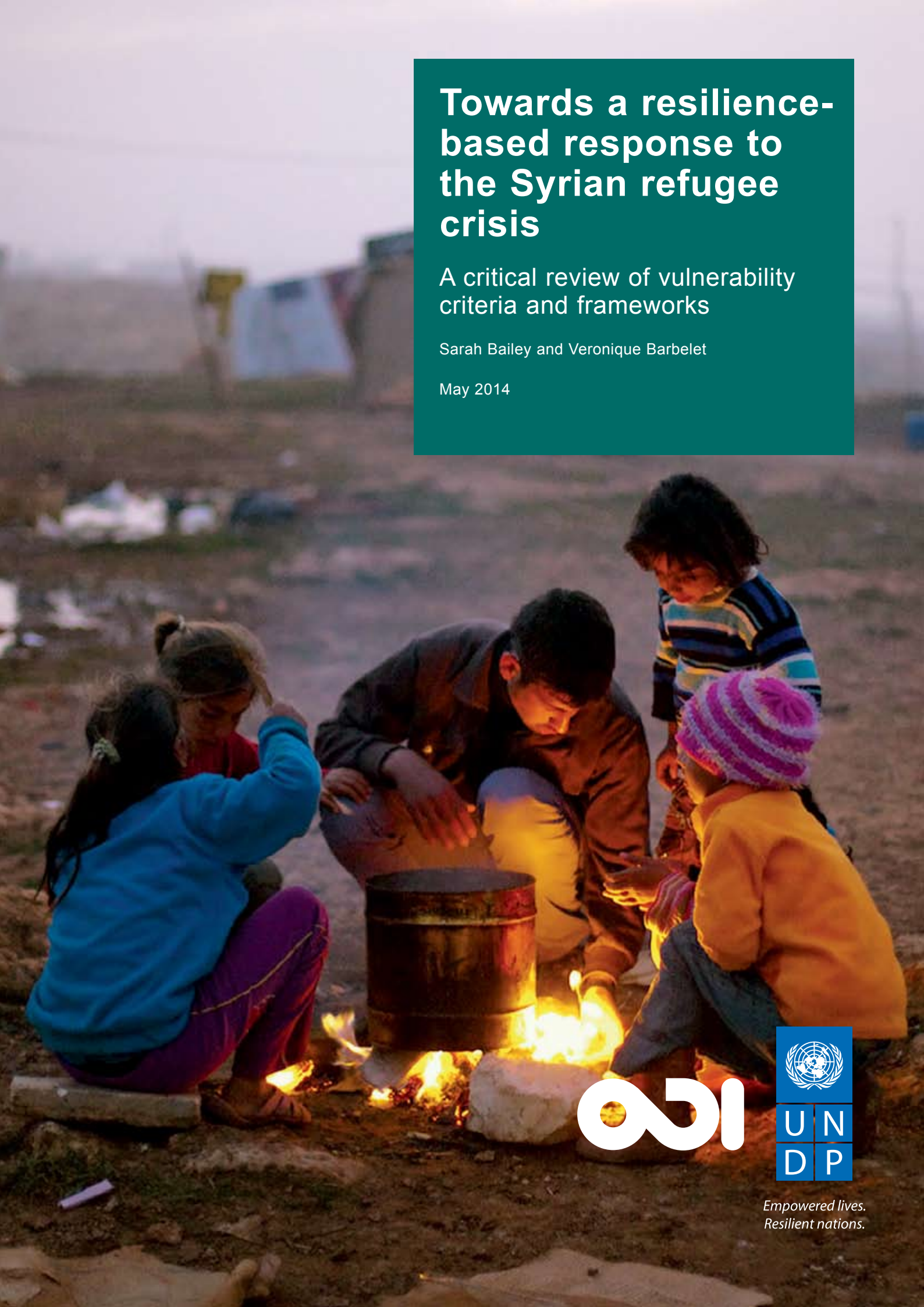


Towards a resilience-based response to the Syrian refugee crisis

A critical review of vulnerability criteria and frameworks

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May 2014



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

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Executive summary

The Syrian crisis has resulted in more than 100,000 deaths and the displacement of over two million people. For countries in the region, the combination of refugee flows and decreased economic activity with Syria have affected growth, economic performance, fiscal health and the provision of basic services. In light of these impacts, a ‘resilience-based development approach’ was endorsed by the Regional United Nations Development Group (UNDG) in November 2013. The approach seeks to ensure that basic resources and infrastructures can cope with the pressure from the increased demand resulting from refugee flows, that households are supported to recover and that declining economic performance and deteriorating social cohesion can be arrested and reversed.

This paper supports the operationalisation of a resilience-based development approach to dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis by exploring how stakeholders understand the current challenges and approach vulnerability and criteria that could inform the targeting and prioritisation of resilience-based development efforts. While the resilience-based approach is not limited to a particular context, the focus of the paper primarily on Lebanon and Jordan, which respectively host 38% and 23% of refugees in the sub-region.

Resilience and vulnerability: approaches and analysis in the sub-region

Though definitions and approaches to resilience vary, resilience fundamentally concerns how an individual, household, community, society or state deals with shocks and stresses. As a concept and approach, resilience appears broadly accepted by aid agencies and donors in the sub-region across humanitarian and development sectors. According to the Regional UN Development Group (R-UNDG) Position Paper, prepared by a UNDG Regional Working Group on Resilience, the resilience-based development approach specifically looks at supporting resilience through development assistance, which aims to support institutions to respond to increased demand and pressure (characterised as “coping”), promote household recovery from the negative impacts of the crisis (“recovering”) and strengthen local and national economic, social and political institutions to protect development gains and enhance performance (“sustaining”). The governments of Jordan and Lebanon have strategies in place that aim to contribute to resilience and address negative repercussions of the crisis. These have been influenced by the position paper on a resilience-based development approach and propose specific responses.

Vulnerability and resilience are closely related because they both concern responses to shocks; they are often characterised as being obverse sides of the same coin. In the region, definitions used by aid actors vary, but they converge around the common theme that vulnerability reflects the inability to withstand and recover from shocks, as well as exposure to them. As concepts, both resilience and vulnerability need to be considered in relation to specific shocks. For countries in the sub-region, these shocks are demographic (large numbers of refugees) and economic (the closing of Syria as an economic space).

Development and humanitarian actors are taking diverse approaches to vulnerability while agreeing on the foundation of the concept. Four noticeable trends are highlighted in the report: (1) vulnerability is often defined through categories of people considered vulnerable; (2) vulnerability criteria primarily served to inform targeting and prioritisation and not the substance of interventions; (3) different levels of analysis are being considered by different actors; and (4) of the criteria reviewed, there is a strong focus on vulnerability with little attention to capacity analysis. The report argues that an analysis framework, as opposed to categorical criteria, would allow a more in-depth analysis of root causes of vulnerability and allow appropriate interventions to be designed for building resilience.

Criteria and analysis for a resilience-based development approach

Addressing the regional impact of the Syrian crisis requires an objective assessment of how to target interventions in support of resilience-based development – where to provide support, whom to support and systems that should be supported. A basic approach to gauging the vulnerability of households, communities

and institutions to the impacts of these shocks is through: 1) criteria based on negative impacts have already occurred, as these indicate an inability to cope with the shocks; and 2) factors associated with exposure and lack of capacity to manage shocks (i.e. poverty, concentration of refugees) as these suggest vulnerability to negative impacts in the future.

To identify areas at the sub-national level, suggested criteria are refugee density (i.e. percentage of refugees to the host population), poverty and social tensions. The inclusion of criteria related to poverty and social tensions moves away from the strict focus on ‘host’ communities, to a broader recognition that refugee presence is not the sole indicator of vulnerability. Criteria to identify sectors and services under stress should be refined with the relevant ministries and aid agencies, while keeping in mind the information and data which is and is not available.

Criteria can be used to determine where assistance should be directed. Putting a resilience-based development approach into practice also fundamentally requires determining the responses to implement in the identified areas (i.e. response analysis). In Jordan and Lebanon, this process is already being taken forward through, respectively, the National Resilience Plan and the Lebanon Stabilisation Roadmap. The process of identifying responses should be based on an understanding of drivers of vulnerability, of capacities that can be supported and of the probable impacts of different responses. Processes and structures are already in place that can support this analysis and decision-making. While they are by no means perfect, there are multiple sources of data available to support these types of analysis, including the assessments underpinning the National Resilience Plan and Lebanon Stabilisation Roadmap.

The time for reflection is never over, but now is the time for action to support resilience through development assistance. Responses and strategies should be pursued with flexibility so they are able to adjust according to emerging lessons and changing circumstances. These strategies should likewise ensure that responses include monitoring and information sharing processes to enable this feedback loop. The question of supporting host countries to manage the impacts of the Syrian crisis is an urgent one, and it is crucial to not let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

1 Introduction

The impacts of the Syrian crisis have been devastating. In 2013, the death toll was estimated at 100,000. More than two million people have fled to countries in the region. In Lebanon alone, the arrival of refugees has increased the total population by 16%. For countries hosting refugees, population movements have placed stress on basic services, labour, natural resources and housing markets and in cases have contributed to serious tensions. The combination of refugee flows and decreased economic activity with Syria has altered the economic performance and fiscal health of countries in the region, affecting public finance, trade deficits and key economic sectors.

Given the acute threats to lives and livelihoods, the response to the Syrian crisis has been primarily humanitarian. There is growing recognition that the social, environmental and economic impacts also require a development response. There is an opportunity, and indeed an imperative, for development assistance to play an important role in addressing the negative impacts of the crisis on countries in the sub-region and in supporting the systems¹ and services on which households rely.

In recognition of these challenges, a ‘resilience-based development approach’ was endorsed by the Regional United Nations Development Group (UNDG) in November 2013. Regional UNDG developed a position paper on ‘A Resilience-Based Development Approach to the Syria Crisis’. The approach aims to support governance structures, housing, infrastructures, natural resource management policies and basic services to respond to increased demand and pressure (*coping*), promote the recovery of households (refugee, internally displaced, and in host communities) from the negative impacts of the crisis (*recovering*) and strengthen local and national economic, social and political institutions in neighbouring countries to protect development gains (*sustaining*).²

The UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility engaged the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) to support the operationalisation of a resilience-based development approach by exploring how stakeholders understand the current challenges and approach vulnerability and, secondly, developing criteria that could inform the targeting and prioritisation of resilience-based development efforts. The key questions underpinning this process were:

- How do key stakeholders (e.g. aid agencies, donors, governments) understand the nature of the challenges facing host countries, host communities and refugees?
- What frameworks do they apply to dealing with these challenges?
- Where do understandings and perceptions of various stakeholders converge and diverge, and what potential is there for bringing them together?
- What criteria can be used to inform the operationalisation of resilience-based development – building upon, rather than replacing, existing criteria applied by key humanitarian and development actors?

Approach

The process relied on engagement with diverse stakeholders, in order to understand their approaches and contribute to consensus on ways forward where possible. While the findings can be applied more broadly in the sub-region, the focus of the engagement was on Lebanon and Jordan, which host the highest numbers of Syrian refugees in the region.

The first phase of this project involved a scoping mission and consultation with different individuals and

¹ The term “system” refers to informal and formal institutions, service delivery mechanisms, markets and their relation to populations that depend on these to fulfil their basic needs. It encompasses more than community, goes beyond local institution or local governance, and most importantly is dynamic.

² Regional UN Development Group (March, 2014) Position paper: a resilience-based development response to the Syria crisis; UNDP (2013) Resilience-Based Development Approach to the Syria Crisis. Booklet.

institutions involved in supporting populations in the region, including humanitarian, development, government and inter-governmental actors. The scoping mission took place in December 2013 in Amman and Beirut. The consultations focused on how stakeholders understood the challenges facing the region in light of the Syria crisis and refugee flows; how they define vulnerability; what criteria they use to assess vulnerability; what assessment tools are being utilised; and what frameworks are being used to inform the design of interventions to address vulnerabilities. The consultations were used to gather key documents, including concept notes on vulnerability and assessment reports. This mission resulted in a scoping report, the findings of which are integrated in this final report.

