents from Ashrafieh thought that the Syrian Embassy should be in charge of all of these legal aspects and deal with them from Lebanon.

One male respondent from Cité Sportive believed that he had finished the procedure, only to find out that it was incomplete, implying a serious misunderstanding among many of the Syrian respondents: “The children should be registered when we go back to Syria, and I was adamant to have mine legally listed. I took the birth certificate and went to the *mokhtar*, believing that this would be enough, but it was not. I was asked to go to the Syrian Embassy but did not go.”

Females from Qasr complained about the lack of information: “We need to understand these issues-- our children’s future is at stake.”

A few respondents were aware of supporting organizations that could help them in the process. “There is a lawyer at the UN, specializing in the registration of newborns,” said a respondent from Halba. A respondent from Majdel Anjar said that ‘the Danish’ had a law office that was also helping the Syrians with registration issues.

### Legal Status of Refugees

Difficulties related to the registration of newborns were also related to the lack of residencies, as many respondents said that they would be unable to register their newborns as they had no legal documentation themselves. “I also gave birth to a child in Lebanon, but they would not let me register her until I renewed my family’s residency permits. They wanted me to have all the documents in order before we could move on. They mentioned a few other places that I needed to go to in order to complete the registration, but I decided not to go through with the process,” said a male respondent from Cité Sportive.

Male respondents from Harouf and Ghaziyeh, as well as females from Halba, Cité Sportive and Zrariyeh, also mentioned the issue of residencies: “Without legal residencies, it is impossible to register newborns.”; “I could not register him because my husband has no residency.”; “We cannot register them if we do not have our own papers.”; “We are illegal. We cannot register our children. If we had documents, we would have definitely registered her.”



Many others did not have the required paperwork and documents needed to complete registrations, such as identification cards and family statements. “My family statement is in Syria. If I had it, I would have registered my child. The children were born during the war, I could not register them in Syria, nor in Lebanon,” said one female respondent in Halba. A male respondent in Zein had a similar issue: “I do not have a family statement, and have not seen my family for four years.”

## Penalties

For those who had not registered their newborns, penalties started accumulating after six months. That was an issue for many respondents who had children above age two or three, but had failed to register them in the early days. “They asked me to pay US\$ 400 to the General Security. This would cover two years of legal registration,” said a male respondent from Cité Sportive.

“If you do not register and have delays, it gets worse because they charge penalty fees,” said a respondent from Jnah, and another one from Harouf said that he owed penalties for the three past years.

## Marriages

There were similar issues with marriages and deaths, whereby the marriages were often merely completed with a sheikh’s consent and approval, while deaths were rarely registered. Refugees were more concerned about where to bury the dead than how to register them.

## Nature and Understanding of Marriage Registration

Most of the respondents mentioned the sheikhs and registering at the Sharia court. “Our marriages are considered civil. The sheikh calls it a marriage contract which needs to be submitted to the government for official approval and registration. Most of the Syrians just keep the contract and do nothing else,” stated one male respondent from Zein. Another respondent agreed saying, “we only get a document from the sheikh, but we do not register the weddings with the Lebanese authorities or anywhere else. The document proves that the wedding is official.” “Some people just register with the sheikh. They pay LL 100,000 and it stays this way,” said one male respondent from Odeisseh.

A respondent from Zrariyeh said that any marriage could only become official by the sheikh. A male respondent from Odeisseh thought that there was no actual proof of marriage, because the said contract issued by the sheikh expired within six months and needed to be renewed: “It needs to be registered in Syria otherwise it will never be legal. We have to get to Syria within six months of getting married to make it official there.”

Many respondents, from Majdel Anjar, Zrariyeh, Aydamoun and Minieh said that the marriages had to be registered in the official court, or Sharia court. But some, like the men from Minieh, were concerned about the cost of going to court: “You can register the marriage in court but have to pay US\$ 600.” ; “We only go to the notary, otherwise we need to go to court which we cannot afford.”

## Legal Status of Refugees

Many respondents commented that their lack of residency permits was hindering the possibility to officially register marriages, the same way it made births difficult to register. “My sister has an opportunity to get married, but she does not dare because of the legal documents,” said one respondent from Ras el Nabeh. “Everything is related to the residency”.

Other respondents from Zrariyeh, Cité Sportive and Aydamoun also mentioned the absence of residencies saying, “we are illegal anyway.” “We need to have been registered for a full year before registering our marriages, and need to have an *Ikhrāj Qaid* (proof of identity) from Syria,” said one male respondent from Cité Sportive. Females from Aydamoun also argued that the legal documentation was essential to complete any civil documentation, including marriages and births.

## Lack of Awareness

The majority of respondents also lacked the necessary information needed to register marriages. “We are not aware of what needs to be done in order to complete the marriage registrations, or any other registration,” stated one male respondent from Aydamoun. A female from Ghaziyeh said that her daughter was getting married, but that she had no idea what to do.

Some of the respondents knew where to seek help and information for marriages. “The embassy has a registry for marriage,” said one male from Odeisseh, but not all of the respondents could confirm that, except for one respondent in the same group who said that the embassy had answers to everything that they needed to know. However, there was often reluctance to refer to the embassy, which scared many Syrians who believed that they could be sent back to Syria or drafted into the army if they visited it for clarification.

One male from Halba said that there was a local office in Halba that specialized in marriages, births and deaths. “They give you a document which is official. Syrians can go there for any kind of registration, and the office handles it all from scratch.”

## Deaths

There was also a lot of confusion about what to do with the dead. Many knew it was important to register them, but merely resorted to burying them wherever they could. It had become difficult to send them back to Syria because the unregistered refugees could not go there, which meant a lot of Syrians were now burying their dead in Lebanon.

