RESPOND

Working Papers

Global Migration:
Consequences and Responses

Reception Policies, Practices and Responses

Lebanon Country Report

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Contents

Acknowledgements

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Definition
3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CMU	Crisis Management Unit
EU	European Union
GSO	General Security Office
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Political Rights
ISF	Internal Security Forces
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoIM	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PHC	Primary Health Care
PHCC	Primary Health Care Center
PM	Prime Minister
PRS	Palestinian Refugees from Syria
RACE	Reaching All Children with Education

RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SHC	Secondary Health Care
THC	Tertiary Health Care
TPR	Temporary Protection Regime
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organisation

About the project

RESPOND is a Horizon 2020 project which aims at studying the multilevel governance of migration in Europe and beyond. The consortium is formed of 14 partners from 11 source, transit and destination countries and is coordinated by Uppsala University in Sweden. The main aim of this Europe-wide project is to provide an in-depth understanding of the governance of recent mass migration at macro, meso and micro levels through cross-country comparative research and to critically analyse governance practices with the aim of enhancing the migration governance capacity and policy coherence of the EU, its member states and third countries.

RESPOND will study migration governance through a narrative which is constructed along five thematic fields: (1) Border management and security, (2) Refugee protection regimes, (3) Reception policies, (4) Integration policies, and (5) Conflicting Europeanization. Each thematic field is reflecting a juncture in the migration journey of refugees and designed to provide a holistic view of policies, their impacts and responses given by affected actors within.

In order to better focus on these themes, we divided our research question into work packages (WPs). The present report is concerned with the findings related to WP4, which focuses specifically on reception policies.

Executive Summary

This report provides a contextual analysis of the provision of reception to asylum seekers in Lebanon, with a particular focus on the developments of the period spanning 2011 to 2019. Research findings highlight the absence of a comprehensive asylum reception regime, in favour of a set of formal and informal *ad-hoc* policies and decisions taken from 2014 onwards, with the specific aim of dissuading populations of concerns from settling in the country. While Lebanon is party to numerous international conventions and treaties safeguarding reception standards, it however falls short in practice with the implementation of discriminatory measures breaching those very principles. Indeed, the response to the mass influx of Syrian refugees in 2011 required the cooperation of a myriad of state actors at the national level, such as ministries, the local level with municipalities, as well as other actors ranging from International United Nations agencies, to the associative sector,, in the provision of the various dimensions of reception. Despite efforts exerted at both the national and local level, scarce human and material resources, donor fatigue, and the government's subpar commitment (or lack thereof) to improve the reception regime have all resulted in various multidimensional hurdles encountered by asylum seekers in every aspect of their daily lives. From accessing the border, to regularising their legal status, to accessing income generating opportunities, Syrian asylum seekers face a myriad of obstacles, and bureaucratic formalities, coupled with a multiplicity of actors, and widespread practices of discriminatory treatments. Indeed, practices of (non)reception appear to be multi-layered. In terms of access to employment, available income-generating opportunities are restricted to the informal labour market where Syrian asylum seekers are recurrently exploited by their employers, regardless of their legal status. This precarious situation also affects access to housing and education, as monthly rent and extra-school fees exacerbate livelihood instability. Additionally, the described subpar provision of services and allowances, specifically with regards to cash transfers, in-kind assistance, and healthcare have compounded already dire reception standards. Further, encounters with civil society actors, Lebanese officials, as well as host community members, as recounted by our respondents, have aided in forming the perception of a "non-welcome" culture. Ultimately these dynamics serve to dissuade Syrian asylum seekers from settling in Lebanon, all the while encouraging them to either return to Syria or seek resettlement abroad. Moreover, negative lived experiences serve to further instil the perception of Lebanon solely as a country of transit. The concluding section of this report advances recommendations to state actors, municipalities, and non-state actors with the aim of improving the reception process and corresponding standards.

The methodology of this report is as follows:

❖ The first section of this report relies on an review of the literature, through desk research including, notably, the examination of policy documents, newspaper articles, (I)NGO reports, and academic literature on the provision of refugee reception in Lebanon, at the macro-level.

❖ The second section draws from the results from the fieldwork[1] which consisted of 75 interviews, conducted at both the micro (60) and meso-level (15), and with the aim of

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[1] The fieldwork was conducted by our field research assistant, Cybele Atmeh.

gathering first-hand insights about practices, perceptions and narratives, in order to complement prevailing macro-level insights from the desk research. All interviews followed semi-structured interview guidelines. All interviews took place in person. At the micro-level, 60 interviews were conducted with Syrian (55), Kurdish (1) and Palestinian Syrian (4) refugees arriving to Lebanon after the eruption of the Syrian conflict in 2011. Our interlocutors consisted of 28 male and 32 female interviewees, all between the ages of 20 and 65. At the meso-level, 15 interviews were conducted with (4) female and (11) male interlocutors. The interviews targeted members of civil society, municipality and ISF officers, among others. Interviews took place in rural and urban areas in urban and rural areas and were conducted in Arabic.

1. Policies and Legislations (Non)-Reception: A Multi-level Perspective

Lebanon is currently hosting the largest number of refugees per capita worldwide, following the eruption of the Syrian conflict in 2011 (UNHCR, 2019b, p.2). Additionally, it is also host to an estimated 504,000 Palestinians registered with UNRWA, 42,000 Palestinians refugees from Syria, and 16,000 from other origins, such as Sudan, Iraq and Ethiopia (Janmyr, 2017). Despite these figures, the Lebanese polity still lacks formal domestic reception legal and policy framework, as its government insists it is not a country of asylum. Instead, it follows an assemblage of formal and informal *ad-hoc* policies differentiating between nationals and non-nationals, immigration legislation, constitutional provisions, in addition to targeted-action plans in cooperation with national and international partners.

For the purpose of this report, the notion of reception allows us to map out and include the conditions under which asylum seekers are granted non-discriminatory access to: (1) material goods such as accommodation, food, clothing, which could be presented as in-kind and/or financial allowances, (2) basic healthcare, and (3) education for minors (Council Directive 2013/33/EU, 2013). Additionally, the relevant time frame for our analysis of reception standards spans from the crossing of the border (including airports and seaports), to the submission of an application for international protection, and ends when a relevant decision has been made by the designated authorities[2] (UNHCR, 2000a). In the event that the application for international protection is accepted, then the applicant is subject to the process of integration. While waiting for a final deliberation, asylum seekers are entitled to reception conditions meeting not only their basic material needs, but also an adequate standard of living, health, and well-being (UNHCR, 2017a, p,61).

Prior to moving forward, it is important to note that Syrians are not considered by governing authorities as "refugees", but rather as "displaced persons". Additionally, the terms "refugee", "asylum seeker", and "irregular migrant" are used interchangeably. Indeed, the coverage of mainstream media pertaining to mass migrations, such as the influx of Syrian refugees, tends to neglect the nuanced distinction between these terms, or even incorrectly use the terms interchangeably, thus jumbling national and international asylum laws. Failing to discern between these three categories leads to confusion as to the legal rights afforded to each. In the case of reception, this creates misinformation concerning the rights of asylum seekers at their arrival, and subjects them to continuous vulnerabilities.

1.1. Overview of the International instruments

To guarantee the provision of adequate reception standards, international human rights law presents a baseline of content applicable to everyone, including asylum seekers, in all possible situations. Although the 1951 Geneva Convention, complemented by its 1967 Optional Protocol, does not explicitly discuss asylum seekers, it does provide a framework of standards to be applied prior to obtaining formal refugee status (UNHCR, 2000b). Both remain important international

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[2] The outcome will either be the "effective expulsion" of the unsuccessful applicant, or with the acceptance of their request for international protection.

instruments, and a pivotal departure point in the formulation of reception standards of asylum seekers, who will possibly become *bona fide* refugees (Ibid). The 1951 Geneva Convention advances fair and expeditious asylum procedures and reception standards (Ibid). Indeed, it posits that asylum seekers should enjoy an adequate standard of living throughout the asylum procedure (Ibid).