The next phase of this process entailed a workshop in Amman in February 2014 to inform the operationalisation of a resilience-based development approach by: 1) taking stock of development and humanitarian interventions and their role in addressing the effects of the crisis on households, communities and governments– including gaps and examples of good practices; 2) identifying the criteria and analyses underpinning the planning and prioritisation of initiatives to promote resilience, and what was needed to support planning and prioritisation; and 3) exploring appropriate and feasible interventions that could fill gaps and complement existing efforts and strategies. While originally a more technical meeting was envisioned, it evolved into a broader workshop with members of the Resilience Working Group and other stakeholders (e.g. government, donors), that focused on opportunities for supporting resilience and next steps for operationalising a resilience-based development approach.

This paper communicates the findings from this process. Following this introduction, Section 2 provides an overview of resilience and its use as a concept and approach in the sub-region, including national resilience strategies and a resilience-based development approach. Section 3 explores how different stakeholders are approaching vulnerability – and associated criteria – in the design and targeting of responses. Criteria and indicators for targeting resilience-based interventions are proposed in Section 4. Conclusions and further recommendations are provided in Section 5.

2 Resilience and a resilience-based development approach

While not a new concept, resilience has recently become a more common way of framing humanitarian and development challenges and how to address them. Resilience is understood in diverse ways and applied differently across sectors and contexts.³ However, as a conceptual starting point, resilience fundamentally concerns how an individual, household, community, society or state deals with shocks and stresses. Resilience involves the ability to adapt to stresses while mitigating the negative impact that they have on development progress and humanitarian conditions. Resilience applies in equal measure across sectors and involves components related to livelihoods, governance, the environment, the economy and more. The aim of resilience-oriented programming is to ensure that shocks and stresses, whether individually or in combination, do not lead to a long-term downturn in wellbeing and further seeks to build capacity to deal with future shocks and stresses.

While often associated with preventive/mitigative efforts related to natural disasters and climate change, resilience can also apply to ongoing crises which have already had a negative effect on local conditions. In such an instance, resilience more fundamentally concerns coping with and recovering from shocks by strengthening institutions and systems as well as addressing disruptions to social cohesion which have resulted from the crisis. Resilience can also refer to the capacity to avoid another or similar crisis, and in this respect analysis of the causes of crisis becomes significant. Given that inequalities, including gender inequalities, leading to social, economic and political exclusion, have influenced the crisis in Syria, it is essential that they be eliminated for the purpose of resilience building. Similarly, natural resources are strained in the current crisis highlighting the need for more resilient natural resource management. In these settings, efforts to support resilience are fundamentally concerned with people's and states' abilities to manage shocks and support services, natural assets, markets and institutions on which they rely and even the very existence of the society in which they live, which could be threatened by conflict and unrest. Some view resilience in crisis contexts as a transformational opportunity to improve capacity to deal with future shocks and 'build back better', while others caution that this portrayal unrealistically implies that people and institutions could be better off after suffering severe shocks. Consideration of resilience implicitly involves a longer term perspective, which in crisis contexts draws together humanitarian and development approaches.

Resilience: perceptions and approaches in the sub-region

As a concept and approach, resilience appears broadly accepted by aid agencies in the region and understood as the ability to withstand and recover from shocks. Several donors and aid organisations have their own resilience policies, strategies and approaches in place, which in many cases are influencing the way that they provide aid. This may be motivated by the underlying rationale to reduce the need of recurrent humanitarian funding and enable self-sustaining populations through the implementation of a resilience agenda. At the same time, some question the utility of generic resilience strategies given the unique characteristics of the Syrian crisis and variations in contexts within the sub-region. Others have noted that some actors, including donors, have begun to pursue resilience – and better integrate and align their humanitarian and development responses – without developing an overt resilience strategy. This suggests that aid agencies and donors, given the urgency of the crisis, are starting to operationalize resilience even as explicit strategies for resilience are still being defined.

The governments of Jordan and Lebanon, too, have strategies in place to guide support to resilience and address negative repercussions that these countries have faced (discussed below). These strategies outline the governments' priorities and highlight the severe costs that they have faced because of the Syrian crisis.

³ This first two paragraphs draws upon Mitchell, M. and K. Harris (2012) *Resilience: A risk management approach*, ODI Background Note and Levine, S., A. Pain, S. Bailey and L. Fan (2012) The relevance of 'resilience'?, ODI/HPG Policy Brief.

UNDP's sub-Regional Response Facility has reiterated the centrality of States' role in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis, especially highlighting the specificity of operating in middle-income countries.⁴ However, supporting resilience may become a sensitive issue for governments. Under the resilience banner, there may be calls to support the resilience of refugees in ways which have significant political ramifications, such as granting them work permits. Discussions on resilience therefore should not be held in abstract terms, but must include an appreciation of the political, economic and other realities and focus on resilience of whom/what (e.g. governments, communities, systems, national households, refugee households) to specific shocks. While overarching strategies on resilience can play an important role in promoting a shared vision amongst aid actors, too broad or generic of approaches to resilience may generate misunderstanding and prevent the sorts of joined-up action which they aim to facilitate.

'Operationalising Resilience-based Development' – consensus on supporting resilience

The workshop held on 'Operationalising Resilience-based Development' in February 2014 found consensus on the need to support resilience in response to the Syrian crisis and that doing so was not a strictly development or humanitarian issue. While the humanitarian-development divide (e.g. related to objectives, funding and systems) was perceived as presenting a challenge, participants noted that resilience offers an opportunity to support more coherence between these approaches.⁵ The workshop found broad recognition that the crisis has had impacts on national systems that have to be recognised and mitigated, and that development assistance should be playing a stronger and essential role in addressing impacts on neighbouring countries and supporting their processes and institutions. There are examples in the region of support to the systems and services in which national and refugee households rely, which can be a source of evidence and learning. These include support by the World Bank and UNDP to municipalities in Jordan most affected by the crisis, efforts to align cash and voucher humanitarian responses with safety nets, ILO engagement with local governments to support livelihoods, UNDP support to livelihoods and basic services under stress and WHO support to government health systems.

Resilience to what? Primary shocks affecting the sub-region and their impacts

Resilience is the ability to cope with and recover from a shock or stress. Within Syria, the shock in question is the conflict, which has resulted in devastating consequences for Syrians, as well as a collapse in economic activity and capital stock, macroeconomic stability and a dramatic increase in unemployment.⁶ In the sub-region, there are two basic shocks that have been caused by the conflict in Syria. The first is demographic in nature, as the crisis has resulted in two million people fleeing Syria. The second shock is economic, as Syria has 'closed' as a space for trade and economic engagement.

The vast majority of refugees (97%) have gone to countries in the surrounding region.⁷ They are spread amongst Lebanon (38%), Turkey (25%), Jordan (23%), Iraq (9%) and Egypt (5%).⁸ Needs assessments and other data from Jordan and Lebanon capture many of the resulting impacts.⁹ In Jordan, the demographic shock has resulted in fiscal impacts through increased government expenditure, increased subsidy costs (e.g. electricity, gas, water) and an increased budget deficit. In Lebanon, the World Bank estimates that decreased government revenue collection and increased in demand for public services have resulted in a total fiscal impact to \$2.6 billion, and that the overall decline in economic activities will generate a cumulative loss of

4 UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility (2014) *The Centrality of National Plans and Capacity in Responding to the Syrian Crisis*

5 This point is also made in Boucheé and Mohieddin (2013).

6 Bouché, N. and M. Mohieddin (2013). *The Syrian Crisis: Tracking and Tacking Impacts on Sustainable Human Development in Neighboring Countries. Insights from Jordan and Lebanon*. Draft 25 November 2013.

7 UNHCR (2013) Inter-Agency Regional Response for Syrian Refugees. Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey. 29 August - 4 September 2013.

8 <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> - accessed March 2014

9 See Bouché, N. and M. Mohieddin (2013); Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Host Community Support Platform (2013) *Needs Assessment and Review of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan*; World Bank (2013) *Lebanon: Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict*

\$7.5 billion (cutting annual real GDP growth by 2.9 percentage points each year since 2012).¹⁰ Increased demand on basic services has put them under severe stress, driving up expenditures in these sectors and driving down the quality of services. Areas receiving refugees are facing increased unemployment, social tensions and upward pressure on rent prices.¹¹ The negative impacts that national households have faced as a result of these factors have driven more to turn to social protection programmes, stretching the capacity of these schemes.¹² National trends may not be reflected at more localised levels and vice versa; impacts are greatest in areas with large numbers of refugees. For example, assessments from a range of organisations have indicated crowding out of Jordanian labour (and Egyptian labour migrants in Jordan) by Syrian refugees in specific localities, but national level statistics on employment have not yet shown a clear impact.¹³

The second shock is economic. Commerce with Syria has been cut dramatically, affecting the economies of neighboring countries and also individuals who turned to Syria as a source of employment, goods and services. In Jordan, the crisis has disrupted agriculture and food trade, leading to a 25% decrease in agricultural exports to Syria and 30% decline in agricultural imports, thereby affecting Jordanian farmers and traders.¹⁴ In Lebanon, upward pressure on prices could be associated with increased demand (i.e. from Syrian refugees) and the decreased supply of comparatively low-cost Syrian products.¹⁵ Communities in Lebanon where individuals turned to Syria for trade, services and employment have reportedly faced decreasing incomes because of a slowdown in economic activity and border closures.¹⁶ The shocks are exacerbated by pre-existing structural vulnerabilities. For example, public finances in Jordan and Lebanon were structurally weak prior to the crisis, affecting their capacity to deal with the negative fiscal impacts of the combined shocks.¹⁷

A resilience-based development approach

In recognition of the development implications of the crisis, UNDP in October 2013 deployed a Sub-Regional Development Coordinator to the region to establish a Sub-Regional Response Facility to support the work of Resident Coordinators and Country Offices in the five most affected countries – Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt.¹⁸ Within this framework the Regional undg met in November 2013 and determined that UN agencies ‘need to think and act beyond traditional mandates, to connect humanitarian and development responses, and ensure the strongest relevance and value of [their] work in addressing emergency, fragility, resilience and recovery’.¹⁹

The Regional undg formulated a position paper on the resilience-based development approach; the most recent edition of which is dated March 2014.²⁰ This aims to support the resilience of institutions to respond to increased demand and pressure (characterised as “coping”), promote household recovery from the negative impacts of the crisis (“recovering”) and strengthen local and national economic, social and political institutions and sustainability of natural resources to protect development gains (“sustaining”).²¹ It is guided by principles of local and national ownership, context-specificity, comprehensiveness/integration, strategic and long-term engagement, sustainability, human rights, conflict sensitivity, evidence-based programming and transparent

10 World Bank (2013)

11 See Bouché, N. and M. Mohieddin (2013); Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Host Community Support Platform (2013) *Needs Assessment and Review of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan*

12 Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Host Community Support Platform (2013) *Needs Assessment and Review of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan*

13 Ibid.

14 Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Host Community Support Platform (2013)

15 World Bank (2013)

16 UNDP (2012) Rapid Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Crisis on socio-economic Situation in North and Bekaa, prepared by DMI, Beirut; cited in Bouché, N. and M. Mohieddin (2013)

17 Bouché, N. and M. Mohieddin (2013)

18 UNDP (2013) Resilience-Based Development Approach to the Syria Crisis. Booklet.

19 Ibid.

20 undg (March, 2014) *Position paper: a resilience-based development response to the Syria crisis*

21 undg (2014)

prioritisation based on vulnerability criteria (see Section 5). The Regional UNDG position paper foresees interventions related to sustainable habitat (e.g. housing, infrastructure), economic recovery, education services, social cohesion, the rule of law, local governance and natural resource management that will complement humanitarian efforts.