## Registration of the Dead and Burials

Some of the respondents knew more about the procedure than others, such as male respondents from Ashrafieh: “Deaths are registered at the clinic.”; “At the Lebanese authorities too. My relative who passed

away had to be registered in many places. We had to issue about 50 different documents.” One female respondent from Ashrafieh said that the church had helped her.

A male respondent from Harouf also said he was aware of the procedure: “You need a death certificate, and have to complete the registration at General Security and the Syrian Embassy”.

That said, a majority of respondents said that they buried the deceased without completing the official registration procedure, such as one male respondent from Odeisseh. A respondent from Aydamoun said that despite knowing that they had to register deaths with the Lebanese authorities (Noufous) and through the UN, the majority of Syrians did not do so. “But the Municipality knows if someone dies,” according to the same respondent.

Because they could not legally cross over to Syria anymore, some respondents said that they were prepared to enter Syria illegally in order to bury their relatives. “I had to go to Syria illegally in order to have my husband buried there,” said one female respondent from Jnah. That said, those who could not do that were now resorting to burying the dead in Lebanon. “There is a cemetery for the Syrians,” said a female respondent from Majdel Anjar. “There is a place called Ghouraba where you can pay and bury people,” said a male respondent from Minieh.

### Cost and Procedures

Burying the dead and dealing with the procedures was also something few Syrians could afford financially. The procedure required them to complete many documents and return to Syria. This is why a few resorted to burying them in Lebanon and bypassing all the procedures. Others believed that even burying them in Lebanon was too expensive.

“There are many expenses related to the registration of deaths. We need to get documents from the physician and cover all hospital fees. The procedure in Syria is complex and requires us to go to the Ministry of Interior and the Syrian Embassy in order to complete all of official documentation. In contrast, we can just pay and have them buried in Lebanon, bypassing all procedures,” said one respondent from Ghaziyeh. “If someone dies, we just need to find somewhere to bury them, and pay the required fees,” said a male respondent from Majdel Anjar.

That said, burying the deceased in Lebanon had become a costly business. “We have to pay a lot of money,” said one female respondent from Dalhamiyeh. “Dealing with the dead is difficult. We need to obtain documents from the embassy and take them to Syria. In Lebanon, there are no spaces to bury the Syrians, and if there are, they are very expensive,” stated one male respondent from Harouf.

A female from Zrariyeh argued that it was also expensive to send them back to Syria: “Syrians are paying at the border to send the corpses back to Syria, but sometimes, they stay there for three to four days without a solution, which is why many Syrians are opting to bury people in Lebanon.”

For many, it was impossible to bury someone in Lebanon because of the high cost. “If we do find a space, it costs up to US\$ 10,000. One of our friends even tried to use the influence of someone, but he was unable to find a solution,” said one male respondent from Jnah. Another respondent from Jnah argued

that he knew people who had buried their relative in Bir Hassan, using influence (*wasta*): “It cost him LL 1.5 million.”

## Recommendations

### Help from the UN and Authorities

The respondents had many recommendations to help deal with the registration process in an easier manner. Many thought that the UN should be in charge of the registration process for marriages, births and deaths, rather than leaving the Syrians to deal with it.

“They should at least facilitate the process. The UN cannot register everything on our behalf, but for example, it could help those of us who are illegal and still need to register a newborn,” stated one male from Harouf. A male from Ras el Nabeh suggested that there be more support in dealing with the government: “The UN should help us deal with Lebanese government. When we first registered with the UN, we were given a phone number which us helped a lot at the time. They should do the same for the registry of children.” He went on to say that they should also help their wives: “Usually registering newborns, marriages and deaths cannot occur if the men have a legal residency but their wives do not. This should be eliminated, and the registration should be based on whether the husband has legal documentation.”

“The UN should take care of all registration procedures and deal with the lawyers,” said one female from Harouf.

Others hoped for a temporary solution which would allow Syrians to complete their registrations upon going back to Syria, such as one male from Hermel: “There should be a UN paper that says the child was born outside of his country, and once we go back, we can complete the registration there.”

### Access to Information

Many argued that better communication by the UN could help, in light of the lack of information, confusion and misunderstanding about registration procedures. “Provide us with information,” said a female from Harouf and females from Zrariyeh agreed: “They should give us information the same way you are doing now. Registration is a legal procedure, but we need to know how to complete it.” “They have to let us know what we need and from where to get it,” stated one of the female respondents from Ras el Nabeh.

A few suggested that the ideal tool to inform about registration procedures is SMS messages, as one male respondent from Jnah suggested saying, “They should send us an SMS message to explain what services we may be able to access and how we can deal with registrations.” A male respondent from Majdel Anjar said that the clinics should have brochures or flyers with details about what to do. “They should have awareness campaigns in the camp.”

### Local and Dedicated Offices

Many of the respondents said that there should be local offices or dedicated offices that would deal with registrations. “There should be one dedicated institution dealing with all of the legal documentation for different types of civil documentation including residency permits, and the registration of newborns, marriages and deaths,” stated one female from Zrariyeh. A female from Jnah agreed that the Lebanese government “should help by providing an office for Syrians to register in,” and males from Minieh, Ashrafiyeh and Dalhamiyeh agreed too, as well as those from Qasr saying, “They should have an office, where we could address our queries and seek help.”; “There should be a place where we can go to for all these formalities.”

Males from Hermel also agreed that there should be an office in Hermel dealing with all civil documentation queries.

### **Simplified Procedures and Lower Fees**

A large number of respondents wished for simplified procedures and lower costs, such as one male respondent from Zrariyeh who said, “The birth certificate should be enough to register children. There is no need to wait for parents to have their residencies renewed.” A female from Zrariyeh also complained about transportation and communication costs, saying they should be covered by the UN or waived aside when carrying out such procedures.

One female respondent from Jnah also said that the government should extend the period allocated for registering newborns to more than six months before introducing penalties: “They should reduce all of the requirements and legal documentation required too.”

