

# RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF CRISIS

Rooting resilience in the  
realities of the Lebanese  
experience



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Rooting resilience in the realities of the  
Lebanese experience

Nathalie Bekdache

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## Key concepts and themes

- **Conflict:** A “multi-dimensional social phenomena”<sup>1</sup> essential to social change and transformation. It is the result of parties disagreeing, for example, about the distribution of material or symbolic resources, and then acting on the basis of that disagreement.<sup>2</sup> Conflict can involve a resort to physical, psychological or structural forms of violence to resolve a disagreement. As a consequence, the term ‘conflict’ is often used interchangeably with the term ‘violence’.
- **Collective action:** A community-led action taken together by communities to address issues and problems jointly or as a community for the benefit of the community rather than individually and for the benefit of the individual solely.
- **Marginalised communities:** Communities that have been deprived to a large extent by the state and society of developmental investments and that experience in many ways a governance vacuum leading to a feeling of neglect by the central authorities.
- **Peacebuilding:** Initiatives designed to consolidate peaceful relations, to strengthen viable institutions (political, judicial, socio-economic and cultural) capable of mediating conflict without recourse to violence, and to strengthen other mechanisms and conditions necessary for sustained peace.
- **Resilience:** Capacity to respond to a variety of familiar and unfamiliar external and internal stresses, adapting as necessary, while maintaining a trajectory of developmental progress.
- **Community resilience:** In the Lebanese context and for Lebanese communities, *resilience* is defined as not merely the ability to adapt to worsening circumstances, but in their engagement in a process of *developmental investment and strengthening*, to become better equipped with the decision-making power, skills, infrastructure and the material resources that allow them to proactively address and manage adversities. Important to that definition is the mechanism by which this is attained whereby marginalised communities transform their situation by building foundations (relationships and networks for attaining holistic wellbeing) within and across these communities through collective action that aims to get access to and influence decision-making of the society, central state and local governance structures to reform and improve the provision of services and livelihoods in order for these communities to reshape their circumstances.
- **Positive peace:** Peace is when people are anticipating and managing conflicts without violence, and are engaging in inclusive social change processes that improve the quality of life. They are doing so without compromising the possibility of continuing to do so in the future or the possibility of others to do so. This is the idea of interdependent, positive peace.<sup>3</sup>

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1 International Alert, *Resource Pack for Conflict Transformation*, London: International Alert, 2013, section 2:3

2 Ibid.

3 International Alert, *Programming Framework for International Alert Design, Monitoring and Evaluation*, London: International Alert, 2010, p.5

## Executive summary

Since 2011, Lebanon has seen a huge influx of refugees fleeing the violence in Syria. Lebanon is currently hosting the biggest number of Syrian refugees in the world with more than 1.3 million registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and an unidentified number of unregistered refugees.<sup>4</sup> The Beqaa Valley is the region most affected by the crisis. The presence of Syrian refugees living within and close to host communities, including some of the poorest and most vulnerable communities in the country, has taken its toll on already inadequate infrastructure, economy, hospitals and schools, exacerbating chronic problems that pre-date the Syrian refugee crisis. Given the polarising nature of the conflict in Syria and its effect on the sectarian/political power balance inside Lebanon, security has been adversely affected with violence breaking out in different parts of the country, with the rift between pro- (coalition of March 8) and anti- (coalition of March 14) regime forces within Lebanon's political and communal factions and the Sunni–Shia divide deepening, and threats against refugees increasing.

Since the end of its own civil war, which took place from 1975 to 1990, Lebanon has weathered successive political crises, which have taken their toll on the country's economy, infrastructure, social capital and populace. However, with the most recent refugee crisis showing no signs of abating, many communities are at breaking point. Faced with waves of violence, insecurity and instability, Lebanese communities have often found ways of adapting and developed coping mechanisms to deal with worsening conditions. This adaptability has often been called 'resilience'. Yet, the findings of the research conducted by International Alert outlined in this paper demonstrate the limitations of this reactive view of 'resilience' that is overly focused on coping and adapting to worsening circumstances. There is a need to strengthen cross-community action, which can be leveraged to influence decisions that bring about structural changes that affect the Lebanese population at large irrespective of their political, sectarian and geographical leanings. This would be a more proactive view of resilience. Issues related to healthcare, education, employment, security and governance are cross-cutting across communities especially in peripheral areas, marginalised and underdeveloped for years, and currently overburdened with hosting refugees and the strains this bestows on them. As such, there is a need to deal with the issues affecting these populations from a structural perspective rather than intervening to merely stabilise or return to status quo ante.