Resilience in regional and national strategies

Regional strategies²²

The main regional humanitarian strategy is the sixth edition of the Regional Response Plan (RRP6). The plan classifies expected outputs into three categories: 1) life-saving or preventing immediate risk of harm, 2) preventing deterioration of vulnerabilities and 3) strengthening capacity and resilience among refugees and host communities.²³ As with previous iterations, the RRP6 maintains protection as its core objective and focuses on meeting immediate humanitarian needs of refugees, including protection and essential services and assistance, such as food, health, education, and material assistance in support of the most vulnerable.²⁴

While resilience remains a more limited focus of the RRP6, the plan puts emphasis on taking a resilience-based approach to ‘cope with uncertainties, recover from external shocks, and support early investments for medium and longer-term stabilization’. It foresees increased convergence between humanitarian and development interventions in 2014, and that this collaboration will centre on support to the national resilience plans and stabilisation roadmaps respectively in Jordan and Lebanon. The document refers to the definition of resilience provided in the position paper on resilience-based development: ‘resilience is the ability of households, communities, markets and societies to withstand shocks, recover and support transformational change for sustainability’.²⁵

A Comprehensive Regional Strategy (CRS) was under development by the UN as of February 2014. With several strategies on the table, the CRS is an opportunity to provide a coherent approach to guide the support of international NGOs, UN agencies and donors in the region, including a vision of how resilience will be supported through humanitarian and development approaches, with consideration for the national resilience strategies that are in place.²⁶

National strategies

At the country level, Lebanon’s Roadmap for Stabilisation and Jordan’s National Resilience Plan are the key government documents guiding efforts to mitigate the impacts of the crisis and refugee flows in these countries. Just as the RRP6 refers to these strategies, they too reference the RRP6 and their complementarity with humanitarian efforts. Both plans were developed in 2013 and reflect language used in the Regional UNDG resilience-based development approach position paper, notably on ‘coping, recovering and sustaining’.

22 The Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) is the humanitarian strategy for the provision of assistance in Syria. The 2014 plan requests \$2.3 billion. While the primary focus of the plan is on protection and life-saving assistance, it does seek to create ‘an environment for humanitarian assistance to enhance the resilience of affected communities’ and includes projects to address coping strategies and support community resilience. This plan is not discussed in detail as the focus of this paper is on countries hosting refugees. *Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Response Plan 2014*.

23 United Nations (2014), *2014 Syria Regional Response Plan*

24 Ibid.

25 United Nations (2014): 5

26 UNDP (2013)

Table 1: Jordan and Lebanon national resilience and stabilization strategies

Title	Lebanon Roadmap for Stabilisation	Jordan National Resilience Plan
Date published	November 2013	January 2014 (Draft)
Developed by	Government of Lebanon, with support of World Bank and the United Nations	Government of Jordan (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation) and Host Community Support Platform
Goal/primary objectives	Mitigate the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon	Mitigate the effects of the Syrian crisis on Jordan and Jordanian host communities
Objectives	Restore and expand economic and livelihood opportunities, restore and build resilience of basic public services and strengthen social cohesion	Provide access to quality education services, address increased demands for energy, improve health of citizens residing in areas most affected, improve access to housing for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian households, strengthen the capacity of poor and vulnerable households in host communities, improve the responsiveness of local government services to most affected communities, increase access to social protection, enhance capacity of government to address increased water demand
Examples of responses proposed	Strengthening public health and education systems, rehabilitation of schools, expanding youth employment expanding the National Poverty Targeting Program, fostering peace-building in host communities, leveraging private sector delivery of water sanitation services, sovereign debt guarantee	Increasing absorptive capacity of schools, off-setting incremental energy demands through solar and energy efficient solutions, covering health costs incurred as a result of the Syrian crisis, increase access to affordable housing, creating jobs, supporting municipal service delivery, expanding national and sub-national safety nets, expanding waste water systems

The Lebanon Roadmap for Stabilisation seeks to mitigate the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon, focusing on the impacts on the government’s budget and basic services to host communities (see Table 1). The Roadmap is intended to be a ‘live’ document that can be adjusted as the situation in Lebanon and Syria evolves. It focuses on identifying a small number of high impact measures and divides interventions into ‘tracks’ based on the time horizons of their impacts and includes a cross-cutting track on private sector development.²⁷

In Jordan, the Government has elaborated a National Resilience Plan (NRP), proposing interventions through a resilience-based development approach.²⁸ Similar to the Roadmap, the NRP provides a programme of high priority investments in response to the Syrian crisis’s impacts on host communities and the Jordanian economy. The plan was established through the Host Communities Support Platform (HCSP) – a body comprised of government line ministries, donors and INGOs – and underpinned by a review of assessments and data on the impacts of the crisis.

UNDP’s Sub-Regional Response Facility has advocated for responses that recognise the central role of national plans and national states as well as responses that recognise and make use of existing national capacities. The Syria refugee crisis differs in many ways to many refugee crises due to its scope but also because host countries are ‘middle-income countries [...] [that] had mostly achieved key levels of human development in the pre-crisis period’.²⁹ This requires an adapted humanitarian response, addressing development goals that are being compromised, national ownership, utilising national systems and processes, and harmonising planning instruments.³⁰

27 Government of Lebanon (2013) *Lebanon Roadmap of Priority Interventions for Stabilization from the Syrian Conflict*.

28 Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Host Community Support Platform (2013)

29 UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility (2014) *The Centrality of National Plans and Capacity in Responding to the Syrian Crisis*

30 UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility (2014) *The Centrality of National Plans and Capacity in Responding to the Syrian Crisis*

In Jordan and Lebanon, aid agencies, donors and governments generally are in agreement on the importance of supporting the ability of governments, communities and households to cope with the negative impacts of the Syrian conflict. This is reflected in the main strategies guiding assistance in the region. This emerging consensus is important; in some crisis contexts, there is substantial disagreement about whether ‘resilience’ is an appropriate frame for planning assistance. The Jordan National Resilience Plan and Lebanon Stabilization Road map are by far the most specific strategies on the table – both are focused on supporting governments and host communities. Given the large amount of humanitarian assistance to refugees and domestic political sensitivities related to their presence, the precise ways in which their resilience should be supported, compared to national households, could emerge as a source of contention between governments on the one hand and aid agencies and donors on the other.

3 Vulnerability: definitions, analysis and criteria

A resilience-based development response should address the vulnerability of individuals, communities and institutions to the negative impacts of these shocks and identify ways to strengthen their capacity to withstand, adapt to and recover from them.³¹ Similar to resilience, definitions of vulnerability vary across disciplines and even within them. In crisis contexts, vulnerability broadly refers to the likelihood of individuals or systems experiencing negative consequences on account of characteristics that make them exposed to those consequences in the first place (i.e. exposure) such as being present in zones affected by the crisis and limited ability to manage the impacts of the crisis (i.e. coping capacities). Vulnerability and resilience are closely related because they both concern responses to shocks; they have been characterised as being two sides of the same coin, at opposite ends of the well-being spectrum and part of the same equation.³² This section explores how different development and humanitarian stakeholders in the sub-region are approaching vulnerability, including their understandings of vulnerability, ways to address vulnerability and the use of criteria.

Defining vulnerability

The concept of vulnerability is being used widely in the region by development and humanitarian actors, both associated with and independent of concepts of resilience. Definitions vary according to the specific focus and interpretations of stakeholders, but they converge around the common theme that vulnerability reflects the inability to withstand and recover from shocks, as well as exposure to them. Thus, while there are nuances in definitions and descriptions, there is no debate on the conceptual underpinning of vulnerability including the fact that analysis of vulnerability applies to different levels (e.g. individuals, households, communities, countries and systems) and to different shocks.³³

This juxtaposition of diversity and commonality was highlighted in an electronic discussion (e-discussion) on the UNDP Teamworks website.³⁴ In December 2013, the UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility queried fellow development practitioners in UNDG agencies about how they defined vulnerability in a crisis context and the criteria and frameworks used to assess it.³⁵ Table 2 outlines the definitions provided by contributors. Just as the previous section stressed the importance of precision on the shock in question, which also applies to here, the table highlights that importance of clarity on the unit(s) of analysis. The vulnerability of the Lebanese health system to the impacts of the economic and demographic shocks will be a different discussion than one on the vulnerability of Lebanese households to these shocks (which will be different compared to the vulnerability of refugee households to these shocks, etc.).

Vulnerability in international and national strategies

As discussed in the previous section, the RRP6 is the primary plan guiding humanitarian action, and the Lebanon Stabilisation Roadmap and Jordan National Resilience Plan have been developed to address the impacts of the Syrian crisis on those countries. In all three strategies, vulnerability is conceptualized at the level of the individual and is typically described related to groups of people and communities who are considered

31 UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility (2013)

32 McDonald, L. (2014) 'Coconut Trees in a Cyclone: Vulnerability and Resilience in a Melanesian Context' in Feeny, S. (ed). *Household Vulnerability and Resilience to Economic Shocks: Findings from Findings from Melanesia*. Ashgate.

33 The UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility working paper *Vulnerability Analysis for Countries Affected by the Syrian Crisis* (2014) identifies three levels of vulnerability: national, sectoral and local.

34 The definitions cover the inability to cope / recover from shocks and stresses related to a lack of capacities (and adaptive capacities); and sensitivity, exposure and susceptibility to hazards and threats (and characteristics related to susceptibility)

35 Schunter, J. (2014) *Consolidated Summary. Syria Response E-Discussion (Dec. 9-20): Assessing vulnerability in crisis in support of a resilience-based development approach*. Prepared with the support of the contributors to the e-discussion.

Table 2: Defining vulnerability in a crisis context – findings of UNDG e-discussion³⁶

Key elements	Definition	Units of analysis
Inability to cope/recover	The inability to safely endure a natural or human-caused catastrophic event and/or the inability to recover from a catastrophe effectively enough to assure the security of one's person, family, community, and/or the political, economic, and social institutions upon which ongoing recuperation or transformation to a state of stability depends.	Individual, household, community, institution
Inability to cope / recover	The inability of individuals, households, communities, institutions, countries to withstand shocks and stresses, and recover from such stresses.	Individual, household, community, institution, country
Limited ability of articulated strategies to assist people to cope, lack of adaptive capacities	The limited ability of adaptive strategies of countries, communities and households to cope with the shocks and stresses resulting from crisis, resulting in a serious threat to security, livelihoods and long-term prospects.	Household, community, country
Risk of exposure to hazards and threats, lack of adaptive capacities	The risk of exposure to certain hazards/ threats (e.g. politically related threats including civil war; environmental hazards including drought, floods, earthquake, and landslides, etc.) and lack of adaptive capacities to reduce or mitigate their impacts.	N/A
Risk of exposure, sensitivity, lack of adaptive capacities	The multiplied risk of exposure, and sensitivity to political conflict induced threats including civil war and lack of adaptive capacities to reduce or mitigate their catastrophic impacts on lives and livelihoods.	N/A
Exposure and sensitivity to hazards, lack of capacity	Vulnerability has three dimensions: exposure to potential hazards; sensitivity to hazards, and lack of capacity to respond, adapt to the external stresses and shocks.	N/A
Exposure to risks, inability to cope	The degree of 1) exposure to risks of a system when damaged by an event or a crisis, and 2) its inability to cope with the consequences of the impact received and/or the uncertainty of the situation (lack of resilience).	System
Susceptibility to hazards and stresses, inability to cope	The degree to which a population or system is susceptible to, and unable to cope with, hazards and stresses, including the effects of climate change (Source: From Vulnerability to Resilience)	Population, system
Exposure to events	A state in which a system (be it at individual, household, community, or country levels) is exposed to unpredictable events outside its immediate control (shocks) that adversely affect its well-being now and in the future.	System at individual, household, community or country level
Characteristics related to susceptibility	The characteristics and circumstances of a community, system or asset that make it susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard (Source: UNISDR).	Community, system, asset
Characteristics related to susceptibility	Intrinsic properties of something resulting in susceptibility to a risk source that can lead to a consequence (Source: ISO guide).	N/A
Characteristics related to susceptibility	The set of characteristics and circumstances of an individual, household, population group, system or asset that make it susceptible (or sensitive, in the case of ecosystems) to the damaging effects of a hazard and/or effects of climate change.	Individual, household, population group, system or asset

most affected by the negative impacts of the crisis. The RRP6 targets three specific populations: refugees in fixed settlements such as camps, refugees living outside camp settlements and host communities. Within these groups, vulnerability is often equated with membership in groups such as unaccompanied or separated children, single female-headed household, the elderly and people living with impairment.³⁷ The plan foresees ‘clearer’ assessments of vulnerability among the existing refugee populations, and includes references to supporting to the ‘most vulnerable’ and preventing a ‘further escalation of vulnerabilities’. While such general language is common in humanitarian strategies, it provides limited insight on how vulnerability will be analysed in a way that informs the design and prioritisation of responses. As discussed below, there are multiple initiatives in the region by humanitarian actors to refine vulnerability criteria and approaches. While the RRP6 is based on needs assessments carried out by humanitarian actors, other strategies such as the Lebanon Stabilisation Roadmap, the Jordan National Resilience Plan and the Resilience-Based Development Approach are based on needs and impact assessments that highlight the wider impact of the crisis on host countries.