A few believed that cash assistance would help them deal with all of these issues. For example one male from Majdel Anjar said, “The best initiative is for the UN to give us cash assistance. We do not need medical care, nor Taghziyeh, nothing but cash to deal with all of these issues.” Money was indeed the biggest issue for most of the respondents, as described by one female from Hermel who said that she wanted to renew the residency permit and complete all civil documentation without having to pay a fee. This was echoed by one more respondent from Cité Sportive who said that the grace period for residency renewals should be expanded to include all other civil documentation.

## I. Communication

### Information Needed

Most of the information needed had to do with the type of assistance and services that were available to the Syrians, as well as their legal status, registration procedures, and their rights in Lebanon. A few needed to know more about travel assistance and how to apply for emigration.

One male respondent from Jnah encapsulated a few of these ideas in a single statement: “We need to know why we have no medical care, why we have no education, why we are unable to renew our residency permits. Why do we not have lawyers?”

### UN Assistance and Services

The majority of respondents worried about the UN assistance, and more specifically about the Taghziyeh card which had been fluctuating in value and withdrawn for many. They wanted to know why they had been removed from the program, which criteria were used to select beneficiaries, why other households were receiving more regular assistance, and if they would at some point receive any further assistance.

Males from Zrariyeh asked about the Taghziyeh card, and so did the males and females from Qasr, Dalhamiyeh and Ashafieh: “Why are we not eligible for the Taghziyeh assistance when many others are receiving it?” Males from Haarouf and females in Jnah wanted to know why they had been withdrawn from the Taghziyeh program and whether it would resume.

A few others worried about the fluctuations and not knowing whether their cards had been credited or not, such as one female respondent from Aydamoun: “We do not know if the card is working or not. Sometimes we go to the supermarket only to find out it is empty. We would like to know whether it is valid or not.” That said, most of the respondents obtained this information via text message every month, whereby they would be told if the card had been credited or not.

One female from Qasr wanted to know who was receiving all of the assistance and why, echoing much of the frustration described during discussions by respondents who complained about the unfair distribution of assistance programs.

Others wanted to know about other types of assistance by other humanitarian organizations, such as the male respondents from Odeisseh who said, “Are we going to receive cartons?” and “What type of aid is coming?”

### Rights and Civil Status

Following the discussion about civil documentation and the registration of newborns, marriages and deaths, many respondents were worried about the lack of information and misunderstanding of many legal implications, which is why they wanted to know more about these.

“We want to know more about how to register marriages,” said a female respondent from Majdel Anjar, and a female respondent from Ashrafieh had the same concern. A male respondent from Dalhamiyeh also asked about registration procedures which were still very unclear to many. Many others asked for help with the registration, such as one female respondent from Cité Sportive who said: “I need to register my newborn. I was not aware that we needed to register him before you told us during this meeting. Now that I know, it is too late because my child is one year old and I will have to go to court.” Males from Aydamoun also wanted to know more about registrations.

A few respondents wanted to know about their rights as Syrian refugees in Lebanon: “We want to know about our civil rights, our religious rights, and all of it,” said the males from Jnah. A few others wanted to know about their future: “What is our future with the UN?” and males from Qasr wanted to know about residencies, and how to deal with checkpoints.

## Travel

Among those who wanted to travel, all of them wanted to know more about how they could apply for emigration or insist that they wanted to leave, if they would be eligible to go somewhere, and what they needed to do in order to achieve this. “We want information about travel, and more importantly, we want to know if they can pressure the foreign embassies to help us. I want them to call the Australian embassy and ask about my application,” said one respondent from Ashrafieh.

## Existing Communication Channels

### The UN and Lebanese Authorities

The majority of respondents relied on the UN for information. They preferred to call the UN or go to their offices to seek information. That said, many respondents complained that the organization was not being responsive. “We go to the UN, we have nowhere else to go,” said one male respondent from Jnah as all other respondents in his group agreed. One female from Halba complained that they never answered her queries, and another respondent from Majdel Anjar also complained that he had been kept waiting for hours to no avail.

Only one male from Ras el Nabeh said that he was satisfied with the feedback from the UN: “The UN is very helpful when we call them. I have called the allocated number and they gave me feedback and called me back three months later to make sure everything had been solved.”

A few respondents from Qasr had asked the Lebanese government or the Red Cross for information, while one male from Zein also said he would seek information from General Security.

## SMS

Text messages were mostly received by those who had the Taghziyeh card, to let them know whether their card was functional and how much money had been credited to their accounts. “We receive SMS messages to notify us of any changes with Taghziyeh, and let us know about our new balance,” said one

male respondent from Odeisseh. Males from Halba and Zein and females from Dalhamiyeh also agreed: “We receive SMS messages for Taghziyeh and Diesel fuel only.”

One respondent from Odeisseh said that he had received an SMS about other issues. They “warned us about travelling by boat and told us not to believe anyone, to remain vigilant, and to refuse to pay money for anyone to help us with travel arrangements.”

### Hotline

Many respondents also mentioned the hotline. “There is a hotline, but it is not always functional,” said one male from Minieh. Males from Oddeisseh as well as females from Zein said that they had been given a number too. One male from Harouf said that there were several numbers, among which one of them was an emergency number that answered queries 24 hours a day and was very supportive: “You can ask about medical care, or about the assistance, or about residencies. They answer and listen to us. But they do not always have solutions.”

### Word of Mouth

The Syrians were quite inclined to discuss issues with each other, seek each other’s advice, or refer to more knowledgeable refugees. “People talk about things,” said a male respondent from Cité Sportive. “We ask our neighbours, with whom we can discuss our problems,” said another male from Jnah. Males from Ras el Nabeh and females from Cité Sportive and many others agreed.