In this report, we advocate for strengthening the resilience of Lebanese communities across the country with the explicit understanding that this resilience is not merely the ability to adapt to worsening circumstances, but a *developmental investment in and strengthening of* marginalised communities to become equipped with the skills, infrastructure and resources that allow them to proactively address adversities in ways that can reduce future vulnerability.

This reframing of resilience is based on our action research in partnership with the Permanent Peace Movement through the project 'Harnessing local capacities for resilience in the face of the Syrian crisis', implemented in the regions of Wadi Khaled, Hermel and Badghan. The research looked into understanding people's perspectives on the conditions in their regions before and after the influx of refugees into those areas. Building on that, workshops on conflict analysis and advocacy were conducted with each group in their locales before bringing them together to jointly work on an advocacy plan. The joint group chose water as the common issue to advocate for and had a chance to present their advocacy plan to key stakeholders in the sector.

<sup>4</sup> Lebanon: 2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Lebanon, UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486676.html>, accessed 27 February 2015

## Overview of research

Beginning from 2013, Alert carried out a two-year action research project to inform communities, donors and policy-makers in Lebanon of effective ways to strengthen local resilience to proactively address communities' systemic marginalisation. Central to the research's aim and approach was to reflect the voices of communities that are often unheard or overlooked, with a view to engaging them with one another on key issues affecting their daily lives. Researchers asked communities about their daily lives and their coping mechanisms to develop an understanding of their resilience. The term 'resilience' itself was not used directly with communities, as communities do not talk about resilience in these terms and there is no agreed or adequate translation in Arabic that captures the same meaning as in English.<sup>5</sup> The project focused on three regions: Wadi Khaled and Hermel (in the north and east of the country, respectively, regions bordering with Syria) and Badghan (in Mount Lebanon).

These regions were chosen as their geographic location and their demographic, economic and sectarian differences influenced the communities' responses to and impact of the crisis on their various resources and abilities to manage the crisis. The intervention's contribution to strengthening resilience comes mainly from its focus on providing project participants with the 'soft' aspects of resilience (skills, networks, knowledge) as a means for communities to harness such aspects and attempt to influence state policies for the attainment of 'hard' aspects of resilience (infrastructure, employment, education, health, security).

## Summary of findings

Interviews with the three villages revealed key gaps and needs in relation to the economy, healthcare, education, security, governance and social factors before and after the Syrian crisis, and the communities' responses and ability to address these issues.

In terms of **economy**, citizens of the three regions felt marginalised by the Lebanese state. Already precarious economic conditions were worsened by the Syrian refugee crisis with competition for jobs, particularly from Syrian labourers (who often charge smaller fees than the Lebanese labourers), creating resentment among host communities. Closure of the borders with Syria made it harder for the residents to access cheaper Syrian goods, forcing them to rely on more expensive local goods. The absence of industrial investment and support for agriculture in these regions and the rise in prices of domestic goods in comparison to Syrian goods added to the difficulty in coping with unemployment. Resentment among host communities extends further to humanitarian organisations, which, in their view, are aiding the Syrian refugees and neglecting the Lebanese hosts.

Inadequate provision of **healthcare** services was deemed an issue before and after the crisis. With the onset of the Syrian crisis and severance of access into Syria, Lebanese communities in border areas (who used to access healthcare centres in Syria) have been forced to seek local services, which are significantly more expensive. Healthcare organisations were seen to be giving priority and support to Syrian refugees when the Lebanese communities in those locations perceived themselves to be equally vulnerable and in need of aid.