The Lebanon Stabilisation Roadmap seeks to mitigate the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon – thus the focus is on supporting public services and communities that have been affected by the crisis and not on assistance to refugees. The strategy refers to vulnerable communities as those hosting high numbers of refugees, and makes references to supporting the livelihoods of ‘vulnerable groups’. The strategy prioritises sectors and responses not on vulnerability, but rather according to the rapidity of the intervention impact and implementation; interventions that can be readily implemented and result in a rapid impact on populations are prioritised.

One proposed action in the strategy is to strengthen Lebanon’s social safety net programme, the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP), which already has criteria in place for inclusion in the programme. Based on the World Bank’s experience and methodologies, the NPTP uses a proxy means approach, which considers household expenditure and other household indicators that correlate with poverty (a total of 62 social and economic indicators are considered³⁸). The system requires households to apply to the programme rather than be identified by the government. Once an application is submitted, a household assessment is carried out; the findings are cross-checked with ministries and eligibility is decided according to a daily expenditure score. Households spending US\$3.84 per person per day are considered extremely poor households and are entitled to free health care, education registration and school supplies. Applications to the NPTP have increased noticeably in localities with large numbers of refugee numbers, suggesting that the refugee flows have resulted in negative consequences on the well-being of non-refugee households in these areas.

The Jordan National Resilience Plan also seeks to support national institutions and households affected by the crisis, though some interventions (namely those related to housing) do refer to refugees as a target group. The strategy refers to the ‘most vulnerable’ but does not qualify or define this notion. One exception is the section on Social Protection which identifies that the following vulnerability criteria will be used in the design and targeting of interventions:³⁹

- Areas of high refugee concentration
- Areas with high poverty rates / households with high levels of poverty (using existing national poverty data)
- Groups with reduced access to material resources and services (e.g. people with disabilities, poor households, displaced due to economic pressures)
- Group with low levels of participation (women, girls, youth, children, people with disabilities)

This highlights the use of chronic poverty, the exposure to refugee influx, more ‘traditional’ categorical individual (or household) characteristics and social exclusion as indicators of vulnerability. The criterion of ‘reduced access’ stands out because, rather than saying that people with disabilities are necessarily vulnerable, it highlights that people with reduced access to resources and services are vulnerable and this may be due to disabilities. It therefore could shift analysis towards ‘who has access’ and ‘who participates’ rather than assuming that all women and older persons are vulnerable. Such an approach would be helpful in identifying

37 United Nations (2014), *2014 Syria Regional Response Plan*.

38 <http://www.nptp-mosa.com/>

39 Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Host Community Support Platform (2013) *National Resilience Plan 2014-2016*, consultation draft, 22 December 2013.

responses that consider structural issues including gender discrimination. For instance, increasing the number of mobile social workers to visit households with a high number of disabled people would ensure that they have adequate access to information and services.

Vulnerability assessments and frameworks

In the sub-region, humanitarian agencies clearly identify refugee status as the initial trigger for humanitarian assistance. In Jordan and Lebanon, WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF have initiated assessments and reflections on vulnerability criteria. These were done independently of one another – which highlights limitations in cross-region learning and sharing on such initiatives. Both processes were focused on the humanitarian response and the refugee population. However, WFP in Lebanon indicated that they would consider extending this methodology to host communities. In Lebanon, vulnerability mapping led by UNICEF takes into account both refugees and poor households.

In order to direct their efforts to refugees and refugee households in the greatest need, a trend amongst humanitarian aid agencies to use a ‘category’ or ‘group’ approach to gauge vulnerability and target humanitarian assistance – meaning that vulnerability is associated with groups of people (e.g. pregnant women, elderly, persons with disabilities) and characteristics such as large households, children under two years of age, etc. In some cases, criteria across sectors are being used to create a vulnerability ‘score’. The table below is an example of a vulnerability scorecard. Criteria are assigned numerical values that are added to create an overall vulnerability score.⁴⁰

Table 3: CARE vulnerability scorecard

Category	Criteria
Health	Disability Demonstrated severe medical condition Demonstrated mild medical condition Psycho-social disorder/trauma
Household	Elderly without family support Elderly with family support More than one family in household with no income or only one source of income One family with no source of income or support More than 5 members in family Single-parent household
Women	Female-headed households Pregnant women and nursing mothers Women at risk of GBV
Children	Children under 2 years of age Children at risk (child labour, GBV) Unaccompanied minors
Housing	Threat related to place residence Documented risk of eviction
Legal	Documented debt over 500 Jordanian Dinars Not receiving assistance

Scorecards and categories of vulnerable persons are pragmatic for targeting, assuming that the intervention is designed based on an accurate understanding of their needs (e.g. that the widow, disabled person, etc. being assisted is not provided with food aid when their primary needs relate to health). Categories, however, do not identify the ‘drivers’ of vulnerability. Drivers of vulnerability are the factors that influence and determine vulnerability. For individuals, gender inequality can be such a driver. For households, these can include lack of assets, resources and access to power structures. Scorecards and similar approaches can assess that a household is vulnerable because they are in debt and have poor food consumption, but alone do not provide analysis on the factors that are leading to their debt and poor household food consumption. Thus, such criteria

40 CARE Jordan (2013) *Case analysis of vulnerabilities among Syrian refugees*

alone are insufficient to design a response that would reduce vulnerability, and indeed their primary use is for determining area and persons that should receive assistance.

In Jordan, UNHCR with partners and the Assessment Capacity Project (ACAPS)⁴¹ have carried out a review of vulnerability criteria being used for Syrian refugees in Jordan. UNHCR has drafted a Vulnerability Analysis Framework for Syrian Refugees in Jordan based on some of the recommendations of earlier work carried out by ACAPS.⁴² The framework distinguishes vulnerability dimensions from categories of persons deemed to be vulnerable. The conceptual framework proposes an approach to vulnerability that looks at access to certain services (distance to water, sanitation, health, education services, etc.) and income, as well as household profile (threat of eviction legal status, family support, children under 5, etc.). This approach goes further than categorical vulnerability criteria by aiming to uncover the source of vulnerability, although the focus is mainly on distance to services and income. Through household profiling, it also highlights productive capacity. The approach does not uncover why a productive person cannot access work and has insufficient income (indeed this should not be expected as the purpose of the approach to ensure equitable access to assistance based on needs, rather than analyse drivers of vulnerability).

Following from the above work, ACAPs is supporting a process of establishing a vulnerability assessment framework that creates a more nuanced picture of vulnerability among refugee households, incorporating capacities, resilience and coping strategies in order to better target assistance and judge its effectiveness in mitigating and reducing vulnerability. Limited resources and pressure from donors mean that humanitarian and development actors are required to provide more justification for assistance. More importantly, refugees are no longer considered to all be equally vulnerable and in need of full assistance (or at least not without justifications to donors). This initiative is one of many that aim to address such requirements.

The humanitarian sector in Lebanon has developed a similar approach. The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) in Lebanon led by WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF aims to ‘provide a multi-sectorial profile and to determine vulnerability criteria of the refugee population, in order to enable humanitarian stakeholders to improve their programming and to target assistance for the most vulnerable’.⁴³ The VASyR is based on sector-specific criteria related to shelter, health, non-food items, WASH, education, food security, protection and economy (e.g. expenditures, livelihood sources). It categorises vulnerability according to severe, high, medium and low levels through a weighing system that emphasises food insecurity and economic dimensions of vulnerability. It remains focused on categorical criteria partly because, as with other tools and initiatives in the region, vulnerability criteria are used to prioritise and target rather than as a way to understand drivers of vulnerability.

UNICEF, with the Office of the Prime Minister in Lebanon, has conducted a broad, national mapping of vulnerability based on Lebanese vulnerable population (living on less than US\$4 a day) and registered refugee caseload. This identified 225 localities where further interventions should be implemented, including a ranking of the most vulnerable sub-locations. The mapping is used to geographically prioritise interventions. Rather than focusing on host communities, this mapping highlights that where chronic vulnerability lies (using poverty indicators as a proxy) as well as where the shock is directly experienced (number of registered refugees). Chronic poverty, as defined by existing poverty indicators used by national governments, was recognised by most consulted as an element of vulnerability. UNDP’s Sub-Regional Response Facility paper Vulnerability Analysis for Countries Affected by the Syrian Crisis follows the same approach by proposing a composite approach with these two-indicators, i.e. poverty rate and number of registered refugees.⁴⁴

UNDP in Lebanon is working to add social tension as an additional criterion for geographical targeting. A question that arose during the consultation with UNDP was whether the mapping exercise needed to look at vulnerability to different shocks and their impacts. The demographic shock through the refugee influx is

41 The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) is an initiative of a consortium of three NGOs (HelpAge International, Merlin and Norwegian Refugee Council) created in December 2009, with the aim of supporting the humanitarian community through improved needs assessment, through collaboration with a large network of partners including NGOs, UN and academics. <http://www.acaps.org/>

42 UNHCR (2013) *Vulnerability Analysis Framework for Syrian Refugee in Jordan*

43 UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP (2013) *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*. The methodology is derived from the National Poverty Targeting Programme of the Government based on World Bank’s methodology.

44 UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility (2014) *Vulnerability Analysis for Countries Affected by the Syrian Crisis*

most often highlighted. Communities living on the border with Syria, however, have also dealt with the loss of access to Syria: cheaper food, cheaper health services, employment, illegal trade are amongst the main consequences of that loss of access. In Lebanon, the demographic shock has also raised tensions among Lebanese political and social groups. UNDP is considering how to map risk and resources of communities to better understand how to provide support, but also highlighted that the immediate need is to implement measures to mitigate the impact of the different shocks being experienced. UNDP has also begun analysing the extent of gender-differentiated vulnerability with a view to promoting gender equality as a means to build resilience at individual, household, community and national levels.

The issue of vulnerability of municipalities, as defined by their inability to cope with the demographic shock, has come out prominently in impact assessments in Jordan. As a result the World Bank has provided funds and capacity development through its Emergency Service and Social Resilience Project. The aim is to help municipalities cope with the pressure put on systems with the arrival of refugees. Nine municipalities were identified as being the most impacted by the crisis. A review of the impact of interventions and the status of these nine municipalities was conducted at the end of 2013.⁴⁵ The report concentrates on organisational and human resources, financial resources, service delivery and management, planning and local development, and community outreach and participation. Whereas humanitarian agencies have focused on the vulnerability of households, the emphasis here is on local and national systems.⁴⁶ A resilience-based development approach needs to consider these different levels to understanding why certain systems are vulnerable to this particular shock but more importantly to highlight what interventions may be needed.

UN Habitat has conducted city and neighbourhood profiling examining how urban systems are coping by assessing changes in demographics, types of shelter and informal urban settlements as well as service delivery and the economy (markets, banks, supply chain, physical and social assets, etc.). This methodology explores in what ways and why systems are not coping. Analysis in support of resilience-base development could benefit from this approach by highlighting where support is most needed at a more ‘systemic’ level that could help the majority of people living within the realm of these systems – including both refugees and host communities.

ILO emphasised the importance of analysing both vulnerability and capacity, because interventions need to be based on an understanding of existing capacities in order to enhance them. In broad terms, ILO is prioritising its work according to poverty indicators, conflict indicators and social tensions, potential for job creation and refugee concentration. The questionnaire used by ILO identifies groups which traditionally face further constraints in accessing livelihoods (e.g. women, elderly, socially isolated) and focuses on understanding the impact of a particular shock, constraints to access work, available assistance and services, coping mechanisms, livelihoods and skills and training. It identifies existing programmes to support people’s livelihoods and which interventions might help particular groups access work.