### Internet

Among all groups, only one male from Ghaziyeh mentioned the internet and “Google” as a source of information.

### Traditional Media

One of the male respondents from Odeisseh said that he watched television where he heard news about Syria and the world.

### Preferred Communication Channels

#### The UN and Lebanese Authorities

Many of the respondents felt that the most reliable source of information for Syrian refugees was the UN. Some still wanted to go to their offices, despite being turned down most of the time.

A few suggested improvements that could help the UN cope with all the queries. “They should divide the windows at the UN by type of issue, which would facilitate the process and make sure that we get an answer to our specific problem” said one male from Ashrafieh. They also worried about the staff’s attitude towards them. They wished to be greeted nicely and to have someone listen to them: “They should



welcome us when we go there, and have answers and solutions to our problems. They should therefore have someone there to listen and explain things clearly. I can go anywhere as long as I know they will listen and give me a solution.”

Another respondent from Qasr said that he would go to the Lebanese Serail.

### Representative Office

Many of the respondents wished for a regional UN representative office in close vicinity where they could go to in order to seek information without having to travel long distances. One of the males from Minieh said, “An office where we can go and inquire about our problems would be great, it is better to meet those who are in charge in person.” Males from Qasr, Zein and Aydamoun agreed. “We need an office for migrants. We need somewhere where they can register all of our civil documentation: marriages, births and deaths.”; “There should be an office to refer to nearby, to avoid travelling to other areas.”

One of the males from Aydamoun thought that this could very easily become the responsibility of the local Municipality.

### Gatherings and Visits

Many of the respondents said that they would enjoy discussions during meetings like the focus groups that took place. One female respondent from Halba said that they could come to see them “in their cars” implying once again that the UN was spending too much money on luxuries and staff.

Many from Zrariyeh, Ashrafieh, Qasr and several areas approved of this technique although one respondent from Aydamoun said that he would not go to gatherings anymore: “I was told by the UN that there would be such a gathering, but refused to go, because I know that we are going to repeat our problems once again without finding a solution for them.”

One female respondent from Zrariyeh said that she preferred meetings to take place at the Municipality, in groups. So did the males from Qasr. One male from Ashrafieh suggested “separate meetings for each problem separately. One meeting to discuss travel arrangements, another to discuss sponsors, and so on.” One female from Ashrafieh argued that meetings would be great if they provided direct results: “If we knew there would be nothing happening during this meeting, we would not have come. We talk about our problems every day. We need solutions.”

One male from Jnah suggested weekly meetings or roundtables that would take place every six months in addition to the awareness campaigns.

### Telephones and SMS

The vast majority of respondents chose telephone calls and SMSs as the best tool to reach out to them. “It is best to receive text messages, because we sometimes receive phone calls from people who are only pretending to be from the UN,” said one respondent from Ashrafieh.

Across all groups, SMS messages were mentioned, time and time again. “SMS is the best way”; “The SMS is a great tool because even if our phone is turned off or has no network coverage, we can receive it.”

Phone calls were also very popular: “They should provide us with a hotline and useful numbers”; “We need to have a number to complain to or inquire about different issues”; “They should allocate a free phone number for us to call”; “We do not have anywhere to complain or an office that we can refer to for any issues, or even a phone number that we can call to talk about our problems.”

One respondent from Odeisseh said that he preferred television.

## J. Conclusion

Syrian respondents across the 32 groups have expressed much frustration about their living conditions in Lebanon. They constantly worried about the high cost of living and expensive rents, as well as the absence of legal residency permits, work opportunities, cash and other forms of assistance. All households were impacted and the children, who had often already experienced trauma in Syria, were now dealing with harsh living conditions in Lebanon. Many of them had to work from a young age to help provide for the family and a large number were not attending schools, therefore missing out on important education years which will likely affect their future prospects.

Some believed that migrating to another destination would solve their problems, mentioning Europe and countries like Australia and Canada as their preferred choices. The vast majority, however, did not want to be far from their home country and were eagerly waiting to return to Syria. They only wished for better conditions in Lebanon in the meantime.

Only a few had any legal civil documentation or residency permits. Most lacked awareness of the actual procedures and therefore requested a more flexible process that would allow them to obtain the proper legal documentation. The fees for registration of births, marriages, deaths and for renewing residency permits were also deemed too expensive. Moreover, the fact that respondents were illegal acted as a double-edged sword and also prevented them from obtaining any civil documentation. Refugees also lacked awareness of other issues, such as how to apply for travel to a third destination and what were their rights as refugees registered with the UN. They wished that the organization was easier to reach, for example by having local offices in their areas. They also suggested different ways of reaching out to them.

Many of the Syrians were sceptical about the outcome of these focus groups, saying that they had attended similar meetings in the past to no avail. However, some were hopeful and wished that this time would be different, and that there would be concrete and positive changes.

## Appendices

### Methodology

#### Recruitment, sample size and selection

A list of 664 Syrian beneficiaries was sent to InfoPro with the aim of organizing thirty-two focus groups consisting of seven to eight participants each.

Prior to each focus group, InfoPro screened and evaluated the lists in order to confirm that participants have the appropriate profile. An average of twelve Syrian adults was invited to each session in order to ensure a minimum of eight attendees. Moreover, the locations were selected to be in proximity to the beneficiaries' place of residence.