**Security** was perceived to have deteriorated with the onset of the Syrian crisis. The increase in the number of Syrian refugees who are not familiar to the residents coupled with a lack of police presence (such as local police stations) have exacerbated the feeling of insecurity. The absence of the state in effective/visible security provision has led to the residents relying more on informal

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<sup>5</sup> The best word we could use for 'resilience' in Arabic is *sumud*, which is akin to 'steadfastness'. Different suggested translations for 'resilience' in Arabic did not capture the same meaning that the word connotes in English.

security and justice provision, such as recourse to their clans or political parties, and, in rare cases, on the judiciary system (when the matter at hand involves a crime) to resolve disputes and conflicts. For example, in Badghan, security has been taken into the hands of the citizens by patrolling the area and imposing a curfew for the Syrian refugees.

**Education** was deemed of good quality in the three regions; however, the job market is not commensurate with the studies being offered, especially in Hermel and Wadi Khaled where graduates end up teaching rather than practising their majors. The remoteness of universities from the three locales affect students' choice of studies, whereby the residents of Wadi Khaled choose majors that require little attendance. Syrian refugees struggle in the Lebanese education system due to its structure and language of instruction, which is either in English or French. Moreover, with the presence of Syrian refugees, bigger class sizes, and differences in Lebanese and Syrian levels of education and the systems of education themselves have caused tensions between students.

**Inequitable and inadequate governance for the provision of social services** and a chronic historical absence of state support has been a characteristic in these communities since pre-Syrian crisis and onwards. Badghan relies on its local municipality for security (provided through volunteers) and social and conflict-resolution services. There is a substantial lack of funding for much of the development the area requires. This lack of funding is a problem that both Hermel and Wadi Khaled share. Wadi Khaled's municipality is more focused on the Syrian crisis and is perceived to be more helpful towards the Syrian refugees rather than the Lebanese communities, as the main focus of its work since its inception in 2011 has been in dealing with the influx of refugees and managing the crisis. Hermel relied on aid from Hezbollah mainly to respond to the presence of refugees in the area.

In all three regions, the first resort for conflict resolution or **collective action** was through informal channels such as clans, political parties and religious figures. State institutions were mainly seen as a last resort because informal channels were seen as swifter, more able to contain and resolve a situation, and more in line with tradition. In all three regions, the state institutions were seen as generally unresponsive and irrelevant.

## Implications of findings

The findings of the research reveal that communities have been coping and adapting to the burden the Syrian refugee presence has bestowed on them. Their capacity to continue such adaptation is diminishing with many villages across the country using violence against the refugees or evicting them.<sup>6</sup> Such actions reveal increasing resentment and that communities are reaching their saturation levels, especially in areas that suffer high marginalisation, and a lack of infrastructure and job opportunities. The revelation of the extent of underdevelopment of many Lebanese regions that the Syrian refugee presence has helped uncover should alert policy-makers such as ministries of finance, agriculture, industry, economy, labour, tourism, public works and transportation, health and education to the need to channel resources under an umbrella of reform towards such areas, and support their development in ways that respond to the needs of the communities. Evidently, reform is crucial as illustrated by Lebanon's expenditure on education, which as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) is high and similar to developed nations, yet has been unable to usher in "improvements in the public sector educational system, either in quality or capacity" because it was not aimed at quality improvement nor based on needs assessments.<sup>7</sup>

6 Lebanon: Rising Violence Targets Syrian Refugees, Human Rights Watch, 30 September 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/09/30/lebanon-rising-violence-targets-syrian-refugees> / J. Arbid, Easily Evicted, Executive, 31 October 2014, <http://www.executive-magazine.com/economics-policy/refugee-easily-evicted/> / Q. Sommerville, Syria conflict: Refugees facing eviction, BBC News, 21 January 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25818443>

7 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), The National Human Development Report 2008-2009: Toward a Citizen's State, UNDP, 2009, p.131

National strategies are needed to deal with the problems emanating from the crisis, without the burden being shouldered mainly by municipalities and community members. The central state needs to provide the framework under which the response to the crisis has to happen. As such, banking on the resilience of the Lebanese host communities – from an adaptation to worse circumstances perspective – has its limits. Resilience of Lebanese communities needs to be strengthened through systemic changes that create a space for citizens to inform decision-makers on how to address issues of poverty, affordable education, lack of access to proper healthcare, lack of job opportunities and lack of diversified income in their regions that ultimately affect the security situation and the relationship between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees. Equally important is the approach taken to address the needs of marginalised communities, which should be through a collaborative and participatory decision-making process that is able to channel local voices of these communities to decision-makers and empower them in strengthening their own resilience.