Although Lebanon is not a party to the 1951 Geneva Convention, the polity has ratified other binding instruments such the UDHR, ICESCR, ICCPR, ICERD, and UNCRC (specific to minors), and CEDAW Recommendation No.32, which reiterate the importance of non-refoulement, and the non-discriminatory provision of adequate living standards to everyone, *inter alia*, asylum seekers (OHCHR, n.d.; UNHCR, 2000b).

Articles related to Asylum seekers[3]

❖   **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**:
→ Article 14: (1)"Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."
→ Article 25: (1)"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of [themselves] and of [their] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

❖   **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)**:
→ Article 2: (2) "The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

❖   **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)**:
→ Article 2: (1) "Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

❖   **Intern. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)**:
→ Article 5 (d): (i) "The right to freedom of movement and residence within the border of the State";(iii) "The right to housing"; (iv) "The right to public health, medical care, social security and social services"; (v) "The right to education and training".

❖   **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)**:
→ Article 22: (1) "States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties."

❖   **Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Recommendation No. 32:**
→ Section III: (11) "Given that the Convention applies at every stage of the displacement cycle, it serves to prohibit sex- and gender-based discrimination at every stage: during the refugee status determination procedure, throughout the return or resettlement process and throughout the

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[3] The articles in Box.1 have been directly extracted from the above mentioned international covenants and conventions.

> integration process for women who have been granted asylum. It also applies to processes of statelessness determination and to processes relating to women acquiring, retaining or changing their nationality or conferring their nationality on their children and spouses."

The prevailing provisions of above international instruments provide sufficient reception standards to inform processes at the national level. While international law should take precedence over national regulations and practices, this is seldom the case in Lebanon, especially in managing asylum seekers and refugees.

1.2. Mapping out actors and areas of intervention

The scattering of Syrian asylum seekers throughout Lebanon indicates that the influx is largely decentralised. It requires as such an understanding of the various actors that are mobilised in the reception processes. As the below mapping of actors will show, there is still an absence of a commitment to the provision of adequate reception standards to asylum seekers in the country.

I. State actors

Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA)

The MoSA, through its CMU,[4] coordinates the protection and assistance efforts of NGOs operating in Lebanon and all concerned government ministries and agencies (Bidinger et. al, 2015). In 2012, it was officially appointed by the Council of Ministers to be actively involved in the national response to the influx (Boustani et. al, 2016). MoSA was also designated by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Displaced, to steer the first Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP)[5], created in 2015 (Ibid). Specifically, it was decided that the MoSA will have an active role in the following dimensions of reception: basic assistance, livelihoods, protection, shelter and social stability (UNHCR, 2019a). However, it is worth noting that in May 2015 the Minister of Social Affairs requested the UNHCR to deregister Syrian asylum seekers who had entered following January 5 of that same year, affecting more than 25,000 asylum seekers, who had registered with UNHCR in January and February alone (ALEF, 2015; UNHCR, 2015). Obstructing the asylum seeking process equates to refoulement at the border, a clear example of the Lebanese government's disregard for international humanitarian law, in favor of preserving national interests.

State Ministry of Refugee affairs

In 2016, in an effort to exert greater efforts in tackling the Syrian refugee influx, the newly formed Lebanese government, under the Former PM Saad Hariri, introduced the State Ministry of

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[4] Founded in 2013, it employs experts in security, health (crisis medicine), and shelter issues, which roughly correspond to the greatest concerns of the Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Lebanon.
[5] The content of the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) will be further discussed in Section 1.3 sub-section II.

Refugee Affairs (The Daily Star, 2016). It was initially allocated with the specific task of devising a clear policy for the government regarding the influx (ETF, 2017, p.20). Since its inception, it was criticised for not having a formalised agenda. Its opaque role was viewed in concurrence with that of the MoSA (Derbass, 2019). Notably, the absence of the State Ministry of Refugee Affairs from the LCRP, further highlights the confusion accompanying its official responsibilities in regards to its coordinating efforts in the management of the refugee influx.

Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM)

The MoIM is responsible for overseeing the response to the refugee influx within the following three local administrative structures: governorates, districts, and municipalities/union of municipalities (Shibli, 2014). Notably, the MoIM is tasked with providing municipalities with overall policy guidance in the multidimensional impact of the influx (UNDP, 2017). In the scope of the LCRP, the MoIM is the actor responsible for overseeing, maintaining and strengthening social stability, specifically between the refugees and host communities, in joint efforts with the MoSA (UNHCR, 2019a). In line with this aim, the MoIM works on strengthening the capacity of municipal and local community actors, in order to better foster dialogue and address sources of tensions and conflicts (Ibid, p.31). MoIM should be actively involved in the reception of asylum seekers and further guarantee good practices of local level actors. However, MoIM failed to provide the necessary resources required by municipalities to effectively manage their presence at the local level, in line with the "policy of no-policy" approach initially adopted by national authorities, and in the absence of a clear response and communication strategy. This in turn has pushed local authorities to pursue alternative discriminatory means of crisis management, such as mass evictions and curfews. In response, MoIM did little to interfere in halting these *ad-hoc* decisions which clearly diverge from adequate reception standards, and the overall preservation of social stability.

Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)

In Lebanon, PHC[6] is accessible to Syrian asylum seekers, whether registered or unregistered with UNHCR, via a variety of healthcare facilities, including the MoPH's network of 218 PHCCs, and an estimated 1,011 other PHC facilities, known as dispensaries. (UNHCR, 2019a). SHC,[7] and THC,[8] are accessible to asylum seekers, and delivered via a network of 40 hospitals across the country,[9] both public and private, contracted by UNHCR via a third party administrator (Ibid.). Within the scope of the LCRP (2017-2020), in collaboration with the WHO, and the MoPH's Health Response Strategy, two overarching goals prevail: 1. meeting the health needs of those most

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[6] As per the LCRP (2017-2020) Primary healthcare includes services such as: vaccination, medication for acute and chronic conditions, non-communicable diseases care, sexual and reproductive healthcare, malnutrition screening and management, mental healthcare, dental care, basic laboratory and diagnostics as well as health promotion.

[7] SHC refers to care from a specialist in a facility with more advanced medical investigation capabilities.

[8] THC is more specialised than SHC, it takes place in a hospital and usually includes surgical care.

[9] This number presents a decrease from the 50 available hospitals in 2018.

vulnerable within both the Syrian refugee population, and 2. working on the resilience of the health system, its infrastructure, and resources in order to cope with increase in demand (MoPH, 2016). A criticism addressed to the MoPH, and the overall health sector, is the narrow focus on increasing service provision to the detriment of its role in prevention, planning and regulations(Blanchet, Fouad and Pherali, 2016). Indeed, the lack of funds in the MoPH,[10] hindering its ability to even address the growing healthcare needs of nationals, has pushed for the delegation of third parties, such as the UNHCR and WHO, to take the lead in this dimension of reception. Furthermore, these financial hurdles have also hindered the guidance on medical responses in underserved areas where the majority of Syrian asylum seekers have been residing.

Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)

The MoA, within the context of the refugee influx, is responsible for overseeing the increase in food productivity, in order to address the demands of the influx of asylum seekers, for providing enough food assistance. Within the context of the LCRP (2017-2020), this institution works in cooperation with the WFP, as well as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (UNHCR, 2019a). Indeed, the onset of the Syrian war has halted bilateral agricultural trade, all the while increasing Lebanon's demography by 30% between 2011 and 2013 (Blanchet, Fouad and Pherali, 2016).With most incoming asylum seekers living in precarious conditions and without a stable means of income, food assistance is crucial, especially to those most vulnerable. The percentage of Syrian households with an appropriate diet has been increasing over the years, from 62% in 2017 to 75% in 2019, however, this also implies that to date that 25% of beneficiaries are still food insecure (UNHCR,UNICEF, and WFP, 2019, p.83).

Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)

Since the onset of the influx of Syrian refugees, the MEHE has continuously responded by consistently widening the access to formal education for all vulnerable children, every school year (UNHCR, 2019a). Following the implementation of the RACE I strategy (2014-2016), the MEHE developed, in collaboration with the international community, a five-year plan, the RACE II(2017-2021) (Ibid). Within the context of the LCRP (2017-2020), the MEHE works closely with UNICEF to expand the reach of quality education to the most vulnerable asylum seekers aged three to 18 years old (Ibid). In order to cope with the increased demand for formal education, MEHE introduced a second shift program in a number of public schools to accommodate refugee students attending grades one through nine (Shuayb, Makkouk, and Tutunji, 2014). Additionally, the relevant authorities waived enrollment fees and allowed Syrian children to enroll without proof of legal residency. However, persistent gaps in funding, have exhausted already scarce human and material resources[11] at the disposal of the public school system (Malli, 2019). As a result, public schools stopped enrolling new students to the second shift, in order to continue

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[10] Even prior to the refugee influx, the MoPH had a substantial budget deficit, with delayed payments to contracted private hospitals mounting to USD 800 million, a significant burden on the financial system of many hospitals.

[11] Indeed, a shortage of teaching and learning resources are even present in the first shift of the public system.

accommodating existing Syrian students (Ibid.). Consequently, the percentage of children aged three to five years old attending an early childhood education programme decreased from 16% in 2018 to 13% in 2019; the percentage of those aged six to 14 years old, stood at 69% similar to last year; the percentage of those aged 15 to 17 years old remained at 22% (UNHCR,UNICEF, and WFP, 2019). Resources and funding gaps remain to be addressed in order to accommodate a greater number of students who are at risk of remaining outside the schooling system.

General Security Office (GSO)

The GSO is the principal security enforcer and intelligence-gathering actor, formally mandated to regulate the entry, exit, and residency of foreigners in Lebanon (Frangieh and Saghieh, 2018). It is one of the main actors present at the border, it is the body that grants visas and residence permits, in addition to monitoring migration legislation violations (Lebanon Support, 2019). This role is accomplished via administrative initiatives, all of which are in line with the 1962 Law Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Exit from the Country and carried out with little political or judicial supervision (Frangieh and Saghieh, 2018). Indeed, It has ample discretionary authority to take correctional courses of actions in the ongoing "fight against anything that can jeopardise security", such as arbitrary arrest, temporary detention, or deportation with a re-entry ban (Lebanon Support, 2019). As such, the GSO is the government organ that Syrian asylum seekers are most likely to engage with as of the moment they cross the border (Bidinger et. al, 2015). Although the role of the GSO should be confined to the execution of the decisions enacted by the Council of ministers, in practice this has not been the case(Lebanon Support, 2019). The *ad-hoc* decisions taken by the GSO are most likely to affect the asylum-seeking procedure, specifically in terms of the protection afforded to them.[12]

Internal Security Forces (ISF)

The ISF is the country's national police force, subject to the authority of MoIM. Within the context of asylum, ISF is tasked with the specific role of enforcing the law on foreigners by adopting protective and preventive measures, all the while leading criminal investigations (Lebanon Support, 2019). Their presence at the vicinity of borders contributes to broader border surveillance, specifically in order to halt crimes such as the trafficking of goods and people (Ibid.). As part of its latest strategic plan (2018-2022), and in the context of the influx of Syrian refugees, it is called upon by the Lebanese government to "police a million-plus displaced Syrians scattered all over Lebanon" (ISF, 2018). Municipalities frequently resort to the ISF to maintain protection and social cohesion, as well as for support on security issues, where applicable (UNDP, 2017, p.4).[13] Mayors have expressed their lack of confidence in the efficiency or responsiveness of the ISF (Ibid). The inability of ISF to respond to every security complaint, along with the widespread perception of abandonment and lack of state control, in addition to the existence of informal security actors at the local level, such as vigilante groups, illustrates forms of collaboration (as

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[12] This will be further discussed in Section 1.3 sub-section I.

[13] Such as in areas where the ISF is perceived as responsive, and the municipalities are on good terms with.

shown in previous research) between formal and informal security actors in the enforcement of local security (Lebanon Support, 2016c).

The multiplicity of national actors involved in managing the influx of Syrian asylum seekers has not translated into an efficient and effective response. Indeed, the compiled actor-specific shortcomings in every dimension of reception portray the overall narrow commitment (or lack thereof) in improving their living conditions, and further serve to dissuade them from staying. The suboptimal response by state actors has provided leeway for non-state actors to intervene in the reception process.

II. Non-state actors

UNHCR

The Lebanese government has long relied on the UNHCR for the reception, registration, documentation, as well as Refugee Status Determination (RSD) of asylum seekers, in addition to providing basic assistance, and seeking lasting solutions for all non-Palestinian refugees (Janmyr, 2016). The centrality of shared responsibilities was made explicit in the 2003 Memorandum of Understanding[14] (MoU) agreed upon by the UNHCR and the GSO (Lebanon Support, 2018). Within the scope of the LCRP (2017-2020) for which it is the lead coordinating agency, UNHCR assists the Lebanese government to establish reception arrangements in the following dimensions: basic assistance, shelter, protection, health, and social stability (UNHCR, 2019a; UNHCR, 2016a). It also encourages the use of its reception centres[15] and community centres, in which it acts as a point of referral and support for asylum seekers who may need international protection (UNHCR, 2016a). However, the effectiveness of the UNHCR's action can be affected, among others, by lack of adequate funds, and more so by national authorities. An example of the latter instances include the MoSA's *ad-hoc* decision regarding the discontinuation of asylum seeker registration in April 2015.[16]

UNRWA

The UNRWA, is mandated with providing assistance and monitoring the Lebanese government's treatment and reception of PRS. UNRWA representatives have been present at the Masnaa border, through which the majority of PRS have entered Lebanese territory (Bidinger et. al, 2015). Prior to the restrictions stemming from the 2014 October policies, UNRWA officials would assist PRS with regards to their documentation, and inform them about the proper reception procedures to follow, in addition to raising their awareness on the various forms of aid available to them (Ibid). In 2014, UNRWA activated a hotline for PRS to receive their inquiries pertaining to legal status in Lebanon (Ibid). Over the years, funding cuts impacted the agency's ability to respond to the needs of its beneficiaries. This is specifically the case in Lebanon, already host to over 475,000

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[14]This will be discussed further in Section 1.3. sub-section I.

[15] Their reception centers can be found in the governorates of Mount Lebanon, Bekaa, North, and South.

[16] As discussed in Section 1.3. sub-section I.

Palestinian refugees (UNRWA website, n.d.), where already scarce resources have been further exacerbated with the arrival of over 29,145 PRS eligible for assistance, as of August 2018 (UNRWA , 2019). Indeed, in 2015, UNRWA was forced to interrupt monthly cash assistance that goes towards housing and food due to the lack of funding (UNRWA, 2015), further decreases were witnessed in subsequent years.

UNDP

Within the context of the reception of Syrian refugees, the thrust of United Nations Development Program (UNDP) assistance has centred around supporting communities that are absorbing and hosting the increasingly vast number of refugees (UNDP, 2013). With the flow of refugees exerting extreme strain on local communities, social systems, and local public services, UNDP is partnering with relevant ministries, municipalities, and civil society actors, to address the most pressing demands (Ibid). Within the context of the LCRP (2017-2020), the UNDP coordinates efforts in the reception dimensions of livelihoods, social stability (UNHCR, 2019a). This UN agency believes that expanding local livelihoods options and initiatives, strengthening local service delivery, and enhancing community self-reliance, are all vital to maintaining social cohesion and stability (Ibid.). However, there is a lack of evidence regarding the subsequent institutionalisation of acquired insights and practices within local governance structures, specifically in regards to the immersion of new staff at the municipal level.

UNICEF

The response strategy of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has focused on several dimensions including: child protection, education, health and nutrition, WASH, youth development, as well as social policy in relation with child poverty (UNICEF website, n.d.). Specifically, within the scope of the LCRP (2017-2020), UNICEF is the lead coordinating agency in the following reception dimensions: education, protection, and water (UNHCR,2019a). Despite UNICEF's extensive efforts in several reception dimensions, its work is continuously hindered by the LCRP's shortage of funding.