Below are the profiles of the participants that attended the thirty-two focus groups:

Num	Gender	Caza	Village	Type of site	Site name	Region
1	Female	Batroun	Zein	Community Center	Zein Sports Club	Tripoli
2	Male	Batroun	Zein	Community Center	Zein Sports Club	Tripoli
3	Female	Marjaayoun	Odeisseh	Dispensary	Odeissy Dispensary	South
4	Male	Marjaayoun	Odeisseh	Dispensary	Odeissy Dispensary	South
5	Female	Akkar	Aydamoun	Hall	Aydamoun Mosque	North - Akkar
6	Male	Akkar	Aydamoun	Hall	Aydamoun Mosque	North - Akkar
7	Female	Beirut	Cité Sportive	Café	Light Café	Mount Lebanon
8	Male	Beirut	Cité Sportive	Café	Light Café	Mount Lebanon
9	Female	Baabda	Jnah	Café	Amir's Café	Mount Lebanon
10	Male	Baabda	Jnah	Café	Amir's Café	Mount Lebanon
11	Female	Zahle	Dalhamiyeh	Rented Room	Celine's Supermarket	Bekaa West
12	Male	Zahle	Dalhamiyeh	Rented Room	Celine's Supermarket	Bekaa West
13	Female	Beirut	Ras El Nabeh	Hall	Thou Al Nourayn Mosque	Mount Lebanon
14	Male	Beirut	Ras El Nabeh	Hall	Thou Al Nourayn Mosque	Mount Lebanon
15	Female	Zahle	Majdel Anjar	Municipality	Majdel Anjar Municipality	Bekaa West
16	Male	Zahle	Majdel Anjar	Municipality	Majdel Anjar Municipality	Bekaa West
17	Female	Minieh-Dennieh	Minieh	Municipality	Minieh Municipality	North - Tripoli
18	Male	Minieh-Dennieh	Minieh	Municipality	Minieh Municipality	North - Tripoli
19	Female	Saida	Zrariyeh	Municipality	Zrariyeh Municipality	South
20	Male	Saida	Zrariyeh	Municipality	Zrariyeh Municipality	South
21	Female	Saida	Ghaziyeh	Municipality	Ghaziyeh Municipality	South
22	Male	Saida	Ghaziyeh	Municipality	Ghaziyeh Municipality	South
23	Female	Nabatieh	Harouf	Municipality	Harouf Municipality	South
24	Male	Nabatieh	Harouf	Municipality	Harouf Municipality	South

25	Female	Beirut	Ashrafieh	Hall	Al Sayde Church	Mount Lebanon
26	Male	Beirut	Ashrafieh	Hall	Al Sayde Church	Mount Lebanon
27	Female	Hermel	Hermel	Municipality	Hermel Municipality	Bekaa East
28	Male	Hermel	Hermel	Municipality	Hermel Municipality	Bekaa East
29	Female	Hermel	Qasr	Municipality	Hermel Municipality	Bekaa East
30	Male	Hermel	Qasr	Municipality	Hermel Municipality	Bekaa East
31	Female	Akkar	Halba	Restaurant	Sarnay Restaurant	North - Akkar
32	Male	Akkar	Halba	Restaurant	Sarnay Restaurant	North - Akkar

### Focus group discussion guide

The focus group discussion guide was drafted and developed by the UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP in English and translated into Arabic by InfoPro. It is included in the Appendix. Each focus session lasted a maximum of two hours. Before the start of the focus group discussions, representatives from UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, as well as InfoPro teams, attended a training session at UNICEF premises to clarify the content of the discussion guide.

### Profile Sheets

Female – Zein – Batroun					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Hamida	N/A	N/A	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	Zein
2	Fatima	N/A	N/A	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	Zein
3	Wafaa	N/A	N/A	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	Zein
4	Yasmine	N/A	N/A	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	Zein
5	Diala	N/A	N/A	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	Zein
6	Dalal	N/A	N/A	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	Zein
7	Yusra	N/A	N/A	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	Zein
8	Soumayya	N/A	N/A	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	Zein

Male – Zein – Batroun					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Youssef	N/A	4	Daraa	N/A
2	Hammadi	N/A	10	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	N/A
3	Hasan	N/A	5	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	N/A
4	Mohamad	N/A	4	Halab	N/A
5	Mohamad	N/A	6	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	N/A
6	Samer	N/A	2	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	N/A
7	Mohamad	N/A	8	Idleb, Jisr Al Shughour	N/A
Female – Odeisseh - Marjaayoun					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Alia	39	6	N/A	Adaisse
2	Rahme	43	6	N/A	Adaisse
3	Hafiza	47	6	N/A	Adaisse
4	Amina	43	6	N/A	Adaisse
5	Raghdaa	33	4	N/A	Adaisse
6	Hayat	38	5	N/A	Adaisse
7	Afaf	47	6	N/A	Adaisse
8	Lamia	35	5	N/A	Adaisse
Male – Odeisseh - Marjaayoun					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Othman	70	12	N/A	N/A
2	Mohamad	27	3	N/A	N/A
3	Hussein	40	5	N/A	N/A
4	Hussam	31	2	N/A	N/A
5	Mahmoud	43	5	N/A	N/A
6	Hassan	36	4	N/A	N/A
7	Abdallah	39	6	N/A	N/A

<b>Female – Aydamoun - Akkar</b>					
	<b>Name of participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b># Children</b>	<b>Hometown</b>	<b>Place of Residence</b>
1	Sawsan	38	5	N/A	Aydamoun
2	Hiam	40	0	N/A	Aydamoun
3	Nawfa	56	7	N/A	Aydamoun
4	Sahar	58	8	N/A	Aydamoun
5	Noura	35	2	N/A	Aydamoun
6	Dalal	45	7	N/A	Aydamoun
7	Ahalem	26	3	N/A	Aydamoun
8	Houriye	40	0	N/A	Aydamoun
9	Otriyi	40	4	N/A	Aydamoun
10	Imtithal	50	5	N/A	Aydamoun
11	Manal	35	6	N/A	Aydamoun
<b>Male – Aydamoun - Akkar</b>					
	<b>Name of participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b># Children</b>	<b>Hometown</b>	<b>Place of Residence</b>
1	Kilan	32	2	N/A	Aydamoun
2	Tarek	30	2	N/A	Aydamoun
3	Issam	36	3	N/A	Aydamoun
4	Mahmoud	52	11	N/A	Aydamoun
5	Abdelkarim	60	9	N/A	Aydamoun
6	Bader	36	2	N/A	Aydamoun
7	AbdelKafeh	40	3	N/A	Aydamoun
8	Raed	24	1	N/A	Aydamoun
9	Akram	32	3	N/A	Aydamoun
10	Mohamad	36	2	N/A	Aydamoun
11	Jassem	62	4	N/A	Aydamoun