A new *modus operandi*, whereby the state's interventions are better informed by citizens' input that is actively solicited by local governance to feed into central government's policies, opens the door for building trust between the state and its citizens and contributes to better progress on key developmental and security issues that, in Lebanon's current context of hosting a great number of refugees, is crucial. Whereas past investments in better infrastructure and the creation of viable local economies could have enhanced the support capabilities by the Lebanese host communities towards the Syrian refugees, today the Syrian crisis needs to be seen as a wake-up call by state authorities, international organisations and the society at large to the absolute necessity of shifting resources towards the development of areas beyond Beirut and its environs. Lebanese communities need to receive positive dividends from this crisis to be continuously able to host the influx of refugees. This goes beyond ad hoc and stopgap interventions to the creation of a more holistic plan and strategies that address national issues and problems facing the vast majority of Lebanese communities, especially those in peripheral areas.

## Recommendations

The Syrian crisis has exposed the extent of marginalisation that a vast number of Lebanese regions and villages face, and the acute challenges associated with bearing the brunt of hosting refugees. This marginalisation has continued for years without being addressed (pre- and post-crisis) and these regions have few viable means to influence the central state's developmental policies as a way of renegotiating their circumstances. This crisis has served as an opportunity to highlight the gaps in governance, and, if leveraged in the right way, it could provide space for an entry point for reform.

An overarching recommendation is for all actors who are able to contribute to the new *modus operandi* regarding resilience described above to take that on board, recognising that such an endeavour is a long-term commitment.

### To the central government and politicians:

- Introduce political reform, in the shape of communal empowerment that provides a space for communities to influence the central government's economic, public services and developmental policies, to counter historical marginalisation.
- Create linkages between local and national governance that can pave the way to decrease tensions produced by the presence of Syrian refugees as communities get engaged in shaping responses to this crisis. A concerted effort by parliamentarians and mayors to consult citizens and allow their voices to influence policy-making can help achieve this.

- Uphold responsibility in administering the affairs of the state for the public good rather than private interests.
- Usher in comprehensive solutions encompassing legal, managerial and technological frameworks to address broader sectoral problems rather than only localised interventions.
- Engage in regional development by redistributing resources downwards. Disenfranchisement today has a risk of radicalising the disenfranchised when alternative ideologies and systems are appealing to the politically and economically weak.
- Direct resources towards creating sustainable solutions that respond to communal needs in terms of utilities, education, healthcare and job creation in industry and agriculture. With the receipt of an economic dividend by host communities that can be attributed to a governmental reform long overdue but prompted by the Syrian crisis, tensions can be lessened within host communities and absorption of the impact of Syrian refugees can be enhanced.
- Clarify the different responsibilities within various ministries for the administration of the response to the Syrian crisis, and ensure that these responsibilities are fulfilled effectively.
- Encourage investments in rural development by providing private investors with incentives to invest in peripheral and marginalised areas, along with safeguards for the livelihoods of those already living there.

#### **To donors:**

- Ensure funded interventions are designed to move away from adapting, coping and returning to status quo ante and move towards transformative relations between state and citizens and the means by which citizens attain their basic needs. All donor interventions should have built-in mechanisms that support transformative resilience.
- Include, in assistance to Lebanon, support for reform in state institutions with the government having a proactive role in implementing developmental projects rather than relegating such projects to the international community. Without an institutional reform, developmental projects hit bottlenecks and political obstacles and end up being ineffective, all the while providing a semblance of activities happening.
- Support the design by the government and with participation of NGOs (humanitarian, developmental and peacebuilding) of a developmental plan for marginalised communities where NGOs can plug in their expertise and implement different parts. This would be under the rubric of the state, which needs to have a clear strategy to invest in strengthening communal resilience by combatting poverty, redistributing resources and investing in marginalised areas to ensure that civil society and donors do not contribute to a further weakening of the social contract between state and citizens.