The ILO targeting strategy looks at the extent to which households are able to meet basic needs, while also considering their resources, skills and capital. For households unable to consistently meet basic needs, it takes into account whether they have productive human capital, which would indicate the potential for interventions geared towards employment, training and entrepreneurship. This targeting approach focuses on understanding household capacity and using that information to inform the options for responses. Rather than highlighting only who is vulnerable, it asks why certain people are vulnerable and what they need to address this vulnerability.

Consultations highlighted existing vulnerability assessment methodologies such as the FAO Livelihood Assessment Kit and the IFRC’s Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment. These tools are often used by these organisations after being adapted to the local context. However, it was unclear whether they were being systematically used in the case of the Syrian crisis. According to the FAO assessment kit, ‘vulnerability depends on the asset base that people have prior to the crisis and their ability to engage in various coping strategies’.⁴⁷ This framework of analysis enables an understanding of livelihoods and shocks that can impact livelihoods, positive and negative coping mechanisms and the capacity of the system to support livelihoods through shocks.

45 Daoud, R. (2013) *Institutional assessment report of the nine municipalities to be supported by the ESSRP – A Study* commissioned by the World Bank Emergency Services and Social Resilience Project

46 UNDP is also doing on analysis on municipal capacities

47 FAO (2009), *The livelihood assessment tool-kit*, p.14

Table 4: Vulnerability criteria and assessment frameworks identified

Type of assessment, analysis, criteria	Purpose	Description	Observations
Household and individual ‘categorical’ vulnerability criteria (e.g. multiple humanitarian agencies)	Targeting assistance to individuals and households	Examples include women-headed households, disabled persons, refugee households Proxy for vulnerability to the negative impacts of shocks, through identifying categories of people who might have decreased ability to respond to shocks	Often linked to the missions, mandates and sector focus of agencies Criteria suggest groups and categories of people who are vulnerable Most commonly used for targeting humanitarian assistance
Vulnerability mapping (e.g. UNICEF in Lebanon)	Geographic identification of areas vulnerable to impacts of Syrian crisis	Provides basic overview of geographical areas considered vulnerable to negative impacts of Syrian crisis based on composite of refugee concentration data and poverty data	Useful for geographic targeting Consideration of poverty moves beyond strict humanitarian focus (with poverty as a proxy for vulnerability to negative impacts of shocks) Identifies where further response analysis is needed
Multisector vulnerability profiles (e.g. VASyR in Lebanon)	Targeting humanitarian assistance, understanding effectiveness	Multi-sectoral profile of refugee populations based on vulnerability criteria	Provides indicators across sectors Can be used for targeting and multisector ‘picture’ Focused on refugees
UNHCR multisector vulnerability analysis (Jordan)	Analysing vulnerability, targeting humanitarian assistance	Conceptual framework for vulnerability analysis is based on geographical, household/communities, and household/individuals	Goes further than categorical vulnerability criteria by aiming to uncover the sources of vulnerability Highlights productive capacity Focused on refugees
Proxy means test (e.g. NPTP in Lebanon)	Inclusion of households in safety net programmes	Proxy means tests generate a score for applicant households based on household characteristics, such as household expenditures	Straight-forward and easy to measure Criteria already accepted for inclusion in safety net programmes
Vulnerability and capacity analysis (e.g. IFRC tool institutions)	Project design and targeting	Analyses risks, vulnerability and capacity	Includes analysis of existing capacity (livelihoods, Some analysis on drivers of vulnerability)
Livelihoods assessment (e.g. FAO tool)	Project design	Analyses impact of disasters on livelihoods	Includes analysis of assets, coping strategies, institutions and livelihood outcomes to inform design of interventions Through the livelihoods framework, enables analysis on drivers of vulnerability Time intensive
City and neighbourhood profiling (e.g. HABITAT)	Project design and targeting	Uses an urban systems analysis to understand how urban systems are coping or not following a shock through a multi-sectoral analysis in order to design interventions	Uses analysis that can inform the design and targeting of appropriate responses Focus on urban systems

The IFRC vulnerability and capacity assessment is ‘a participatory investigative process designed to assess the risks that people face in their locality, their vulnerability to those risks, and the capacities they possess to cope with a hazard and recover from it when it strikes’.⁴⁸ This toolbox looks at vulnerability to particular natural disasters and offers analytical tools to understand nuances of vulnerability. For instance, while some argue that women are a vulnerable group, the approach in this document argues that one needs to consider the division of resources between men and women and how this affects their vulnerability to hazards and risks. The framework examines capacity through an analysis of livelihoods and mapping of institutions (e.g. government, community organisations, hospitals) to which people turn in times of need.

Vulnerability criteria and analysis: trends and convergence

Development and humanitarian actors are taking diverse approaches to vulnerability, including the use of criteria (see Table 4). For resilience-based development, there is no shortage of potential criteria to consider: a total of 99 vulnerability criteria were provided by participants in the UNDG E-Discussion alone. Amidst this diversity, there are four noticeable trends: (1) vulnerability is often defined through categories of people considered to be vulnerable, (2) vulnerability criteria primarily serve to inform targeting and prioritisation and not the design of interventions, (3) different levels of analysis are being considered by different actors and (4) of the criteria reviewed, there is a strong focus on vulnerability with little attention to capacity analysis. The UNICEF and government of Lebanon vulnerability mapping exercise emerges as very relevant for resilience-based development efforts to prioritise attention on specific geographical areas to then conduct vulnerability and capacity analysis that would focus on understanding the drivers of vulnerability.⁴⁹

Categorical criteria versus analysis framework: In its most basic form, vulnerability is understood by stakeholders as the inability to cope with shocks and inability to access basic needs. However, when defining vulnerability, a categorical and ‘vulnerable group’ approach was commonly adopted. In many ways, vulnerable groups were identified according to mandates and population of concerns, like UN Women speaking to the general vulnerability of women, FAO of small scale farmers, UNHCR of refugees, etc. The identification of categories of people who typically are vulnerable to the negative impacts of shocks as vulnerability criteria does not highlight the drivers of vulnerability for these groups (i.e. why women or small scale farmers are suffering from the particular shocks that the Syria crisis imply). Although there is some analysis on the drivers of vulnerability of these categorical groups to the crisis (for example loss of essential imported inputs for small farmers), these drivers are not captured in the vulnerability criteria. The issue of using just categorical groups as criteria for vulnerability is that it highlights chronic issues but not contextual ones. Moving away from categorical criteria would make space for an analytical framework that would not only provide a more in-depth understanding of the drivers of vulnerabilities but would also support the design of appropriate interventions. Categorical criteria inform targeting or who may need support and assistance, but have limited use in identifying drivers of vulnerability. An analysis framework that would focus on assessing the drivers (or root causes) of vulnerability and capacity would support the design of appropriate interventions.

Criteria for targeting and prioritisation versus addressing/uncovering root causes of vulnerability: The type of approach adopted depends heavily on whether the vulnerability criteria and analysis are used as a way to target beneficiaries and prioritise humanitarian, development and/or resilience-based development interventions or as way to design what assistance and support will be provided. Most of the categorical criteria developed by humanitarians and cited above are meant to inform targeting and make choices on who should receive assistance rather than on what assistance should be provided. The VASyR is not meant to uncover the root causes of food insecurity but to identify who is food insecure for instance. The UNICEF mapping according to poverty indicators and refugee concentration can help identify geographical areas for attention rather than analyse the drivers of vulnerability of institutions to the arrival of refugees and declining economic engagement with Syria. An analysis framework should take into account the vulnerability and capacity of

48 IFRC (2007) *VCA toolbox with reference sheets*

49 This approach is supported by UNDP’s Sub-Regional Response Facility’s working paper on *Index of Stress (IS) for Targeting the Most Vulnerable Communities Affected by the Syrian Crisis* (2014) that recognises the need for a rapid assessment to focus analysis made up of refugee caseload as a share of population and poverty rate. This working paper also proposes a more elaborated Index of Stress composed of (1) A humanitarian sub-index (refugee caseload as a share of population); (2) Development sub-index (poverty rate); and (3) Access to basic social services sub-index (composed of two key indicator to be developed: education services indicator and health services indicator). This working paper is attached as an annex (see Annex 1) for reference.

institutions according to the geographical focus defined by the mapping exercise. This paper in no way downplays the role that criteria can play to prioritise actions and target people in need; however, the design of interventions that will eventually help reduce vulnerability and build resilience requires analysis on capacities, drivers of vulnerability and the probable impacts of different response options.

Units of analysis: Analysis of vulnerability is taking place at different levels. While humanitarian work focuses on individual and household units of analysis, development actors have traditionally focused on national level processes. However, both are looking at community-level vulnerability through the resilience lens. This level of analysis has been referred to during consultations as communities, municipalities, local governance and systems. Essentially, these terms all referred to sub-national levels of analysis (but not necessarily units of analysis). The term “communities” refers to the population that considers being part of the same living environment or entity. While the term “municipalities” refers to an administrative unit. The term “local governance” goes beyond the administrative unit to refer to a system of governance at the local level and takes into account formal and informal institutions. The term “systems” has been used to look at not only the formal and informal institutions, but also services and activities that support basic needs and livelihoods and more importantly, the relationship between the population and these services. The term “systems”, used widely throughout this report, seems appropriate in capturing all aspects that may make individuals more or less able to fulfil their basic needs. Rather than a unit of analysis, the concept of “systems” provides a lens to identify all entry points, activities, services, institutions that need to be analysed in order to have a holistic view of drivers of vulnerability as well as existing capacities. This approach would be an asset to operationalise the resilience-based development approach.

Vulnerability and capacity assessments: Vulnerability has been the primary focus of analysis with much less attention to capacity. There are exceptions. The UN Habitat methodology allows more understanding of capacities of systems to cope (including institutions and service delivery mechanisms) as well as individuals’ positive and negative coping mechanisms, and the IFRC and FAO assessment methodologies include analysis of capacity. ILO’s analysis of responses in light of existing capacities is another example of how capacity can be integrated into analysis, which is essential for understanding ways to address vulnerability and support resilience.

Criteria for targeting resilience-based development: One of the approaches reviewed in this section stands out as being particularly relevant for geographic targeting of resilience-based development efforts. The ‘vulnerability mapping’ undertaken by UNICEF and the government in Lebanon, based on poverty indicators and refugee concentration, is a logical entry point for identifying geographic areas vulnerable to the negative impacts of the Syrian crisis. The mapping identifies where poor households are as well as where exposure to the demographic shock (the concentration of refugees) is the highest. While this entry point is the initial step (a response analysis that includes vulnerability and capacity analysis as described above is the next critical and essential step), it is one that would allow prioritising response analysis and interventions for the resilience-based development approach.

This review of the multiple approaches to definition, analysis and criteria for vulnerability including approaches within the Region and outside has highlighted key elements to take forward. The vulnerability mapping conducted in Lebanon helps identify two key indicators that can be used to identify a geographical focus: existing poverty indicators and the concentration of refugee populations. Poverty indicators identify areas with structural vulnerability while the concentration of refugees highlights areas with the greatest direct exposure to the demographic shock. However, this is an initial step. UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility’s working paper on *Index of Stress for Targeting the Most Vulnerable Communities Affected by the Syrian Crisis* further adopts this approach by proposing a two-step approach. The first step replicates the vulnerability mapping by proposing a rapid index methodology composed of refugee caseload as a share of population and the poverty rate. The second step recognises three critical spheres of vulnerability that are relevant to a resilience-based approach: (1) the level of human development of each district or municipality, (2) the availability of (or lack of) health and education services, and (3) the magnitude of the pressure from the Syrian refugee crisis. This informs a detailed Stress Index made of a humanitarian sub-index (refugee caseload as a share of population), a development sub-index (poverty rate) and an access sub-index (education services indicator and health services indicator that require further development) (see Annex 1).⁵⁰

50 UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility (2014) on *Index of Stress (IS) for Targeting the Most Vulnerable Communities Affected by the Syrian Crisis* (17 April 2014); UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility (2014) *Index of Stress for Targeting the Most Vulnerable Communities Affected by the Syrian Crisis*

In order to allow for appropriate and contextualised interventions, the next step should include the analysis of existing drivers (or root causes) of vulnerability and existing capacities in the locations identified. Where possible, the vulnerability to conflict should be taken into account through assessing social cohesion and conducting conflict analysis. The next section will highlight some indicators that relate to different units of analysis including households, institutions, as well as different measurement such as national fiscal capacity, etc. While the units of analysis may include micro-level units such as the households, this report argues for a strong focus on a systems approach: understanding the formal and informal institutions, service delivery mechanisms and social dynamics that impact the ability of individuals to continue meeting their basic needs. It is by understanding where within the system failure to cope can be identified and understanding why different elements of the system are failing to cope that relevant intervention can be designed and implemented.