NGOs

A pattern of recurring peaks in NGO creation following each humanitarian crisis can be distinguished in Lebanon (AbiYaghi, Jagarnathsingh, and Yammine, 2019). The most recent example of such instances followed the onset of the influx of Syrians seeking asylum in 2011. Indeed, the associative sector has witnessed an exponential increase of new initiatives, campaigns, and organisations, mostly funded by UNHCR, USAID, the EU, and other international bodies (Ibid; Karam 2018). NGOs have been spearheading aid and relief initiatives directed towards Syrian asylum seekers and refugees in various sectors including livelihoods, basic assistance, WASH, shelter, health, food security, education, SGBV, child protection, as well as social cohesion (Karam, 2018). Their efforts are also geared towards awareness raising, capacity building, advocacy and lobbying, monitoring and observation, protection of marginalised

populations, as well as providing effective representation concerns at the local and national level (Beyond Reform & Development, 2015, p.50).

With government bodies and security agencies falling short of adequately responding to the influx of Syrian asylum seekers, non-state actors have stepped in to fill in the gaps in the provisions of goods and services. Indeed, coordination between local, regional, and international actors compiles ongoing efforts to improve the living conditions of refugees and asylum seekers. However, obstacles stemming from on-going funding crunches, *ad-hoc* discriminatory policies at the national level, and the lack of effective authority of non-state actors to impose change, have hindered effective improvements in reception standards. Additionally, an overwhelming focus has been placed on service provision in lieu of enhancing advocacy efforts which could ultimately feed into policy change, as such the status quo remains unchanged.

1.3. Mapping out prevailing national legislations and response frameworks

Lebanon does not have a comprehensive national legislation framework for reception of refugees. Even prior to the Syrian refugee influx, the provision of rights of migrants were met with controversy. Indeed ongoing concerns regarding the country's political and confessional "balance", has recurrently resulted in the lack of consensus among officials and the recourse to reactionary *ad-hoc* decisions (Bidinger et. al, 2015). Indeed issues of migration, *inter alia*, asylum, are perceived as potential wellsprings of instability. This section will discuss the relevant policies and response frameworks informing (non)reception standards and services in Lebanon.

1.3.1. National legislative framework of (non)reception

Prior to 2011: Narrow-scoped policies

Asylum seekers, along with all other foreigners, fall under the 1962 Law Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Exit from the Country[17]. However, while its relevant provisions are not able to absorb refugees or asylum seekers, they are often considered as irregular migrants (Lebanon Support, 2018). Furthermore, it is not conducive towards the formulation of adequate reception standards for the current refugee crisis. Subsequently, and in light of the Iraqi refugee influx, the 2003 bilateral cooperative Memorandum of Understanding between the UNHCR and the GSO reasserted that Lebanon is a transit country, and that an asylum seeker is referred to as: "a person seeking asylum is a country other than Lebanon" (Fakhoury, 2017; Janmyr, 2017). It offers unprecedented legal assurances to asylum seekers and clearly spells out the respective obligations of UNHCR and its government counterparts (UNHCR, 2004). However, the agreement contains a number of structural flaws and does not mention key refugee protection norms, such as that of non-refoulement (Janmyr, 2018). Although it is mandated with RSD, such determinations are not per definition formally recognised by the

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[17]It is the main legislation governing the reception of asylum seekers in Lebanon, boasting 6 asylum-related articles (on political grounds), in Chapter VII, although lacking in scope and applicability towards the current refugee influx (Lebanon Support, 2018, p.20).

Lebanese authorities. Furthermore, obstructing the regularisation of the asylum seekers' stay, is leading to further obstacles pertaining to livelihood opportunities, receiving basic assistance, in addition to affecting other dimensions of reception.

2011-2014: The "policy of no-policy"

In the period spanning from 2011 to 2014, the Lebanese government adopted a 'policy of no-policy" approach regarding the Syrian refugee crisis, and preferred to use the terms of 'displaced persons' and 'guests' instead of 'asylum seekers' (Lebanon Support, 2018; El-Mufti, 2014). The lack of effective response at the national level guided a series of political developments. Examples of such instances include two policies related to the influx of Syrian refugees: the dissociation policy and the non-encampment policy, both adopted in 2012, under the guidance of Former PM Najib Mikati (Atallah and Mahdi, 2017). The dissociation policy declared in the Baabda Declaration of 2012 advocated for sustaining a stance of political neutrality vis-à-vis the Syrian conflict as a precautionary measure, citing lingering worries of threats to Lebanon's national security, all the while upholding the "the right to humanitarian solidarity" (Ibid.). The non-encampment policy stemmed from a rationale informed by fears of repeating the Palestinian camp experience, albeit Syrian asylum seekers and refugees had already moved into informal settlemts prior to the promulgation of this decision (El-Mufti 2014). During this period, UNHCR was conducting registration and RSD, as asylum seekers had been entering legally, in line with the persistent open border policy with Syria.

2014 onwards: an assemblage of restrictive policies

The period of "policy of no-policy" was short-lived due to alleged mounting strains on Lebanon's economy and infrastructure. The Syrian refugee influx was subsequently governed by the Council of Ministers' *ad-hoc* restrictive October policies, guided by the rationale of "reducing the numbers", solely implemented by the GSO with limited authoritative oversight and in accordance with the 1962 law of Entry and Exit (Lebanon Support, 2018). In December 2014, the GSO unilaterally introduced a set of stringent entry requirements in the form of 7 visa categories,[18]aimed at regulating and restricting access at the border, and ultimately hindering the reception standards afforded to asylum seekers, who are now confined to apply under the non-inclusive "humanitarian exception" (Ibid.).[19]

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[18] "Category 1: for tourism, shopping, business, landlords, and tenants; Category 2: for studying; Category 3: for transiting to a third country; Category 4: for those displaced; Category 5: for medical treatment; Category 6: for an embassy appointment; Category 7: for those entering with a pledge of responsibility (from a Lebanese sponsor).

[19] This category refers to 'unaccompanied and/or separated children with a parent already registered in Lebanon, persons living with disabilities with a relative already registered in Lebanon, persons with urgent medical needs for whom treatment in Syria is unavailable, and persons who will be resettled in third countries'.

All visa categories require specific documents[20] in order to meet the prerequisites for approval by the MoSA and MIoM prior to being allowed entry into Lebanon (Janmyr, 2016). Further, most of these categories only permit entry for a specific time period, and they may be renewed in scenarios involving medical cases or embassy appointments (Ibid.). Increased formalities at the borders have, counterproductively, led to an increase in irregular entries with smugglers via dangerous illegal crossings, albeit less costly than the legal route. Those who do not fit in any visa category may seek out a Lebanese national to sponsor their entry and stay, also known as a "kafeel", who will be obligated to undertake specific duties contingent upon the purpose of entry (Refugees-Lebanon website, 2016).[21]

Also in December 2014, the MoL constrained the sectors accessible to Syrian nationals to those of construction, agriculture, and cleaning (Lebanon Support, 2018). Subsequent directives required employers to commit to maintaining a ratio of less than 10:1 of Lebanese workers to foreign workers (Battistin and Leape, 2015). As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Syrian nationals, *inter alia*, asylum seekers, must seek out a Lebanese sponsor, generally an employer, who would sign the "pledge of responsibility" (Lebanon Support, 2016a). Furthermore, asylum seekers registered with the UNHCR, and wishing to pursue the renewal of their registration, are ineligible to enter the labour market in Lebanon on grounds of their access to humanitarian assistance (Ibid).

Further in April of 2015 the UNHCR was requested to halt the registration of Syrians asylum seekers and refugees, and to deregister those who had entered after January 5 (Janmyr, 2016b). The official rationale communication was that a new mechanism was to be established in lieu however, this new instrument has yet to concretise (Janmyr, 2016b). Indeed, these rules and regulations have impacted the presence of Syrian asylum seekers not only by contributing to the deprivation of basic human rights or lack of access to legal redress, but also they have increased their proneness to a myriad of vulnerabilities. As such, their only option to regulate their residency was through the sponsorship system as economic migrants. The increase in formalities has led to greater informality; over 74% of Syrian asylum seekers were without proper documentation at any given year between 2015 and 2019. This period also witnessed further deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of Syrian asylum seekers. Indeed, arbitrary arrests, detentions, deportations, and raids on semi-permanent housing structures in informal settlements, are all conducted with the aim to dissuade Syrian asylum seekers from staying in Lebanon. Most recently, since November 2018 and well into the summer of 2019, a series of crackdowns by the MoL on the informal labour market, part of a campaign targeting Syrian workers lacking adequate

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[20] It is important to note that, some of the documents required for entry, such as proof of hotel reservation, proof of land ownership, in addition to holding a sizeable sum of money at the border crossing, has engendered further discrimination against vulnerable populations.