#### **To civil society:**

- Engage Lebanese communities in cross-communal initiatives and aim to stimulate collective action that advocates for reform. Cross-communal engagement towards the state builds trust between otherwise antagonistic communities, places issues that affect the communities' daily lives at the centre of the political discourse and contributes to forging an enhanced sense of citizenship. Transformative collaborative relationships between communities, once established, can be harnessed to build their resilience further.

- Advise the government on the reforms it should be undertaking and advocate for the government to implement those reforms.
- Engage in an exercise of self-reflection on its role in substituting the state in provision of services, and transform such a role into a supportive rather than a substitutive one.
- Harness collective action among its many branches in humanitarian, developmental and peacebuilding organisations to work collectively on structural problems by advocating for a holistic governmental plan.
- Complement local interventions by working also on a holistic, structural level.

# 1. Introduction

## Crisis and fragility in Lebanon

Lebanon is no stranger to crises. Its birth, history, geographical location and population make-up have infused it with a seemingly inherent disposition to tensions, sometimes flaring to become fully fledged crises. Lebanon's complex, sectarian-based governance system, a by-product of the culture of politics in Lebanon, which by nature is set up to 'cope' and avoid major structural changes that might upset the political settlement agreed upon since its independence, has in many ways proved to be a failure in effective governance and has engendered long periods of violence.

A breakdown of the system occurred when the country experienced civil war (1975–1990) and successive internal waves of violence, as well as having to cope with repercussions of regional power plays that have had a destabilising effect. The regeneration of the same system, with some tweaks ushered in by the Taif Agreement, have provided Lebanon's so-called 'stability' seen over the past 25 years. This 'stability', however, emanates from an entrenched resilient political class that has been able to – through an extensive network of patronage – regenerate itself always in a framework whereby short-term stability issues are more or less managed, but which systematically prevents major structural changes necessary to create tangible improvements in citizens' daily lives. Such an approach has brought forth a crisis of faith in institutions by the citizenry, consigning what would have been their demands on the state to the private sphere, detaching them from mobilising around issues of concern. This has reconfigured the social contract between the state and its citizens by allowing the former to neglect its duties and responsibilities, and by opening up the space for political parties, charities, religious organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international NGOs (INGOs) and the various branches of the United Nations (UN) to fill the needs of communities and keep them afloat.

Today, the tensions in Lebanon – whether due to the Sunni–Shia divide, opposing political camps taking opposite sides vis-à-vis the Syrian crisis, the economic hardships compounded by competition on jobs due to Syrian labour or the utter failure by the state to create solutions to infrastructural problems such as water, electricity, housing, economic problems (such as inflation and unemployment) and security problems are high and may well forebode more difficult times. It is strange, therefore, that a country that seems to be constantly moving from one crisis to another has seen little consistent state focus on investing in strengthening sustainable foundations for local and national resilience as a means to better weather and ultimately prevent these crises. It opts, however, to take impromptu reactive measures that reflect a lack of visionary planning and care for the public good.

The aim of this research paper is to highlight the main factors and impacts of the Syrian crisis on vulnerable and marginalised communities in Lebanon, demonstrate communities' response to these crises and provide recommendations on how actors could strengthen community resilience and collective action to actively address these crises.

## Structure of the report

First, this research paper will outline the implications of the Syrian crisis and the main contextual and conflict dynamics in Lebanon, with particular reference to the regions in focus (Wadi Khaled, Hermel and Badghan). Secondly, it will present the methodology of the field research conducted in June and July 2013. Thirdly, it will frame resilience in the Lebanese context before presenting the

findings and perceptions of communities regarding the different facets that affect their resilience. Finally, it will reflect upon the project's approach and its effectiveness in its attempt to influence resilience of communities to draw out learning and make recommendations for strengthening resilience on this basis.