4 Criteria and analysis for a resilience-based development approach

Addressing the regional impact of the Syrian crisis requires an objective assessment of how to target interventions in support of resilience-based development – where to provide support, whom to support and systems that should be supported. A basic approach to gauging the vulnerability of individuals, households, communities and institutions to the impacts of these shocks is through: 1) criteria based on negative impacts that have already occurred, as these indicate an inability to cope with the shocks; and 2) factors associated with exposure and lack of capacity to manage shocks (i.e. poverty, concentration of refugees, state of natural resources) as these suggest vulnerability to negative impacts in the future. Table 5 proposes criteria and indicators for this purpose based on a review of existing criteria used by stakeholders, consultations and evidence concerning the impacts of these shocks from the national to household levels.

Where data on indicators will be out of date or incomplete, decisions must be made on whether to complete datasets – increased certainty comes at a cost in form of time and resources. There is a wealth of knowledge in the region on which to draw to make decisions based on the available data and information, not all of which will be documented. Nevertheless, the importance of the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data cannot be underestimated.

Table 5: Criteria and indicators for targeting resilience-based interventions

Level of analysis	Criteria	Indicators
National	Macroeconomic and fiscal performance	Growth rate (absolute and % change in) Fiscal balance (absolute and % change in) Public debt as % of GDP (absolute and change in)
	Refugee caseload	# Refugees/ratio of refugees to host nation population
	Environmental factors	Trends of climate change impact on crops and key economic sectors, land degradation, freshwater availability
Sub-national	Poverty	% of population below national poverty line; unemployment
	Natural resources	% of population with adequate access to arable land, freshwater and other natural resources
	Refugee caseload	Refugees as % of population
	Social tensions	Qualitative determination of change in social tensions/potential for violent conflict
Sector	Demand on basic services Capacity of basic services	% Change in expenditures in relevant sectors Qualitative identification of ‘services under stress’ Sector specific indicators* (e.g. education, energy, water and sanitation, waste, health, shelter, agriculture, natural resources)
	Economic sector impacts	% Change in growth by economic sector (e.g. manufacturing, fiscal impact of rising energy import needs, service sector)
Household	Access to sustainable energy options	% of households with access to energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions
	Targeting criteria based on objectives of response	Indicators based on the objectives of response
	Access to household cooking energy and electricity	% of refugee households with access to adequate levels of cooking gas and power

National level

Two basic criteria can be used to determine where resilience-based development efforts should be focused in the sub-region. *Macroeconomic and fiscal performance* data can be used to understand the health of the economy and the government's fiscal position and provide an indication of their vulnerability to negative impacts of the demographic and economic shocks stemming from the Syrian crisis. Current growth rates, fiscal balance and public debt should be considered, as well as changes in these measures since 2011. However, impacts of shocks on these measures take time to manifest. The *refugee caseload and refugee density* (i.e. percentage of refugees to the host population) indicates the exposure of systems (e.g. basic services, labour markets, rental markets) to the demographic shock, which in turn affects the national and refugee households who are part of these systems.

Environmental factors can help identify contextual risks to crisis response and recovery efforts and build into responses longer-term issues of sustainability. In the case of the sub-region impacted by the Syrian crisis for example, drought played an exacerbating force in 2006-2010 social tension and economic challenges in the lead up to the onset of social tensions. The onset of the next drought cycle in the area could likewise be an important factor for development responses, especially in context of a good percentage of refugees in the sub-region having been rural farmers impacted by the previous drought cycle prior to internal migrations and subsequent refugee flows. Future planning for resumption of farm related livelihoods should thus consider national trends of climate change, drought and related land and water insecurity factors.

Sub-national level

A combination of refugee density and poverty data can be used to identify sub-national areas vulnerable to further impacts of the Syrian crisis. Exposure, which is one component of vulnerability, is greatest in areas with high refugee concentrations (i.e. high ratio of refugee to national population). Poverty is associated with limited capacities to deal with shocks. A combination of poverty rates and refugee concentrations is therefore a logical starting point for identifying areas vulnerable to the negative impacts of the demographic shock. This follows the method used by UNICEF and the Prime Minister's office in Lebanon to create a vulnerability map by using a composite of poverty and refugee data, which is readily available. Ideally poverty data used should go beyond a strict focus on income and include unemployment indicators (including in the informal sector). This composite of two indicators is further adopted in UNDP Sub-Region Response Facility's working papers *Vulnerability Analysis for Countries Affected by the Syrian Crisis and Index of Stress for Targeting the Most Vulnerable Communities Affected by the Syrian Crisis*.

A key issue relates to natural resources, and variation of community access to water, arable land and other natural resources between communities within a sub-national areas such as a province or districts, or between sub-national areas. Inequity in access to natural resources can be exacerbated by shocks, while Government responses to local challenges in accessing arable land and water can be an important factor in catalysing tensions. Meanwhile, there may be critical ecosystems that face disproportionate impacts from refugee flux, such as in Jordan where the Zataari camp overlays the country's largest groundwater aquifer. The state of local natural assets should also be a key factor to consider in designing resilience-based development responses tailored to local contextual factors, with natural resources often an important base for post-crisis livelihood and economic recovery.

Targeting at a sub-national level should also consider *social tensions* that might result in violence, if there is a deterioration of communities' ability to manage peaceful relations within the community and with refugee populations. However, 'social cohesion' is not practical as an indicator because attempts to measure it would likely require collecting new data and adapting measurement approaches to different contexts in the sub-region. Therefore basic conflict analysis should be used to identify areas with the greatest risk of tensions and violence and taken into account in the targeting of interventions at a sub-national level.⁵¹ Complementary to that is the focus of UNESCO's mandate on '*Building Peace in the Minds of Men and Women*' that emphasises aspects that deal with social cohesion, education and cultural diversity as factors for peace and resilience.⁵²

51 UNDP in Lebanon is developing a methodology to assess social cohesion and conducting conflict analysis, as well as perception polls on refugee presence.

52 As demonstrated in UNESCO's 2009 World Report *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*, the cultural diversity in the sub-region that is pointed at as a factor of tensions is actually the vehicle for addressing the roots of the social tensions. The underlying societal divisions cannot be ignored.

Consultation with UNESCO highlighted differing views on the appropriateness of conflict analysis. UNESCO highlighted alternative approaches in its 2009 World Report *‘Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue’* as well as UNDP’s 2004 Human Development Report *‘Cultural Liberty in Today’s Diverse World’*. These provide elements to develop approaches at various degrees of granularity to address social cohesion as a factor of resilience. As such, in addition to addressing the humanitarian and immediate recovery needs of affected countries, a resilience strategy should, according to UNESCO, include the elements for sustaining peace as embedded in social cohesion in existing national plans. UNESCO argues that longer term investments that nurture peace at various levels (household, community, sector, institution, national dialogue) are essential in a medium-term resilience plan. This includes investing in peace dialogue, teacher training and literacy.⁵³

Certain communities have stronger economic links to Syria than others (e.g. communities that border Syria). Effects in these areas to the economic shock may or may not be readily captured through criteria related to poverty and refugee concentration. Thus prioritising geographic zones should also consider areas where households are facing decreased livelihood opportunities, abandoning farmland in border areas and facing higher prices of goods and services owing to decreased access to markets in/linked to Syria.

Sector level

Within and among geographic areas identified, other criteria can be used to identify basic services and sectors that are not coping with the increased demand and pressure from refugees. A basic indicator of *increased demand on services* is increased government expenditure per sector (e.g. health, energy, water, sanitation, education and, waste). This indicator only captures how increased demand is affecting the resources available to and required of public services; it does not reflect where demand for basic services is being met through private providers, aid agencies or outside of government channels, or where needs are going un-met. Given the challenges that would be involved in collecting data on all of these dimensions (e.g., supply demand, coping strategies, public and private service provision), a more sensible approach would be to keep these various factors in mind and to incorporate them into planning where applicable data is available.

Sector-specific criteria and indicators could be developed with the relevant stakeholders (e.g. ministries, aid agencies, affected populations), that consider how sectors have been affected and the *capacities of basic services* to respond to increased demand. Potential indicators include: education (number of over-crowded schools, number of refugee children enrolled in schools),⁵⁴ health (number of outpatient visits to primary healthcare centres, percentage of Syrian patients per total patients), sanitation (sanitation coverage, access to waste collection services), housing (vacant housing stock, rental prices, waste (access to waste collection services) and energy (percent demand growth in demand on the electricity power grid and related fiscal outlay burdens). Criteria would enable a comparison of probable impacts between areas (e.g. whether schools in one locality on average were more overcrowded than another), but alone are insufficient to prioritise which sectors to support in relation to one another (e.g. whether more resources should be directed to supporting education systems or health systems).

Within geographic areas that have been identified through the above targeting processes, stakeholders also can make judgements on the services under stress based on their own assessments, as data on specific indicators might not be available or the type of data might not be consistent between localities. This approach would mitigate the need for additional (and potentially unnecessary) data collection exercises.

Economic sectors and systems that were dependent on Syria have been affected by the economic shock of reduced access and trade. Given number of variables that contribute to performance of economic sectors,

53 These objectives should be in parts fostered through investing in education. As articulated in UNESCO’s 2011 Education for All Global Monitoring Report entitled *The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education*, ‘to unlock education’s potential to nurture peace, governments and donors need to prioritise the development of inclusive education systems [...]. Schools should be seen first and foremost as places for imparting the most vital of skills: tolerance, mutual respect, and the ability to live peacefully with others’. There is a need for more teachers to absorb more students, but the skills of these new teachers as well as the existing teaching need to be reviewed in light of the education needs. The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) provides a number of minimum standards for education in emergency, as well as tools and strategies for using education not only to get children (and youth) off the street and protect them, but also to nurture a qualitative aspect of education to build a more resilient and peaceful society after a crisis.

54 As per UNESCO’s contribution highlighted in the previous section, a qualitative assessment is needed following the minimum standards highlighted by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE).

and the likelihood that markets and individuals are reorienting towards more viable opportunities, specific indicators are not advisable. Basic analysis on vulnerability of sectors can consider evidence of negative impacts (e.g. changes in food and agricultural exports to Syria), which can then inform analysis on whether/how interventions should address this impacts.

The environmental effect of the crisis, which is vital, will feature prominently when analysing the vulnerability of the energy and agricultural sectors. Pressure on natural resources as a result of the crisis has increased the vulnerability of the physical environment that supports the livelihoods of communities. A resilience-based strategy in those sectors will not be complete without fully addressing environmental sustainability and natural resource management.

Household level

A primary entry point to support households through a resilience-based development approach is by supporting systems and services on which they depend, such as healthcare, energy, education and infrastructure. In countries where national households have access to safety nets, these are an entry point to supporting national households whose vulnerability to the impacts of the crisis has resulted in a worsening of their well-being. Their eligibility criteria are already in place.