[21] Entry for visit: pledge of responsibility at the GSO by Lebanese sponsor. No fees are required for the seven days visit permit renewable for seven days for the applicant and his family. Any registered company or organisation in Lebanon can sponsor beneficiaries for a visit and they will get a residency permit of up to one month; Entry for work: pledge of responsibility at GSO and USD 200 /person above 15 years of age for a six months residency permit for the applicant and his family. The sponsor will apply for a work permit from the MoL; Entry not for work: pledge of responsibility at GSO and a fee of USD 200/person above 15 years old for a six months residency permit renewable for another six months free of charge for the applicant and his family.

documentation, as well as Syrian-owned shops, have further worsened already scarce livelihood opportunities (Sanderson, 2019).

1.3.2. Insufficiently-funded aid and relief plans

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP)

The LCRP[22] is the Lebanon chapter of the 3RP[23] co-led by the UNHCR and UNDP (UNHCR, 2019a). The LCRP is tailored to respond to the specific challenges and needs of Lebanon and its vulnerable populations, in the context of the ongoing regional humanitarian crisis (Ibid). The LCRP aims to achieve the following strategic objectives: 1. ensure the protection of displaced Syrians, vulnerable Lebanese and Palestine Refugees; 2. provide immediate assistance to vulnerable populations; 3. strengthen the capacity of national and local service delivery systems to expand access to and quality of basic public services; 4. and reinforce Lebanon's economic, social and environmental stability (UNHCR, 2019a, p.9). It is multi-dimensional and cross-sectoral covering: protection, livelihood, social stability, food security, basic assistance, health, education, water, energy and shelter (Ibid., p.24).

The LCRP does not state that Lebanon is a country of asylum. Furthermore, the terminology used mirrors the Lebanese authorities' terminology, avoiding hence the use of "refugees" and "asylum-seekers" for example, and using instead "temporarily displaced" since March 2011, as in the 2017 version (UNHCR, 2019a, p.4). Such rather vague labels, stressing on temporariness, contribute to hinder the provision of adequate reception standards and services. UNHCR stressed on using the label "refugee" as it would attract more donor funding for the LCRP, but was met with dismay by the Lebanese governing authorities (Janmyr, 2018, p.399)[24].

Reaching All Children with Education (RACE)

UNICEF reported that with 75% of refugee and asylum seeker households currently living below the poverty-line, many vulnerable families have been resorting to negative coping mechanisms, such as engaging in child labour and child marriage, thus rendering thousands of children vulnerable to violence, abuse, and exploitation (n.d.). As a result, children of concern are excluded from the education system, and left without adequate primary and secondary schooling. The provision of quality education and learning opportunities are time-tested as effective mitigation strategies in the contexts of protracted crises, similar to the current setting in Lebanon. In order to address the education dimension of reception, the MEHE drew up a partnership with UNICEF, other UN agencies, donors, and NGOs, in 2014 to operationalise a 5-year education response plan titled RACE,[25] with the latest second version encompassing the period 2017-2021 (Ibid.).

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[22] It is a joint plan between the Lebanese Government and its international and national partners, mainly steered with the UNHCR, and has two versions to date, one spanning 2015-2016, and the most current one covering 2017 to 2020.

[23] Further discussed in Section 1.4.2

[24] A review of all updates from 2015 to date, reveal significant gaps in funding, as follows: 37% in 2015, 62% in 2016, 55% in 2017, 48% in 2018, and lastly 62% in the third quarter of 2019 (UNHCR, 2016b; UNHCR, 2017b; UNHCR, 2018; UNHCR, 2019c; UNHCR, 2019d).

[25] Developed within the framework of the No Lost Generation (NLG) initiative.

However, the lack of human and material resources, including a funding gap, is hindering the access to education of those most vulnerable (Human Rights Watch, 2017). It was also reported that Lebanon had received far less than what donors had pledged on funding for RACE II, indeed donor fatigue threatens the full operationalisation of the structural improvements (Ibid; MEHE, 2016). However, funding is not the only obstacle to the adequate reception of refugees in the schooling system; no specific training or support programs were administered to sensitise practitioners and Lebanese students on the arrival of Syrian refugee students into public classrooms, leaving public schools and their staff largely unprepared (Adelman, 2018, p.49).

1.4. Regional response plans and hostile municipal policies

1.4.1. Municipal policies of (non)reception: discriminatory curfews and mass evictions

Within the context of (non)reception, and in the absence of a national framework, managing the presence of refugees became *de facto* assigned to local-level institutions, *inter alios*, municipalities. Lebanon has more than 1000 municipalities, subject to the authority of the MoIM, placed as intermediaries between Syrian refugees and the central government, through municipal service delivery programmes.[26] With municipalities acting as mediums between asylum seekers and the governing authorities, the absence of a proactive central framework further led them to adopt policies independently (Atallah and Mahdi, 2017; Boustani, 2014). Hospitality has been recurrently traded in for hostility with the presence of asylum seekers further securitised, at the expense of the provision of adequate reception standards and basic human rights. s. Indeed, Since 2014, at least 45 municipalities have enforced curfews exclusively directed towards Syrian asylum seekers, carried out by municipality police and local vigilante groups, circumscribing their freedom of movement (Human Rights Watch, 2014).The nucleus of the argument favoring curfews, lies in the belief that mounting insecurity and weak infrastructure are solely caused or intensified by foreign forces, such as asylum seekers (Al-Saadi, 2014). Curfews are justified by local authorities as allowing them to protect the local population, as well as asylum seekers, in addition to maintaining public order (Taslakian, 2016). These curfews have served to sustain the constructed narrative that all Syrians, even defenseless ones, are menacing, and they have further enabled the practice of violence forms of harassment, bullying and aggression (El Helou, 2014). Further discriminations against Syrians have taken the form of mass evictions. Since the onset of 2016, and well into the first quarter of 2018, it was reported that at least 3,664 Syrian nationals have been evicted from at least 13 municipalities (Human Rights Watch, 2018). While it was stated that these evictions were based on housing regulation infractions, the discriminatory pattern and lack of due process were scrutinised(Ibid).

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[26] Such as those relating to WASH and education.

1.4.2. The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) (2017-2020) as a response to the protracted humanitarian setting

The 3RP is a regional plan dictating the response to the humanitarian, protection and assistance needs of refugees from Syria and other impacted persons, communities and institutions in the five countries hosting displaced Syrians, i.e. Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt (UNHCR, 2019a). The emergence of the 3RP responds to the inability of increased demand for donor resources in the region in light of the protracted humanitarian setting; this is particularly true for the Lebanese government and its pattern of recurrently seeking international bailouts. While the aspects of strategy, planning and programming are country-steered, an overall regional coherence was formulated to ensure uniformity in response planning and implementation, in light of the diversified governmental responses and practices in the region(3RP, 2019). Its most recent version covers 2020-2021, with 4 strategic goals: 1. protecting people; 2. pursuing durable solutions; 3. supporting dignified lives; and 4. enhancing national and local capacities (3RP, 2019). However, Syrian refugees continue to face challenges across the region, including those living in Lebanon. Uneven access to employment opportunities, education, and basic assistance persist, worsening protection risks, and undermining the reception standards of asylum seekers.

The Lebanese government's reluctance to formulate national reception legislation or to take ownership of the response has encouraged *de facto* third-party delegation. Indeed, in terms of managing the influx of Syrian asylum seekers the *ad-hoc* decisions and practices of local actors have dictated the daily lives of their lives without external authoritative oversight. In terms of funding, planning and programming, the 3RP fills the gaps engendered by the government's narrow commitment to improving the stay of Syrian asylum seekers in Lebanon.