## Implications of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon

Lebanon is currently hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees in the world with more than 1.1 million registered with UNHCR and an unidentified number of unregistered refugees. The peculiarity of this crisis in Lebanon is the absence of formal camps, with refugees living all across the country in many host communities' homes while others live in informal tented settlements, which sprang up due to the lack of alternative means of habitation for many refugees. The Beqaa Valley is the region most affected by the refugee crisis with around 770 informal tented settlements hosting around 410,000 refugees.<sup>8</sup> The presence of Syrian refugees has had its impact on the Lebanese infrastructure with costs estimated at US\$3 billion. Syrians occupy 60% of the labour force in Lebanon<sup>9</sup> and are largely perceived to be taking the jobs of the Lebanese as the Syrian refugees charge lower fees. Eighty-six percent of the refugees reside in highly impoverished neighbourhoods where 66% of vulnerable Lebanese also live.<sup>10</sup> Further strains emanate from overburdening of schools, hospitals and electricity (a sector with shortages existing pre-Syrian crisis). Problems are compounded as the international community has failed to fully fund the relief programme by the UN. Some economists have argued about the presence of small advantages of the Syrian crisis that can be seen in increased spending by middle-class and Syrian workers on consumption in Lebanon, which has prompted some revitalisation of local industry by substituting purchase of goods and products from Syrian markets to local ones. Moreover, some benefits have accrued towards the Beirut International Airport and Beirut Port by shifting traffic from Syria towards these entities. However, the advantages of increased spending are far outweighed by the presence of cheaper Syrian labour, which, due to the fact that agricultural and industrial sectors are unable to absorb the excess labour, is in fact replacing Lebanese labour, namely the poor and existing foreign workers, rather than being integrated into the labour market.<sup>11</sup>

Security has been adversely affected with violence breaking out in different parts of the country. Tensions between the Sunni and Shia communities, which are predominantly on opposing sides of the Syrian conflict, have increased. Tensions between Lebanese and Syrian communities have also increased in general, due to escalating strains on services and competition for jobs, as well as kidnappings of Lebanese soldiers by Syrian militants in border towns. In the areas of the North and Beqaa provinces, refugee camps have become regarded, by the state and many Lebanese citizens, as safe havens for terrorists with refugees no longer seen as victims. This is encouraging use of force by security agents and Lebanese communities against refugees, as well as threats of violence and death against them, with calls for them to leave. The deteriorating security situation is limiting the work of civil society in these regions – reducing access to the most vulnerable. In parallel, at least 45 municipalities have imposed curfews on Syrian refugees in contravention of Lebanese law.<sup>12</sup> These seem to be targeting mainly the poorer strata of the Syrian refugee community.<sup>13</sup> In the face of deepening crisis, the Lebanese state lacks a long-term plan to address

8 Top UN Humanitarian Officials Visit Syrian Refugees, Call for Support for Lebanon, UNHCR, 16 September 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/54185e1d9.html>

9 M. A. Zeid, A Time Bomb in Lebanon: The Syrian Refugee Crisis, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 6 October 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis?fa=56857>

10 L. Khatib, Repercussions of the Syrian Refugee Crisis for Lebanon, Carnegie Middle East Center, 10 December 2014, <http://carnegie-mec.org/2014/12/10/repercussions-of-syrian-refugee-crisis-for-lebanon/hw9w>

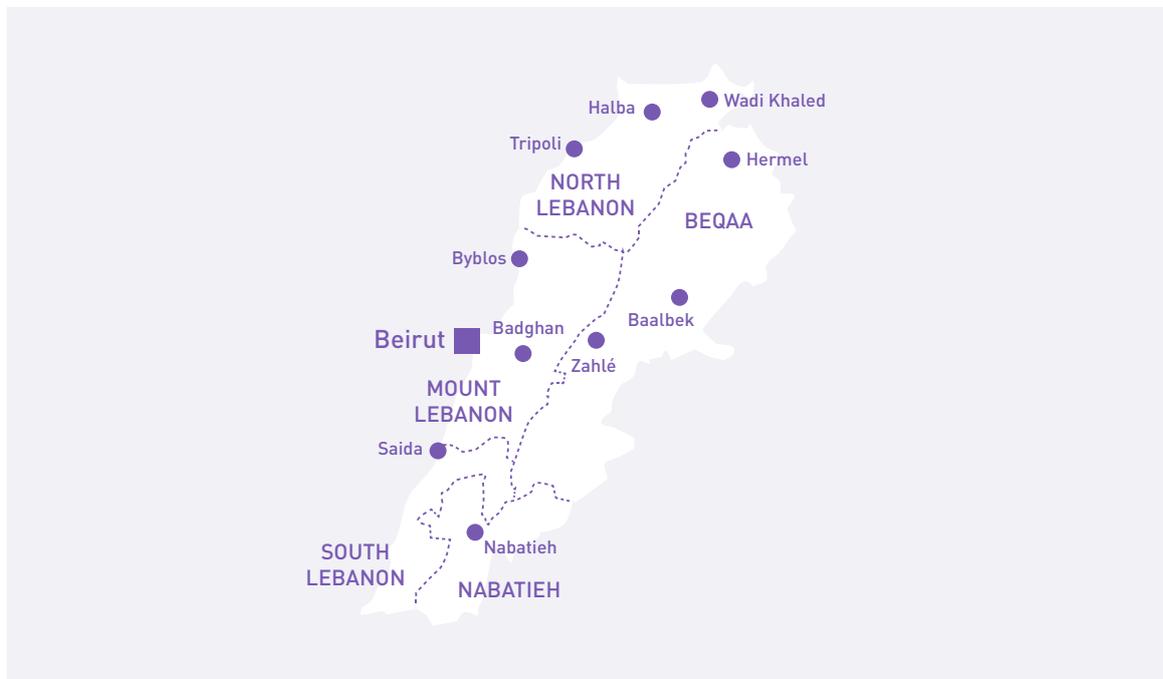
11 M. Wehbe, The impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon: Small advantages, huge damage, and overwhelming racism, Al-Akhbar English, 5 January 2015, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/23099>