Other resilience initiatives that target national or refugees at the household level, either through a resilience-based development approach or other resilience initiatives, should use criteria linked to their objectives. Interventions supporting access to housing by directly targeting households would use a different targeting approach than one identifying households to participate in public works programmes. Likewise general subsidy and cash transfer systems related to household access to cooking gas and electricity would likewise vary from general households and refugee households. Because refugee and national households face different constraints, targeting criteria may differ. However, the focus should not be on finding ‘universal’ criteria that apply to national household on the one hand and refugee households on the other. Criteria for determining which households should be included in responses are always based on the response objectives, which are based an analysis of the problem at hand (e.g. related to sanitation services, livelihoods, housing).

Analysis for prioritising and planning interventions

The proposed criteria in Table 5 move beyond a narrow focus on ‘host communities and refugees’ by identifying areas and systems in affected countries that are vulnerable to the impacts of the Syrian crisis. Geographical targeting through mapping poverty indicators, natural resource capacities and refugee concentration, as well as consideration of conflict/social tensions, is an important first step. Putting a resilience-based development approach into practice will also require determining and prioritising the responses to implement in the identified areas (i.e. response analysis). In Jordan and Lebanon, this process is already being taken forward through, respectively, the National Resilience Plan and the Stabilisation Roadmap.

A response analysis process involves:

1. Analysis of drivers of vulnerability, capacities and how the scenario will likely evolve
2. Identification of potential responses that match the needs, drivers and capacities
3. Analysis of probable impacts to justify the resources

A hypothetical example can be used to illustrate a response analysis process. Suppose that geographic mapping has identified a locality with very high poverty rates, already strained natural resources and ecosystems, and a large percentage of refugees compared to the host population, that sector-specific criteria and analysis suggest that the housing sector is facing serious stresses, and that decision-makers have determined that addressing housing in this area is a priority. In order to take forward a response, stakeholders need to consider how the situation might evolve (e.g. whether population movements are likely, whether the market supply may catch up with demand); drivers of vulnerability (e.g. demographic pressures, regulatory environment, chronic urban poverty, lack of equitable access to resources, gender inequality, energy, water, arable land); who is vulnerable to the negative impacts (e.g. poor national households living in those areas, refugees); capacities (e.g. government and aid agencies engaged in the sector, initiatives already in place to support access to housing, available housing stock); and the range of actions that therefore might be appropriate (e.g. rental subsidies, addressing policy barriers to housing construction and renting, directly constructing new housing,

cash transfers, addressing policy barriers to increases access to sustainable energy, arable land and water, doing nothing because the market supply is catching up demand through increased construction). Decisions on which responses to support would consider their probable impacts (e.g. foreseen positive impacts, time horizon of impacts, which segments of the population would likely benefit/not benefit, potential negative impacts).

Response analysis is not new. Stakeholders in the region are constantly engaged in weighing how best to provide support. However, the focus has been most strongly on supporting refugee households affected by the crisis with less analysis on the systems on which national and refugee households depend, and capacity analysis in particular has been limited. A challenging issue for analysing and prioritising responses is that drivers of vulnerability in relation to the demographic and economic shocks cannot be fully divorced from those underpinning chronic vulnerability. While a resilience-based development approach should not seek to resolve unresolved structural challenges that decades of development work have not sufficiently addressed, it must also consider the interplay of these drivers. Similarly, efforts to support resilience in response to the Syria crisis should consider other relevant shocks and hazards, such as regional droughts, which affect natural resources that have been stressed owing to refugee influxes. For example the sub-region faces regular drought cycles, but with more severe and frequent events in recent years, this complex and broad contextual factor will have implications for long-term responses that seek to sustain post-crisis recovery efforts.

Prioritisation of responses between sectors will require making decisions on which responses take priority over others. Platforms and coordination processes are already in place that can be used for prioritisation within and between sectors, such as the Host Community Support Platform in Jordan, working groups and sector-specific coordination groups. Basic principles that could guide prioritisation are *feasibility* (how feasible is the intervention technically and politically), *relevance* (how strongly does the response correspond with the systems that are vulnerable to the negative impacts of the demographic and/or economic shock? How aligned is the intervention to government priorities?), probable *impact* (how quickly will results be realised? How significant will these results be? Which impacts would be temporary solutions to help the existing systems to cope or increase the system's ability to deal with change?), and *added value* of supporting actions through a resilience-based development approach (is resilience-based development the most appropriate avenue for support)?

There are multiple sources of data available to support the types of analysis outlined in this section. A number of assessments of the impact of the current Syria crisis on countries in the sub-region, and in particular Lebanon and Jordan, have been conducted. Data on poverty indicators is available in Lebanon and Jordan from the governments and work carried out by development actors prior to the Syria crisis (Jordan has a functioning Department of Analysis and Statistics at the national level). Likewise extensive data sets exist related to issues of natural resources and the environment, based on UN cooperation with governments in countries of the sub-region on issues such as climate and drought trend and vulnerability analysis, land degradation vulnerability trends and community impacts, and state of energy consumption growth and use of energy efficiency and renewable energy options. Humanitarian organisations have gathered substantial data at household level, though focused primarily on refugees (e.g. UNHCR and Progress database for registration of refugees). Insufficient availability of sex-disaggregated data may hamper analysis, however.

The criteria for targeting resilience-based development that are proposed in this section are deliberately lean, which corresponds to findings from the scoping mission on the importance of keeping criteria simple rather than including all possible indicators. That said, the use of criteria should not come at the cost of excluding other relevant data, information and analysis where it exists. For example, if information on wage rates in the informal sector in certain areas suggests that wages are decreasing, this indicates that populations engaged in the informal labour markets face risks related to their income and livelihoods.⁵⁵ The purpose of criteria is to inform decisions and not to substitute for judgment.

The operationalisation of a resilience-based development approach, and analysis to support it, should incorporate issues relating to gender, exclusion, environment and environmental risks, rule of law and social cohesion/conflict. The position paper on the resilience-based development approach states that these are cross-cutting principles. These principles should be integrated when implementing the approach in this document.

⁵⁵ The Needs Assessment Review of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan found that evidence suggested downward pressure on wages in the informal private sector.

This assessment started with a strong focus on vulnerability criteria. The scoping mission helped identify the need to go beyond criteria. Criteria, whether they are termed vulnerability criteria or otherwise, are meant for inclusion/exclusion into an assistance programme. They are also meant to help prioritise interventions. However, they are not meant to uncover the root causes or drivers of vulnerability. This knowledge is however needed if one aims to design interventions that want to contribute to resilience. As such, this report argues that an analysis that aims to uncover the root causes of vulnerability to design interventions addressing these root causes is essential. The two approaches are not exclusive however. They are complementary and play different roles. However, their rationale should be explicitly stated as one does not replace the other. This study argues that the most significant step to operationalise the resilience-based development approach is first and foremost to carry out a response analysis that identifies the drivers of vulnerability, existing capacity as well as possible actions to address them. This should be done prioritising those areas with high poverty, high refugee concentration, and where conflict is most likely (through conducting localised conflict analyses). This should be done by using the information provided by the many assessments that have been carried out in the region. While humanitarian assessments may be too focused on refugee households, others such as the regional study by Bouche and Mohieddin (2013) contain a wealth of information on the issues at stake. Finally, this should be done in consultation with actors on the ground including affected populations, with explicit attention to those voices that are otherwise difficult to reach out.

5 Conclusions and additional recommendations

The Syrian crisis has resulted in devastating consequences that require a mix of humanitarian and development responses. Countries in the region have been generous in hosting refugees fleeing the crisis. This generosity has come at a cost. The demographic and economic shocks have had repercussions from the national to the household level – impacts on growth, government expenditure, basic services, employment and social cohesion. There is growing consensus on the need to support national systems and services in host countries through development approaches that consider the unique circumstances of the Syrian crisis.

Resilience offers a common ground through which more coherence between humanitarian and development approaches can be achieved in a way that recognises their distinct objectives and principles. The humanitarian RRP6 include objectives and activities to support resilience and recognises the importance of coherence with national resilience strategies, and the national resilience and stabilization strategies in place are intended to work in tandem with humanitarian ones. However, when considering the role for aid in addressing the negative impacts of the Syrian crisis and support to resilience, there is a general sentiment that development assistance needs to ‘catch up’.

Entry points for a resilience-based development approach are numerous. Governments in Jordan and Lebanon have developed resilience and stabilization strategies that identify systems and sectors vulnerable to these negative impacts and propose responses in support of them. Governments already have in place national safety net programmes that traditionally are used to address poverty and shocks faced by household; national and sub-national social protection mechanisms can be strengthened and expanded; and systems for analysing and tracking risks from climate change, drought, energy use and land and water insecurity. Donors, aid agencies and governments are taking forward actions to support systems from which good practices and lessons can be drawn.

This paper proposes criteria that can support the operationalisation of a resilience-based development approach through the identification and prioritisation of intervention areas. A first step, which has already been taken forward in Lebanon, is to identify areas with high refugee concentration and poverty rates and those facing increased social tensions. The inclusion of criteria related to poverty and social tensions moves away from the strict focus on ‘host’ communities, to a broader recognition that refugee presence is not the sole indicator of vulnerability. Criteria to identify sectors and services under stress should be refined with the relevant ministries and aid agencies, while keeping in mind the information and data which is and is not available. In all cases, common sense and relevant information falling outside of the scope of criteria should be considered, as it is unreasonable to expect measurable indicators to capture all dimensions of these impacts. Criteria cannot resolve that there will be competing priorities and that resources are rarely available for all desired actions; judgements are required.

A resilience-based development response should address the vulnerability of institutions and individuals to the negative impacts of the demographic and economic shocks and identify what weakens their capacity to withstand, adapt to and recover from them. The process of prioritising responses should be based on an understanding of drivers of vulnerability, of capacities that can be supported and of the probable impacts of different responses. Processes and structures are already in place that can support this analysis and decision-making.

The time for reflection is never over, but now is the time for action to support resilience through development assistance. Responses and strategies should be pursued with flexibility so they are able to adjust according to emerging lessons and changing circumstances. These strategies should likewise ensure that responses include monitoring and information sharing processes to enable this feedback loop.

More and better data is almost always desirable to inform the design and prioritisation of responses. However, the question of supporting host countries to manage the impacts of the Syrian crisis is an urgent one, and it is

crucial to not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Use of sex-disaggregated data should be pursued to the extent possible.

Additional recommendations

While section 4 of this paper captures the key technical recommendations emerging from this study, the points below provide further specifics to guide policy-making and practice on vulnerability and a resilience-based approach.

- National strategies and the ways in which they will be supported should be outlined in the Comprehensive Regional Strategy, including, but not limited to, criteria for targeting responses in support of resilience-based development.
- Broad geographical targeting should be based on mapping household poverty indicators, state of natural resources, refugee concentration and risk of conflict/social tension.
- Sector-based criteria for targeting and prioritisation should be developed and refined through a consultation with the relevant stakeholders (ministries, UN agencies other technical actors), including the identification of sectors affected by reduced trade/access to Syria.
- Stakeholders should recognise that criteria can inform decision-making on where to provide support and the systems to support, but cannot replace the need for judgement and consultation.
- The process of designing and prioritising responses to support a resilience based development approach should consider how the present scenario might evolve and based on an understanding of drivers of vulnerability, of capacities that can be supported and of the probable impacts of different responses (i.e. response analysis).
- As one of the most resource scarce areas of the world, contextual factors related to natural resources and the environment are critical to understanding exacerbating aspects of underlying vulnerability to crises as well as effectively designing responses that span the humanitarian-development nexus. This is particularly important in context of ensuring measures achieve the ‘sustaining’ phase of resilience based development response.
- The Jordan National Resilience Plan and Lebanon Stabilisation Roadmap should be supported.
- While drivers of chronic vulnerability should be considered in the design of interventions, this is not the time to resolve structural issues that decades of development efforts have not been able to address. However, all efforts should ensure that where possible, such structural issues start to be addressed from the very beginning of the response.
- The UNDP position paper⁵⁶ on a resilience-based development approach should be finalised to ensure clarity and transparency on the approach, and principles guiding it.