2. Practices of (Non)Reception

This section is based on insights gathered from interviews with practitioners, asylum seekers, and refugees. The meso-level interviews brought together 15 participants (4 women and 11 men) from various backgrounds, and locations spanning from Beirut, Majdal Anjar, Mount Lebanon, Tripoli, Zahle, who interact directly with Syrian refugees. The micro-level interviews involved 60 participants (28 men and 32 women), the majority of which are of Syrian origin (55), in addition to (4) Palestinians, and (1) Kurdish national. Participants' locations included Akkar, Beirut, Bourj Hammoud, Majdal Anjar, Mount Lebanon, Ouzai, Saida, Sin el Fil, Tripoli, Tyre, and Zahle.

2.1. Uneasy access to housing

Adequate housing entails "hav[ing] a home, a place which protects privacy, contributes to physical and psychological well-being, and supports the development and social integration of its inhabitants – a central place for human life", indeed a definition moving beyond the physical aspect of the space (Bonnefoy, 2007, p.413). However, and in line with the government's non-encampment policy in 2012, no formal camps were established for Syrian asylum seekers, and no alternatives provided officially. This decision emerged from existing fears related to the Palestinian camps experience (Atallah and Mahdi, 2017). It is worth mentioning that even prior to the governing authorities communicating their stance on the issue, informal settlements within *ad-hoc* non-permanent infrastructure had already been erected in the Bekaa and the North (El-Mufti, 2014). Each informal settlement has its representative, the *Shawish*, who is also an authoritative figure in an informal tented settlement (UNHCR and UN-Habitat, 2018). Typically, he is the first to arrive on the property and negotiate the settlement with the landlord, in other cases he may be the oldest one in the camp (Ibid). Although he might help out asylum seekers and refugees in many aspects of their daily lives, he also intervenes in their decision making, and acts as a gatekeeper for accessing shelter, among others, which leads to skewed power dynamics in favour of the *shawish* (Abu Kheir, 2016).

Syrian asylum seekers and refugees have communicated the dire material living conditions of the non-permanent structures, a reality affecting almost 20% of asylum seekers and refugees in Lebanon (UNHCR,UNICEF, and WFP, 2018; UNHCR,UNICEF, and WFP, 2019). These conditions worsen during the winter:

> "We have an issue with shelter, in the winter the plastic covers get blown away. When it rains, it comes on us and we have little children. We are afraid for them, we are afraid they will get sick" (Male, Akkar, Interview, 3 November 2018);

> "We stayed in tents. It was the most difficult part. The first day we were living in the tent rain started falling on us at 10:00 in the morning. The water came in the tent and all of my children got sick" (Female, Majdal Anjar, Interview, 3 November 2018).

Asylum seekers may also rent out furnished or unfurnished apartments in substandard buildings, and the majority of them also seek various types of one room structures, and non-

residential spaces (UNHCR and UN-Habitat, 2018). In these circumstances, interlocutors have mentioned strenuous relations with their landlord, especially in terms of settling the monthly rent, which is more often than not one of the greatest burdens exacerbating the economic hardships of Syrian asylum seekers and refugees. One our respondents recounts the following:

> "..and the rent is expensive. I rent my house for USD 300. I'm planning to leave now too. The owner of the house wants his rent [...] I want to find a cheaper house. I'll try to save LBP 50,000 or LBP 100,000" (Female, Beirut, Interview, 16 November 2018).

2.2. Insufficient services and allowances

Widespread throughout the interviews with refugees and asylum seekers was the dismay with the UNHCR's basic assistance provision and overall performance. From delays regarding aid reception, to incidents of one-off financial assistance, unaddressed complaints, and neglect, the inventory of grievances is long and varied. A woman Syrian refugee explains:

> "I want the UN to come see our situation, no one has ever visited our home" (Beirut, Interview, 16 November 2018).

Within this context, another participant adds:

> "They gave me assistance for one winter and they never gave me assistance again" (Female, Tripoli, Interview, 5 December 2018).

Indeed, a Shawish we interviewed confirmed these incidents stating that:

> "Over and above everything, the UN cut a lot of the funding and lots of people stopped getting aid. The cash cards the UN has distributed stopped working, only for a very few people is it still working, only those people who have 10 kids" (Male, Beirut, Interview, 4 December 2018).

More importantly, cash transfers, a preferred method of basic assistance, have been criticised for their selection process of beneficiaries and the inequalities they carry (Sbeih, 2019). The latter are evaluated solely on their economic vulnerability. Cash transfers mainly view beneficiaries as consumers and economic agents, hence this approach is criticised as it is not rights-based (Ibid). Many respondents have expressed the shared perception of unequal treatment and unfair selection of beneficiaries. A beneficiary who has a child with kidney problems and was receiving cash assistance from the UNHCR recounts her frustration with the following statement. Many interlocutors communicated their discontent with the healthcare services provided by the UNHCR. One of the main grievances, recurrently mentioned, was that the aid provided was not enough to cover the full cost of medical bills and procedures, and the remaining 25% to be settled is already perceived as a burden:

"There is someone living with us here in the camp who needs to do an operation of his heart. However he can't afford to pay 25% of the operation, which does not exceed USD 800 but he is not able to cover this" (Female, Majdal Anjar, Interview, 10 November 2018).

As a result, our interlocutors have mentioned resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as foregoing healthcare altogether, in favour of prioritising rent, food, and their children's needs:

"I don't go to the doctor because I prioritise my children. I cannot afford it. I have an allergy and I cannot get my medication. I went to the red cross once. And the UN clinic. I went to a doctor once who needed a scan of my chest but it was going to cost 500,000 LL and I thought that it is better that I die and pay the rent than do it [...] If I sell myself and my children I would still not be able to do it" (Female, Tyre, Interview, 29 November 2018).

2.3. Restricted access to education

It is estimated that 40% of Syrian children are left outside of the schooling system (both formal and non-formal) despite the extensive efforts of the MEHE and its coordinating agencies (LCPR, 2019). The shortage of funding is exacerbating the prevailing frail capacity and ability of the public-school sector to absorb them, and provide them with quality education, as a result, newcomers are turned away in favour of continuing to accommodate existing Syrian refugee students. One of our female interlocutors commented on the matter in regards to her daughter stating that:

"Every time we went to a school, they would tell us that classes are full and they could accept her because we came too late" (Beirut, Interview, 16 November 2018).

She also mentioned that the school that two of her boys attended stopped operating, which shows the effect of insufficient funds on continuity of education provision (Ibid). Another interlocutor re-affirms the situation:

"We have been looking for schools here for 3 years, and no school agreed to register them, in any way... Every time we go, they tell us they have reached capacity" (Male, Beirut, Interview, 4 December 2018).

Despite the aid provisions included in subsidised education schemes, respondents who managed to enrol their children have complained about the remaining steep costs associated with bus transportation and books, perceived as a burden for an education which may not lead to diplomas or certifications, they also stated that all the UNHCR narrowly cares about enrolment (Male Tyre, Interview 29 November 2018; Female, Beirut, Interview, 5 December 2018).

Additionally, respondents have communicated their concerns regarding the Lebanese curriculum. Specifically, the use of foreign languages poses significant learning obstacles for children of concern, who were accustomed to all subject matters being taught in Arabic (Shuayb, 2016, p.26). As one female refugee notes:

"They once went to school, but it's not really an education. They put them all in a room and teach them a bunch of things. Education in Syria was different. Here they are teaching them French not Arabic like they should" (Akkar, Interview, 3 November 2018).

Other refugees and practitioners reported discriminatory behaviour from some instructors, as stated by an art therapist working with Syrian children:

"We do get verbal racism, addressing them [Syrian children] as inferior and different" (Beirut, Interview, 18 November 2018). This illustrates some widespread perceptions and narratives on Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Lebanon.

2.4.   Restricted access to employment opportunities

Despite the 2014 labour decisions constricting Syrians' employment opportunities to the three sectors of construction, agriculture, and cleaning, and the subsequent 2015 *ad-hoc* decisions promulgated by GSO, our interview respondents unanimously agreed that

"they work in anything, they could find […] usually low skilled jobs" (Landlord, Beirut, Interview, 4 December 2018).