12 Lebanon: At Least 45 Local Curfews Imposed on Syrian Refugees, Human Rights Watch, 3 October 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/03/lebanon-least-45-local-curfews-imposed-syrian-refugees>

13 M. Helou, Refugees Under Curfew: The War of Lebanese Municipalities Against the Poor, The Legal Agenda, 22 December 2014, <http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=674&lang=en>

the situation and relies on the UN and civil society to ease tensions with peacebuilding and conflict-resolution programmes.<sup>14</sup>

## Context analysis



Below we present a brief overview of the economic, health, education, security and governance aspects of the Lebanese state, and then more specifically on the three regions of Wadi Khaled, Hermel and Badghan.

**Economic overview:** According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lebanon is ranked 65 on the Development Index,<sup>15</sup> although a study by World Vision conducted in 2013 showed that 35% of Lebanon’s citizens live “below the satisfaction threshold”,<sup>16</sup> with some of the highest rates of underdevelopment seen in the North and Beqaa provinces. Corruption is endemic in the state institutions with Lebanon ranked number 136 on the corruption monitor index for 2014 (where 1 is the least corrupt).<sup>17</sup> “Lebanon has a free-market economy and a strong laissez-faire commercial tradition. Although the government promotes foreign investment, the investment climate suffers from many restrictions, delays and obstacles. The Lebanese economy is service-oriented; main growth sectors include banking and tourism”<sup>18</sup> and real estate. The economy is heavily burdened by a growing debt mainly financed internally. Prospects for Lebanon to become an oil-exporting country loom on the horizon as oil fields may exist on the shores of the country and inland. One of the major sources of income in the Lebanese economy are remittances projected to be of US\$7.7 billion for 2014,<sup>19</sup> which account for 17% of Lebanon’s GDP.<sup>20</sup>

14 Khatib, 2014, Op. cit.

15 K. Malik, Human Development Report 2014 – Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience, New York: UNDP, 2014, p.165

16 R. Das and J. Davidson, Profiles of Poverty in Lebanon: The human face of poverty in Lebanon, Beirut: Dar Manhal al Hayat, 2011, p.55

17 Corruption by Country, Lebanon, Transparency International, 2014, [www.transparency.org/country#LBN](http://www.transparency.org/country#LBN), accessed 27 February 2015

18 About Lebanon, UNDP, n.d., <http://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/countryinfo/>, accessed 27 February 2015

19 Remittances to Lebanon to hit \$7.7B, The Daily Star, 13 October 2014, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Local/2014/Oct-13/273813-remittances-to-lebanon-to-hit-77b.ashx>

20 Lebanon GDP, 1988-2015 | Data | Chart | Calendar | Forecast | News, Trading Economics, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/lebanon/gdp>, accessed 14 January 2015

**Healthcare overview:** Although the Ministry of Public Health governs and regulates healthcare work in Lebanon, private healthcare providers overwhelmingly dominate the service provision by offering about 90% of services through primary healthcare centres (PHC), hospitals and specialist facilities. Other healthcare options include a mix of state and non-state organisations such as municipalities, national charities/foundations and INGOs that exist in parallel to the private healthcare companies.