56 Regional United Nations Development Group (2014) Position paper: a resilience-based development response to the Syria crisis, Draft March 2014

Annex 1: Index of Stress (IS) for Targeting the Most Vulnerable Communities Affected by the Syrian Crisis

I. Introduction

The Syrian crisis is confronting neighboring countries with a complex and multi-faceted ‘vulnerability challenge’. There is growing evidence that the spillovers of the crisis in neighboring countries are affecting socio-economic fabric, access and quality of basic infrastructure and services in territories and communities which were already among the poorest and most deprived prior to the crisis. Vulnerable refugees are found to compete with equally vulnerable local populations for already scarce or strained resources, infrastructure and social services, food, jobs, affordable housing and livelihood opportunities, which unavoidably heightens social tensions. Pressures on local solid waste management, water and health systems are especially high, stretching beyond limits the management capacities of local governments and other actors. An analysis of the stress of the refugee crisis and the pre-existing vulnerabilities of host communities is required to provide an in depth estimate of needs, a basis for targeting responses, a baseline for measuring change toward more resilient communities and countries.

The resilience based approach to the Syrian crisis response includes a development component that is directed to support the most affected host communities to withstand the pressures of the increasing refugee presence on their economies, social services, infrastructure and livelihoods and recover in a manner that guarantees that the progress in sustainable human development in those communities (in education, health and poverty) does not stall but continues forward.

There is an agreement that the support of the international community needs to prioritize the most vulnerable communities that stand to suffer the biggest deprivations in human development on account of the crisis. The support should also prioritize social service sectors that have the biggest shortages in capacity and are under the most stress.

The UNDP developed a composite Index of Stress (IS) for the purpose of targeting and prioritizing the most vulnerable communities (at the district or municipality level) that are affected by the Syrian crisis. The IS is now fully endorsed by the Comprehensive Regional Strategy Framework (CRSF) of the UN. The IS considers three critical spheres of vulnerability that are relevant to a resilience-based response to the Syrian Crisis:

- 1) The level of human development of each district or municipality
- 2) The availability (or lack of) health and education services
- 3) The magnitude of the pressure from the Syrian refugee crisis

II. Rationale:

The communities impacted by the Syrian crisis vary not just in the magnitude of the pressure these communities face from the influx of refugees but they can vary greatly in both the degree of development and the availability of basic social services.⁵⁷

The countries in the sub-region are all Middle-Income Countries with a level of development that is better than most low-income countries but not high enough to provide the sufficient resilience to deal with such a vast and continuing humanitarian and economic crisis. Similarly, State capacities in those countries are relatively

⁵⁷ The social services of most concern in this note are health and education services. The same methodology can be extended to other types of social services as necessary.

strong and continuously expanding but they still fall short when compared to high-income countries and lack any excess or buffer capacities necessary to accommodate a demographic shock like the one imposed by the Syrian refugee crisis. Moreover, the geographic inequality (between rural and urban for example) in levels of development and access to social services is very high.

A well-targeted resilience-based response requires a methodology to prioritize the most vulnerable communities based on the magnitude of pressure from the Syrian crisis, the level of development and capacities of social services sectors.

The IS provides a simple and quick way to combine the three pieces of information in a single index that allows for a ranking of vulnerable communities based on their overall level of stress from the crisis. Current basements rely on a discrete one-dimensional view of vulnerability and stress without taking all three dimensions into account.

The IS therefore provides a quick, accurate, and comprehensive criteria for prioritizing communities that are most vulnerable. The IS is not a diagnostic tool of the drivers of vulnerability at the community level. Such a diagnosis will require further analysis of the communities highlighted by the IS.

III. Purpose:

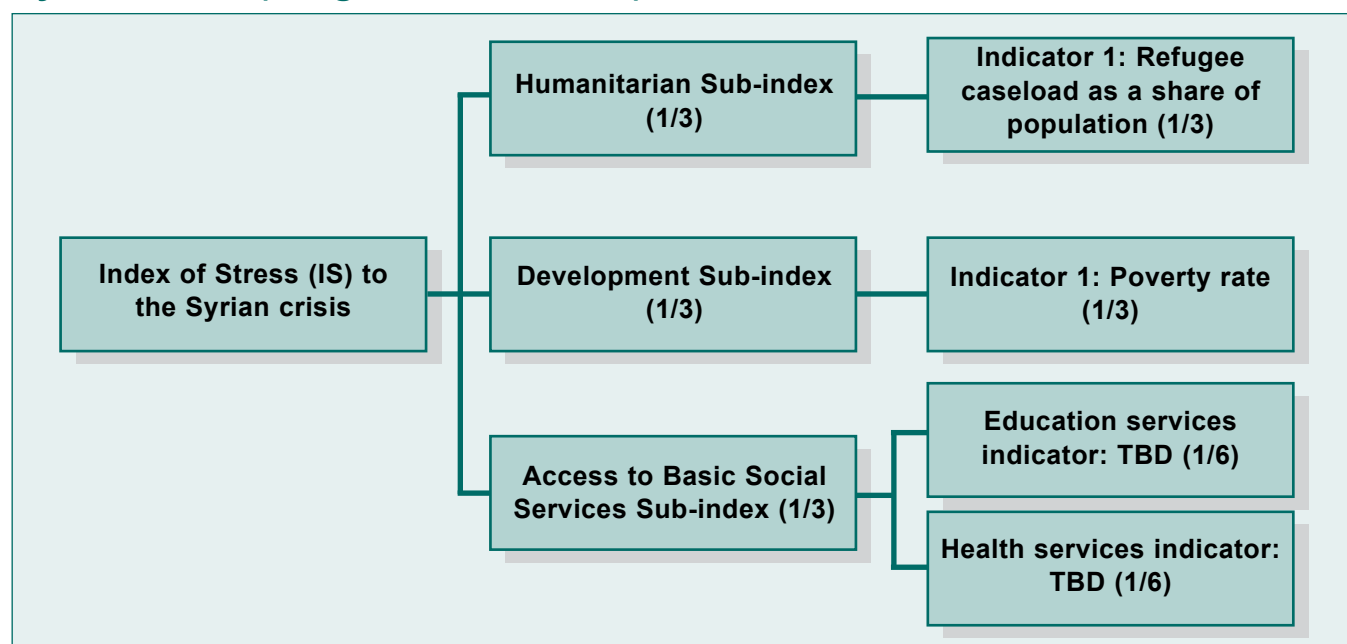
The purpose of the IS is to highlight the most vulnerable communities based on the three most significant dimensions of vulnerability and stress in the context of the Syrian crisis: 1) Human Development, 2) Humanitarian crisis, and 3) Access to basic health and education services.

IV. Definition: Index of Stress (IS)

The Index of Stress (IS) that is composed a sub-index for each of the three dimensions of stress and vulnerability that are relevant for communities affected by the Syrian crisis
IS includes three equally-weighted sub-indices:

- 1) A humanitarian sub-index that focuses on the magnitude of the refugee crisis by district
- 2) An development sub-index that captures the level of human development at the district level
- 3) An Access to social services sub/index that is concerned with measuring the shortages of access to basic health and education services.

Figure 1: The Index of Stress (IS) for communities affected by the Syrian crisis (weights in brackets)



As can be seen from figure 2 above, both the humanitarian index and the development sub-index have a single indicator that is identical to the indicators included in the rapid index. The Access to basic social services sub-index will include indicators that captures access to both health and education services.

The detailed index has the added benefit of being customizable to include all three relevant dimensions of vulnerability to and stress from the crisis and can also accommodate from more than one indicator per dimension. It provides a more accurate description of the community's stress as a result of the crisis though with some loss of rapidity.

V. Methodology and data

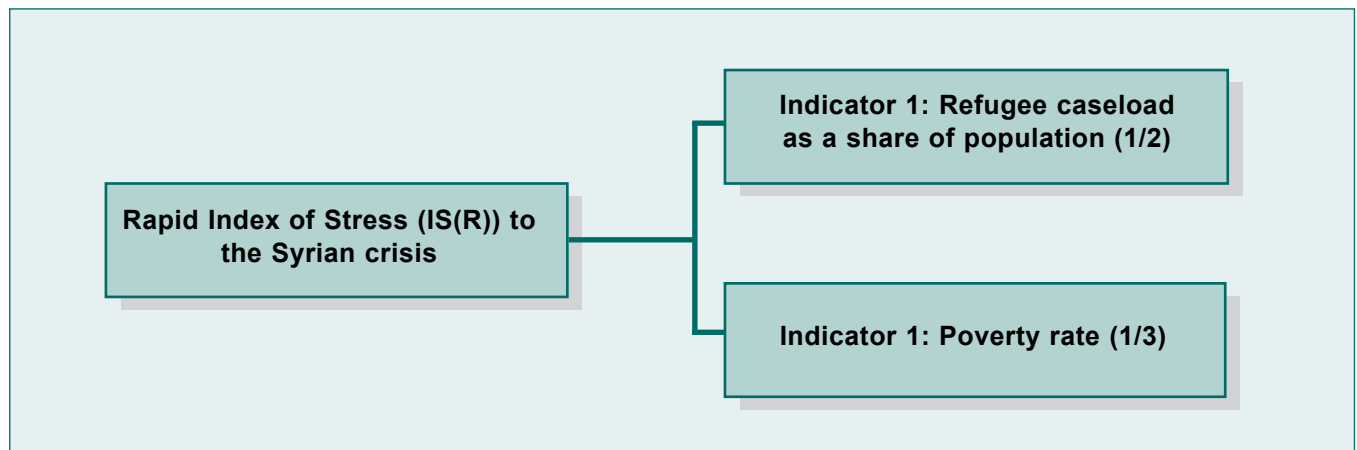
The IS will use a geometric mean of all three sub-indices with an equal weight for each sub-index. Poverty and refugee will use the same sources and level of geographic detail as outlined in Annex 1. Health and education indicators still remain to be confirmed.

VI. A Rapid Index of Stress

An in-depth analysis of stress from the Syrian crisis requires a multilayered process that spans across several countries, sectors and subnational localities (governorates or districts). Although such an in-depth analysis is eventually necessary, the UNDP also proposed a quick but accurate way to measure vulnerability and stress at the local level is needed to form the basis for measuring resilience in the Comprehensive Regional Strategy (CRS).

A rapid Index of Stress IS(R) that consists of just two indicators, namely the national poverty rate (the percentage of households living below the national poverty line) and the number of registered refugees at the local level (as a share of the total population).

Figure 2: Rapid Index of Stress (IS(R)) for communities affected by the Syrian crisis (weights in brackets)



The poverty rate approximates the existing vulnerabilities of host communities since poor communities are the ones most likely to suffer deprivations in human development, a lack of opportunities to generate livelihoods and get jobs, and also shortages in infrastructure and access to basic social services. Moreover, poverty data (collected through Household Income Expenditure and Consumption Surveys (HIECS) is available for all countries at a highly disaggregated level (by district or municipality).

The number of registered refugees captures the degree of the stress the crisis is placing on these communities. The larger the number of refugees in a given area, the more likely it is that this area will suffer the adverse impacts of the shock.

A similar methodology⁵⁸ was used by the Government of Lebanon in the “Lebanon Stabilization and Recovery Roadmap” to identify and rank vulnerable municipalities. The same methodology was recommended by ODI reports and interviews⁵⁹ conducted to support the development of the Comprehensive Regional Strategy.

IS(R) Methodology:

The IS(R) is a geometric mean of the two indicators with both indicators receiving equal weights

$$15(R) = \sqrt{PR \pm RP}$$

Where,

IS(R) = Rapid Index of Stress of communities affected from the Syrian crisis. The Index ranges from 0 (no stress) to infinity.

PR: Is the percent of households living below the national poverty line ranging from 0 to 100

RP: Is the ratio of refugees to total population ranging from 0 to 100.

IS(R) Data

The IS(R) requires two indicators. Poverty data is provided from the latest available household income surveys in each of the countries of concern (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey) applied at the greatest possible level of geographic detail (district or municipality).

58 The method uses a geometric mean of two indices a poverty index based on the poverty rate and a registered refugee index based on the number of registered Syrian refugees to measure stress at the municipality level. This methodology uses both data from UNHCR on the number of refugees and the most recent poverty map for Lebanon (2004).

59 ???

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Cover image: Children gather around a fire in a makeshift encampment for Syrian refugees in the eastern Bekaa Valley, close to the Syrian border.
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