Female – Cité Sportive – Beirut					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Rasha	N/A	3	Halab	Chatila IS
2	Faten	N/A	6	Idleb	Chatila IS
3	Rasha	N/A	2	Idleb	Sabra
4	Hanady	N/A	4	Idleb	Chatila IS
5	Fatima	N/A	3	Idleb	Sabra
6	Saada	N/A	3	Idleb	Sabra
7	Hiam	N/A	4	Halab	Madina Riyadiya
8	Mehdiyi	N/A	5	Idleb	Chatila IS
9	N/A	N/A	8	Idleb	Sabra
Male – Cité Sportive – Beirut					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Ali	N/A	1	Halab	Cola
2	Jemaa	N/A	1	Halab	Cola
3	Youssef	N/A	6	Halab	Cola
4	Mohammad	N/A	N/A	Idleb	Cola
5	Arab	N/A	3	Idleb	Sabra
6	Mohammad	N/A	5	Idleb	Chatila IS
7	Mahmoud	N/A	2	Halab	Sabra
8	Maher	N/A	0	Daraa	Sabra
Female – Jnah – Baabda					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Amshaa	32	1	N/A	N/A
2	Samira	25	2	N/A	N/A
3	Hoda	22	2	N/A	N/A
4	Zeina	21	2	N/A	N/A
5	Jihane	27	3	N/A	N/A
6	Abir	40	8	N/A	N/A
7	Fattoum	31	3	N/A	N/A
8	Marwa	25	1	N/A	N/A





Male – Jnah – Baabda					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Maurice	45	0	N/A	N/A
2	Khaled	36	4	N/A	N/A
3	Mohammad	27	2	N/A	N/A
4	Mostapha	32	3	N/A	N/A
5	Kamel	54	25	N/A	N/A
6	Khaled	48	6	N/A	N/A
7	Wassim	29	0	N/A	N/A
8	Ragheb	40	5	N/A	N/A
Female – Dalhamiye – Zahle					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Fatima	50	6	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
2	Jawhara	45	9	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
3	Nabila	43	6	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
4	Rokayya	18	0	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
5	Sabah	22	3	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
6	Noura	23	1	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
7	Najah	50	13	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
8	Arna	50	6	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
9	Foza	25	5	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
10	Aisha	40	9	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
Male – Dalhamiye – Zahle					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Ibrahim	39	5	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
2	Mahmoud	40	2	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
3	Ali	70	6	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
4	Ismail	85	6	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
5	Abdel Ali	50	5	N/A	Dalhamiyeh

6	Ahmad	27	0	N/A	Dalhamiyeh
7	Hilal	45	4	N/A	Dalhamiyeh

Female – Ras El Nabea – Beirut					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Ilham	N/A	N/A	Damascus	Bourj Abi Haidar
2	Leila	N/A	N/A	Kamishli	Moussaitbeh
3	Shahinaz	N/A	N/A	Damascus	Mar Elias
4	Sabah	N/A	N/A	Damascus	Mathaf
5	Houriya	N/A	N/A	Homs	Ras El Nabea
6	Wafaa	N/A	N/A	Halab	Noueiri
7	Hester	N/A	N/A	Hasaki	Ras El Nabea
8	Henshal	N/A	N/A	Homs	Kornish El Mazraa
9	Amira	N/A	N/A	Damascus	Ras El Nabea
10	Amira	N/A	N/A	Hasaki	Bourj Abi Haidar
Male – Ras El Nabea – Beirut					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Abdallah	N/A	3	Halab	Ras El Nabea
2	Imad	N/A	4	Halab	Ras El Nabea
3	Saleh	N/A	0	Halab	Ras El Nabea
4	Ahmad	N/A	3	Halab	Noueri
5	Ahmad	N/A	2	Menbej	Ras El Nabea
6	Ibrahim	N/A	3	Halab	Ras El Nabea
7	Hussein	N/A	1	Halab	Ras El Nabea
Female – Majdel Anjar – Zahle					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Bassima	52	3	N/A	Majdel Anjar
2	Habiba	35	0	N/A	Majdel Anjar
3	Hadeel	29	4	N/A	Majdel Anjar
4	Rawaa	32	3	N/A	Majdel Anjar
5	Waad	27	2	N/A	Majdel Anjar

6	Shirine	28	3	N/A	Majdel Anjar
7	Howaida	35	0	N/A	Majdel Anjar
8	Jalila	29	4	N/A	Majdel Anjar

Male – Majdel Anjar – Zahle					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Maan	42	3	N/A	Majdel Anjar
2	Abdo	41	4	N/A	Majdel Anjar
3	Issa	45	0	N/A	Majdel Anjar
4	Imad	22	0	N/A	Majdel Anjar
5	Ahmad	25	0	N/A	Majdel Anjar
6	Ahmad	23	2	N/A	Majdel Anjar
7	Ghassan	57	5	N/A	Majdel Anjar
8	Nasser	35	2	N/A	Majdel Anjar
Female – Minie – Minieh Dennieh					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Fadia	N/A	N/A	Damascus	Mhammara
2	Fairouza	N/A	N/A	Idleb	Minie
3	Rim	N/A	N/A	N/A	Minie
4	Hiba	N/A	N/A	N/A	Mhammara
5	Fardous	N/A	N/A	Homs	Minie
6	Sarab	N/A	N/A	Halab	Minie
7	Hadeel	N/A	N/A	Homs	Minie
Male – Minie – Minieh Dennieh					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Khoder	N/A	N/A	Halab	Minie
2	Adnan	N/A	N/A	Homs	Minie
3	Abdel Nasser	N/A	N/A	Kalakh	Minie
4	Wael	N/A	N/A	Homs	Minie
5	Nassim	N/A	N/A	Idleb	Deir Ammar
6	Azouar	N/A	N/A	Dabaa, Homos	Minie