Further stressing that their legal status, or lack thereof, has close to no effect on their employability (Ibid). However, the violation of this aforementioned legislative decision has worsened the pre-existing vulnerability of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in the Lebanese labour market, both formal and informal, with employers gaining from the situation (Bou Khater, 2017. p.4). Indeed, the increased presence of Syrian asylum seekers in the informal market has exposed them to various kinds of exploitation by employers, such as earning lesser wages. One of our Male interlocutors shares his grievances pertaining to the aforementioned discrimination in remuneration, and goes on to state that because of his nationality he is payed "less than the rest" (Beirut, Interview, 4 December 2018). Another respondent adds:

"My husband works with plastering the walls. Now he is not working, he is just sitting at home because sometimes they do not pay him for his work [..] I mean this is something that Syrian refugees have to deal with. If they pay the right amount of money every month the way that is needed, then we would be in better conditions [...] My husband does not get his salary the way he should." (Female, Tripoli, Interview, 5 December 2018).

It has been reported that employers also have a tendency of confiscating personal identification documents of Syrian workers, including their passport and residency papers, as a means to exercise control over their decision making, (Bou Khater, 2017. p.4), a widespread practice under the kafala system, at the heart of which is a prevalent imbalance of power. By doing so, employers are restricting the freedom of movement of Syrian workers, and the option to seek another employer to sponsor them. Indeed, such practices used to instil perceptions of

the superiority of the kafeel have fostered the emergence of a generalised perception among Syrian asylum seekers concerning Lebanese employers as follows:

> "Wherever you work in Lebanon people will take advantage of your vulnerable position" (Male, Sin el Fil, Interview, 11 December 2018).

The difficulties associated with entering the formal labour market are linked with those pertaining to finding a sponsor, a *Kafeel,* a Lebanese national willing to sign a pledge of responsibility, and can be held accountable for the Syrian's actions (Lebanon Support, 2016b). One of our interlocutors was arrested due to the lack of documentation associated with his illegal presence, upon release he was asked to find a sponsor within a few days, his comment on this request was the following:

> "It is as if they are telling you to make magic and suddenly obtain a kafeel, it's really not realistic. They know that it is not easy to get one. It's funny, just like Omar Darwish said once 'it's as if they know that we know' that it's not possible but they do it anyway. It's quite strange" (Male, Interview, Akkar, 3 October 2018).

Indeed, the latter is an example of the many practices serving to dissuade Syrian asylum seekers from staying. The instructions to seek a kafeel are given despite the widespread acknowledgement of the difficulty to do so from both parties.

Since November 2018, and with a peak in Summer 2019, the informal labour market has been raided as part of a campaign by the MoL to crackdown on Syrian workers lacking adequate documentation, as well as Syrian-owned shops (Sanderson, 2019). These constraining measures have occurred simultaneously with an increase in scapegoating narratives in public rhetoric from politicians who have been persistently pushing for the "safe return" of Syrian refugees, and the prioritisation of the national labour force. Indeed, these measures serve to further dissuade Syrian asylum seekers and refugees from settling in Lebanon, by continuously worsening available livelihood opportunities, and specifically constraining their means of income.

2.5.   Encounter with Lebanese officials

The encounter of asylum seekers with Lebanese officials begins with the process of accessing the borders, where instances of discriminatory behaviour occur, more so after 2015, such as class-based profiling and selection. The latter not only infringes on the notion of international asylum standards and reception practices, but is also in breach of the safeguarding provisions included in international conventions to which Lebanon is party, specifically prohibiting discrimination.[27]

The data gathered from our micro-level interviews show that in the period spanning 2011 to 2014, approximately 17% asylum seekers crossed the Lebanese borders illegally via smugglers through mountainous routes, while 83% of those we have interviewed reporting that they have accessed the Lebanese territory legally. A Syrian refugee explains:

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[27] Refer to section 1.1.2 Box 1.

"They just asked us why we were coming to Lebanon and where we were coming from […] Then, they let us" (Women, Tripoli, Interview, 5 May 2018).

Most of our respondents who have entered illegally were concentrated in the period following the adoption of the restrictive 2014 policies, and the ad-hoc requirements advanced by GSO in 2015, when 7 new visa categories were introduced, constraining the asylum process. Indeed, the categories introduced did not reflect the motivating drivers for seeking asylum, in addition to solely offering time-bound conditioned entry. This illustrates the counterproductive impact of such restrictive policies, contributing to pushing those who did not fit in any visa category to choose the alternative route of entering illegally with the help of smugglers through the mountains. As such, these newly introduced formalities, with the aim to regulate entry and stay of Syrians at the border, have led to an increase in informalities and illegality.

During our meso-level interviews, a humanitarian lawyer mentioned difficulties in border crossing, and in relation to profiling, with notably cases of lower-income asylum seekers having more difficulty accessing the border (Humanitarian Lawyer, Beirut, Interview, 29 October 2018). Another interlocutor recounted an incident at the border with an elderly woman:

"A guy on the border told an old lady to dress differently and in short clothes to be able to get into Lebanon without difficulty" (Female, Beirut, Interview, 16 November 2018).

The old lady in question was wearing a hijab at the border crossing, as such this also denotes religious profiling in addition to that of socio-economic background. Our respondent even hinted that the hijab was indicative of the old lady's social class and financial background, and that border officials would deduce that "this woman doesn't look like someone who's going to a hotel" (Ibid.).

Main encounters also encompass security officials, both at the municipal and state level, especially at checkpoints usually in relations to verifying the asylum seekers' legal status and documentation. As such, the relations between refugees and security officials are generally tense, as our respondents frequently reported constant worries of being arrested, detained, or deported. Various statement given by our respondents in this regard resemble the following recounted narrative:

"So I have a few relatives from my village who cannot come and visit me because of the checkpoint here at the beginning of the neighbourhood" (Broker, Beirut, Interview, 4 December 2018).

2.6. Encounter with civil society actors

Civil society organisations are playing a major role in the provision of aid and services. During our micro-level interviews (60) with refugees and asylum seekers, we inquired about their overall experience with the aid provision provided by civil society organisations; the majority of our respondents perceived NGOs as not supportive (52%).

Part of the 38% perceiving NGOs as responsive, an interlocutor communicated her satisfaction with the organisation that helped her renovate her home, albeit she also remains sceptical about the rest in the associative sector:

> "All other NGOs are stealing the funds, we [asylum seekers and refugees] get nothing" (Female, Bourj Brajneh, Interview, 14 December 2018).

Indeed, scepticism among asylum seekers pertaining to aid provision by NGOs lies in their perceived unfulfilled promises of assistance, a complaint shared by all respondents perceiving NGOs as unresponsive:

> "I have to live in these conditions because it is the only thing I can afford and my husband left me… An NGO came to my house and said that they will help me fix it, but I am still waiting" (Female, Beirut, Interview, 23 November 2018).

Similar experiences are not only limited to promises of better housing conditions, but also encompass other reception dimensions:

> "an NGO promised my brother some kind of education, either at school or training for work but they still didn't fill him up on that yet" (Male, Interview, Akkar, 3 November 2018).

Additionally, in regards to healthcare services a respondent shared his grievances as follows:

> "My wife has hearing problems and lots of people gave us numbers for NGOs that were supposed to be able to help but no one helped us" (Male, Majdal Anjar, Interview, 10 November 2018).

Beneficiaries' general dissatisfaction with NGOs could be explained by the heavy reliance of the latter on restricted funds, which would lead to prioritising donor-satisfaction over satisfying the needs of beneficiaries. In this regard, the hierarchy of needs set out by donors may diverge greatly from those of the beneficiaries. Additionally, the unresponsiveness of certain staff and volunteers in the field is negatively impacting the perception of the NGOs work as a whole.

2.7. Experienced non-welcoming culture

Government discourse has continuously framed Syrian asylum seekers as an economic burden, which has continued to foster a xenophobic sentiment among the host community. In terms of the reception of Syrian refugees in host communities, there was a widespread agreement that it ultimately depends on one's political views, the associated public discourse, as well as the perception of the community's history with Syrian presence and the influx of refugees, often based on divergences in political views (in favor or against the Baath regime in Syria for example). A female respondent recounts the difference in treatment from one locality to the other:

"No one has bothered us here. We do not have issues or problems with the Lebanese[...]. When I was living in the mountains, [...] people would always cause us trouble. If my husband would sit outside, they would ask him what he is doing and get the police to raid our house" (Tripoli, Interview, 5 December 2018).