7	Abbas	N/A	N/A	Idleb	Deir Ammar
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Female – Zrariye – Saida					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Alifa	34	4	N/A	Zrariye
2	Nayla	44	4	N/A	Zrariye
3	Leila	40	9	N/A	Zrariye
4	Nahla	32	5	N/A	Zrariye
5	Ghazwa	30	4	N/A	Zrariye
6	Samira	32	5	N/A	Zrariye
7	Leila	33	5	N/A	Zrariye
8	Samra	41	5	N/A	Zrariye
9	Glishan	31	1	N/A	Zrariye
10	Malak	40	4	N/A	Zrariye
Male – Zrariye – Saida					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Mahmoud	36	3	N/A	Zrariye
2	Safwan	28	0	N/A	Zrariye
3	Mohammad	33	2	N/A	Zrariye
4	Idriss	35	3	N/A	Zrariye
5	Mahmoud	60	7	N/A	Zrariye
6	Mohammad	43	6	N/A	Zrariye
7	Walid	35	4	N/A	Zrariye
8	Mohammad	28	2	N/A	Zrariye
9	Bassel	33	2	N/A	Zrariye
10	Hussam	42	4	N/A	Zrariye

Female – Ghaziye – Saida					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Hallouf	N/A	N/A	Hamaa	Doueir
2	Manal	N/A	N/A	N/A	Doueir
3	Zakiya	N/A	N/A	Hamaa	N/A
4	Najwa	N/A	N/A	Homos	Maghdoushi
5	Ayyoush	N/A	N/A	Halab	Ghazieh
6	Zeinab	N/A	N/A	Halab	Ghazieh
7	Ghofran	N/A	N/A	Halab	Ghazieh
8	Seba	N/A	N/A	Halab	Ghazieh
Male – Ghaziye – Saida					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Ahmad	N/A	N/A	Hamah	Ghazieh
2	Ahmad	N/A	N/A	Hamah	Ghazieh
3	Mohamad	N/A	N/A	Hamah	Ghazieh
4	Jomaa	N/A	N/A	Hamah	Ghazieh
5	Alaaeddine	N/A	N/A	Hamah	Ghazieh
Female – Harouf – Nabatieh					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Manal	29	5	N/A	N/A
2	Mounira	41	6	N/A	N/A
3	Houriya	38	4	N/A	N/A
4	Khouloud	28	4	N/A	N/A
5	Hala	50	3	N/A	N/A
6	Najwa	38	5	N/A	N/A
7	Ferzat	39	2	N/A	N/A
8	Nazmya	50	8	N/A	N/A
9	Hedyan	30	2	N/A	N/A

Male – Harouf – Nabatieh					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Mohannad	30	3	N/A	N/A
2	Youssef	37	3	N/A	N/A
3	Mohammad	42	6	N/A	N/A
4	Wael	31	4	N/A	N/A
5	Walid	22	2	N/A	N/A
6	Ahmad	22	1	N/A	N/A
Female – Ashrafieh – Beirut					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Fadia	30	5	N/A	Ashrafieh
2	Likaa	24	2	N/A	Ashrafieh
3	Mona	50	2	N/A	N/A
4	Wahiba	37	4	N/A	N/A
5	Amina	28	2	N/A	N/A
6	Fatima	23	1	N/A	N/A
7	Layali	34	1	N/A	N/A
8	Bana	38	2	N/A	N/A
9	Safaa	35	2	N/A	N/A
Female – Ashrafieh – Beirut					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Hanna	45	2	N/A	Ashrafieh
2	Mohammad	39	4	N/A	N/A
3	Hekmat	56	5	N/A	N/A
4	Shhade	29	2	N/A	N/A
5	Kamal	35	3	N/A	N/A
6	Tabet	43	3	N/A	N/A
7	Iyad	35	4	Daraa, Syria	N/A



Female – Hermel – Hermel					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Naswa	40	7	Nahriyi, Homs	Qasr
2	Nabila	44	0	Qseir	Hermel
3	Dalal	45	5	Aaar	Hermel
4	Najah	55	10	Deir El Zor	Hermel
5	Sabha	36	4	Homs	Hermel
6	Noura	50	6	Damascus	Hermel
7	Rahaf	19	1	Damascus	Assi
8	Dalal	48	6	Zabadani	Hermel
9	Hadia	29	3	Zabadani	Hermel
Male – Hermel – Hermel					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Ahmad	36	5	Hasaki	Kroum
2	Radwan	35	6	Homos	Hermel
3	Nasrallah	40	5	Hama	Qasr
4	Jalal	N/A	1	West Syria	Qasr
5	Moussa	35	5	Hama	Mansoura
6	Ghazi	60	9	Homos	Hermel
7	Moatasseem	N/A	3	Ebel	Zoueitini
8	Alaa	30	0	Damascus	Hermel
9	Nader	32	4	Halab	Mansoura
Female – Qasr – Hermel					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Fatima	36	3	N/A	N/A
2	Khadija	22	1	N/A	N/A
3	Joumana	30	2	N/A	N/A
4	Mariam	33	3	N/A	N/A
5	Jamila	31	2	N/A	N/A
6	Khadra	47	3	N/A	N/A
7	Salwa	37	1	N/A	N/A

Male – Qasr – Hermel					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Ali	34	3	N/A	N/A
2	Abdel Rahman	29	1	N/A	N/A
3	Fawwaz	52	2	N/A	N/A
4	Abdel Hadi	46	7	N/A	N/A
5	Abdel Rahman	33	5	N/A	N/A
6	Ahmad	44	6	N/A	N/A
7	Mohamad	42	6	N/A	N/A
Female – Halba – Akkar					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Khaldiya	46	5	Tal Kalakh	Kousha
2	Samar	41	4	Homos	Halba
3	Zeinab	27	2	Homos	Halba
4	Sarab	46	1	Homos	Halba
5	Hadia	40	5	Qseir	Halba
6	Nivine	31	3	Homos	Halba
7	Sharihane	28	4	Homos	Halba
Male – Halba – Akkar					
	Name of participant	Age	# Children	Hometown	Place of Residence
1	Hassan	43	5	Homos	Kousha
2	Nadime	28	4	Qseir	Halba
3	Nawras	19	0	Homos	Halba
4	Abdel Aziz	51	5	Halab	Hosniye
5	Abdel Halim	50	8	Homos	Dennieh
6	Mostafa	32	2	Hama	Berqayel

## Discussion Guide

Theme	Key Questions	Background info
A- Shocks and coping	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the major problems you currently face?</li> <li>2. Are these problems different this year compared to last year? If yes, describe in what way they have changed? Did they get worse or better?</li> <li>3. Who is the most affected and why? Has this changed compared to last year how?</li> <li>4. What are the main consequences of the current problems that your family faces?</li> <li>5. Due to these problems, are there any steps/measures (positive or negative) that your family has had to take which you've not done before?</li> <li>6. If you could suggest one thing that would be most helpful for you to meet these challenges what would it be?</li> </ol>	<p>Here we are trying to understand negative coping mechanisms that refugees are forced to resort to.</p> <p>A major problem will be defined as a problem that has a significant impact on their day to day lives.</p>
B- Social networks/Assistance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are there support structures/ social networks/ community organisations which provide support or services for members of your community?</li> <li>2. Who can access these services?</li> <li>3. What kind of support do they provide? How good are these structures/ networks/ organisations at helping members of the community solve their problems?</li> <li>4. If they are NOT considered helpful, what are the major limitations that prevent them from better serving the community?</li> </ol>	<p>Here we are trying to understand refugee's knowledge of support structures/ social networks/community organisations available and how they feel about them.</p> <p>Q1-Q4 Where refugees mention a specific type of support structures/ social networks/community organisations –</p>

follow that one though. As far as possible be specific about what types of networks/community structures they are speaking of.

Q7 As above be specific to the service/assistance.

If the FDG is with service providers – ask them directly about their services.

If the FDG is with Lebanese adjust accordingly.

C- Assistance from humanitarian community

5. How do you feel about the current level of assistance compared to last year?
  - a. Did it changed?
6. If yes, what is the impact of this changes on your Community?

D- Livelihood

- 1- What are the main fields of work (i.e. occupation) that the community is involved in?
- 2- What are the gender and age differences in access to types of work, and income generating activities?
- 3- Have any changes have occurred in the availability of agriculture labour opportunities during the last year?

We are trying to understand how the types of the work community engages in affects their livelihood?

- |                                     |   |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
|                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4- What are the main skill-sets that the community lack that impacts upon access to livelihood?</li> <li>5- Do people move across the country for work? If so where do they go and is there any change compared to last year? Do entire HHs within the community move and if not, who within the HH does so?</li> <li>6- What are others reasons behind the internal migration (i.e. moving from one area to another within the country)?</li> </ul> |   |
| E- Priorities                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are your key priorities? Have they changed over the last year? How have they changed?</li> <li>2. What means are available to help you meet your priorities?</li> <li>3. What else is needed to help you meet your priorities? (3 priority interventions)</li> </ul>   |   |
| F- Security and Social Cohesion     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. What is the general feeling/atmosphere/security in the area? Have they changed compared to the last year? How and why?</li> <li>5. What needs to be done to improve the actual situation?</li> </ul>  |   |
| G- Intentions for the next 6 months | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are your intentions in the next 6 months?</li> <li>2. Have your intentions changed compared to last year? If yes why?</li> <li>3. What could lead you to leave Lebanon to a third country?</li> <li>4. Or eventually to Syria?</li> <li>5. Under what circumstance would you consider paying someone outside of your family, money to assist to you leave Lebanon?</li> </ul>  |   |
| E. Residency                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the main challenge you face in relation to renewal of residency?</li> <li>2. How does the lack of residency impact the daily life of families in your community?</li> <li>3. If the GSO announced a period of free regularization would you regularize your stay?</li> </ul>  | <p>Sensitive questions may be better asked indirectly – accordingly the wording here is not direct but community focused. However, if the</p> |

group is open to speaking about themselves directly – as them the questions directly.

F. Civil documentation

1. If you had a new born baby born in Lebanon, do you think it is important to register his/her birth with the Lebanese authorities? Why?
2. If you are a parent with a new born baby, are there any challenges that you face in registering the birth of your child – what would help you most to complete the birth registration process?
3. What about other civil documents, like marriage and death certificate for close relative? Is it important for you to have these events recognised?
4. What are the main challenges preventing you to register marriages and deaths?
5. How do you think that your community, ROVs or the community centres could play an increased role in supporting families with birth registration?

G. Communication channels about services/assistance

1. If you want to get information about available services in your area, where do you get it from?
2. What are your main/current sources of information about services in general?
3. What is the quality of information that you are currently getting about services? Is it sufficient? If not, why?
4. What are your preferred sources of information (TV, SMS, household visit, information session, coffee gathering at the neighbour, flyer, nurse talking to you in the health center, etc.)
5. What are your most important information needs?