However, nine out of 10 of participants communicated that they do not feel welcomed in their respective localities:

"I haven't met a Lebanese person who was nice to me" (Female, Tripoli, Interview, 05 December 2018); [...] All our neighbours are Syrian, these are the people I interact with" (Female, Majdal Anjar, Interview, 10 November 2018).

Others reported forms of harassment from the host community:

"We do not have relations with Lebanese nationals, we try to avoid that. Honestly, we've experienced a lot of harassment from locals" (Female, Majdal Anjar, Interview, 10 November 2018).

During our interviews, when respondents were asked about whether they enjoy living in their neighbourhood, or if they alternatively prefer to reside elsewhere, the majority communicated that they would either prefer to move back to Syria, or be resettled in a third country, preferably in Europe, in order to have greater access to rights. Frustration has been frequently reported by respondents who feel stuck in a country where their basic rights are frequently overlooked, and their lives rendered difficult in every aspect:

"I would live anywhere. I just want to go from here. There is no hope we work for nothing" (Female, Majd Al Anjar, Interview, 10 November 2018).

2.8.   Gender Dynamics

Experiences pertaining to freedom of movement and legal status, or lack thereof, differ between genders, with men generally reporting fears notably related to mobility (fears of checkpoints, arrests, and detentions). Our interviews have pointed to GSO being more lenient towards female asylum seekers and refugees who lacked official papers: for example, none of our female respondents had been apprehended for not regularising their stay, nor threatened with coercive measures. Indeed, a female interlocutor from Ouzai stated that she had not renewed her visa in four years and no one had ever stopped her" (Interview, 16 November 2018).

Indeed, male refugees are generally demonised and criminalised in public discourses, a narrative linked to the history between Lebanon and Syria where Syrian men were perceived either as soldiers or as menial workers prone to criminality.

Women also reportedly faced less challenges in renewing their documentation, than our male respondents (Mjadal Anjar, Interview, 10 December 2018; Female, Tyre, Interview, 29 November

2018). This has contributed to additional responsibilities for women refugees within the households. Indeed, in a study conducted by UN Women in 2018, 83% of respondents communicated that they have a larger decision-making role, than prior to seeking asylum (p.5). Additionally, 92% reported taking on more responsibilities in their households and/or communities since the onset of the crisis, with female respondents reporting greater engagement in income generating activities (Ibid.).

3. Conclusion: notes on the multilevel model of reception and policy recommendations

Reception policies and practices in Lebanon appear highly decentralised. Although Lebanon is party to various international instruments guaranteeing the basic rights of asylum seekers, and which hypothetically should accordingly inform national legislation and practices, this has yet to be the case. The various line ministries and security agencies involved in multidimensional reception have failed to unify efforts between the different levels of governance in addressing the influx of asylum seekers. Indeed, in the absence of formalised national reception legislation, local authorities (municipalities), as well as non-state actors (UN agencies as well as NGOs) have appeared as essential players when it comes to the reception of refugees and asylum seekers. However, insufficient human and material resources, compounded by donor fatigue, have effectively hindered their capacity to adequately respond to all reception dimensions, leaving asylum seekers in vulnerable positions.

From difficulties in accessing the border, to generalised and gender-related obstacles in regularising their legal status, to restrictions in accessing income generating opportunities, education, housing, services and allowances, Syrian asylum seekers face a myriad of multidimensional hurdles and formalities affecting their daily lives, coupled with a multiplicity of actors, and a generalised perception of discriminatory treatments. The persistent exclusionary *ad-hoc* policies and practices at both the local and national level are carried out with the aim of dissuading Syrian asylum seekers from staying, and further push them to perceive resettlement or repatriation as their only long-term viable options. The ensuing dissatisfaction of Syrian asylum seekers with the overall process of reception is apparent in the data derived from the conducted interviews. Indeed, negative lived experiences of the majority with security officials have served to further preserve the perception of Lebanon as a country of transit and not one of resettlement, and reinforce the element of temporariness of "hospitality". Also with regards to encounters, however with civil society actors, more than half of our respondents communicated feelings of neglect with regards to local level responses, further compounding their daily multidimensional hurdles.

The differing levels of commitment towards the provision of adequate reception between state, local and non-state actors has led to suboptimal responses as multi-level efforts are interlinked, and in this case problematic. In an effort to correct this situation and prevent the persistence of this mismatch, a list of policy recommendations has been compiled to inform future efforts to improve the reception process in Lebanon moving forward. Although the below set of policy recommendations are in no way exhaustive, they may be built upon in considering the multi-level required improvements.

Policy Recommendations

To state actors:

❖ The Lebanese government should recognise the rights granted to asylum seekers by international conventions and human rights standards.

❖ The Lebanese government should formulate a comprehensive national reception legislation to formalise commitment and set adequate reception standards in line with the provisions of international treaties. This legislation should be formulated in collaboration with UN agencies, as well as local and international civil society actors.

❖ Line ministries involved in reception should coordinate efforts as each dimension of reception affects the other.

❖ State oficials should not propagate xenophobic rhetoric as it hinders social cohesion.

❖ The Lebanese government should further facilitate access to legal residency for Syrian asylum seekers, by considering the abolishment of the kafala system and enacting fee waivers.

❖ An updated MoU should be drafted between the UNHCR and the Lebanese government based on the recognised needs and rights of asylum seekers.

❖ Relevant ministries should order security agencies to put an end to arbitrary arrests and detention which are solely based on the lack of legal status.

❖ The MEHE should work on setting up temporary school structures in disenfranchised peripheries, and fill the human resources gap with teachers from the Syrian community.

❖ The MoL should recognise the right of everyone to seek employment and income, and the need to expand the current economic sectors in order to accommodate asylum seekers in the job market.

❖ The MoPH should exert additional efforts to secure sufficient funding in responding to the increasing demand for healthcare services.

❖ The Lebanese government should improve asylum seekers' access to legal redress, by facilitating access to judiciary courts and legal proceedings.

❖ Sensitivity training should be provided to security officials who directly deal with asylum seekers on a daily basis.

To municipalities:

❖ Municipalities should focus on inter-municipal coordination efforts in unifying and formalising proper reception practices and standards at the local level.

❖ Municipalities should end discriminatory practices against Syrian asylum seekers such as curfews and mass evictions.

❖ Municipalities should actively and continuously learn about the services of NGOs and donors which would aid in the reception process.

❖ Municipalities should actively engage with the associative sector to inform actors of specific local-level needs in order to jointly determine the type of support needed.

❖ Municipalities should keep updated registries of asylum seekers to maintain and help improve lines of communication. Registries also help in keeping track of family growth/changes, identifying specific needs, and maintaining an municipal entry/exit log.

❖ Municipalities officials and personnel should render themselves more accessible to host communities, asylum seekers, and non-state actors.

❖ Municipality should ensure the fair distribution of goods and services to asylum seekers and host communities so as to mitigate social tensions.

❖ Municipalities should create opportunities of interaction between host communities and asylum seekers in order to promote social cohesion.

❖ Municipalities should provide temporary work spaces for non-state actors in order for them to improve their response, aid distribution, and identification of local needs.

❖ Municipalities should help non-state actors coordinate healthcare efforts by creating a medical emergency team.

❖ Municipalities should enforce a base standard of safety and quality assurance on the owners of apartments units, who are renting their properties out to asylum seekers.

To non-state actors:

❖ Non-state actors should increasingly consult with municipalities to stay informed of the evolving needs of both the asylum seekers and host communities.

❖ Sensitivity training should be provided to all aid workers in the associative sector in order for asylum seekers to feel respected by them.

❖ Non-state actors should ensure the fair distribution of goods and services among asylum seekers, and also between them and host communities to mitigate feelings of neglect.

❖ Non-state actors should work closely with municipalities to help them identify practical solutions to the challenges they face with regards to human and material resources.

❖ Non-state actors aiding in the provision of education to children asylum seekers should help public schools in increasing their enrollment capacity, by providing sufficient material and human resources to fill gaps.

❖ Non-state actors involved in healthcare provision, specifically the UNHCR, should improve their response by decreasing the percentage of fees to be settled by beneficiaries.

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