Private healthcare services are considered to be one of the best in the region but are mainly accessible to those able to pay out of pocket or with insurance. Such coverage can be found through professional unions, the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), company schemes and the Ministry of Public Health Financing Scheme. The NSSF is provided solely to Lebanese citizens and their dependants if they are employed, leaving a significant proportion of the population without any coverage.<sup>21</sup>

The Syrian crisis has taken its toll on the healthcare system with PHCs being overburdened in many areas in Lebanon. Amnesty International's report reflects the suffering of Syrian refugees on the healthcare front by highlighting the lack of essential services in nutrition, water and sanitation, and accommodation and shelter, along with the extremely high cost of healthcare, which is mainly privatised. It further states that the impact on Lebanese citizens, by exacerbating their challenges of access to healthcare with a likelihood of increasing morbidity and cost of care to the poorer strata of society, is still met with "no apparent efforts... made by the government to loosen restrictions on international medical organizations which would allow them to set up their own field hospitals and take other measures used in humanitarian crises that could reduce the burden on Lebanon's health system".<sup>22</sup>

**Education:** According to the 2014 World Economic Forum report, Lebanon is ranked 13th in its quality of education, and fourth in science and math, with a 100% secondary education gross enrolment rate and 90% adult literacy rate.<sup>23</sup> Lebanon's adult and youth literacy rates rank among the highest in the Middle East and north Africa region. Private schools have a significant presence in Lebanon, as they fill a gap in the low quality of education provided by the public school system. Yet, they are significantly costlier than public schools. As Das and Davidson explain:

*"The education sector is characterized by the following: i) low internal efficiency; ii) an oversupply and misallocation of teaching and administrative staff; iii) fragmented and inefficient financing of the sector leading to inequalities; and iv) a costly vocational and technical education sub-sector hampered by weak linkages to the labor market."*<sup>24</sup>

Currently, with the presence of Syrian refugees, the schools are struggling with accommodating Syrian students, which in the best situations have room for 30% of them. Moreover, Syrian refugees encounter difficulties studying Lebanese curricula, as they are educated mainly in Arabic in their home country unlike their Lebanese counterparts who study mainly in English or French. Transportation and tuition fees are impeding access to many children refugees.<sup>25</sup>

One of the ways the Ministry of Education is dealing with this issue is by offering a second shift for refugee students on the condition that donors commit to paying all related expenses. Moreover,

21 Integrity Research and Consultancy, Conflict Sensitivity Institutional Capacity Assessment: Primary Healthcare Sector in Lebanon, London: International Alert, Integrity, 2014, p.23

22 Lebanon: Agonizing choices: Syrian refugees in need of health care in Lebanon, Amnesty International, 21 May 2014, p.25, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE18/001/2014/en>

23 B. Bilbao-Osorio, S. Dutta and B. Lanvin, The Global Information Technology Report 2014: Rewards and Risks of Big Data, Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2014, p.174, <http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-information-technology-report-2014>

24 Das and Davidson, 2011, Op. cit., p.50

25 INEE Working Group on Minimum Standards and Network Tools, Mapping the Education Response to the Syrian Crisis, New York: The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), February 2014, p.10, [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Mapping\\_the\\_Education\\_Response\\_to\\_the\\_Syrian\\_Crisis\\_FINAL.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Mapping_the_Education_Response_to_the_Syrian_Crisis_FINAL.pdf)

international organisations are providing informal learning programmes, with UNHCR, Save the Children and Amel Association providing supplementary and remedial classes.<sup>26</sup>

**Security:** Security in Lebanon has been progressively deteriorating since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, characterised by explosions, suicide bombings, Syrian army shelling of border villages (to target rebel groups) and kidnappings of Lebanese army personnel. The reach of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) extends into Lebanon with the kidnapping of more than 30 military and security personnel to use them to negotiate the release of 300 Islamists held in Roumieh prison (east of Beirut in Mount Lebanon province). Parents of kidnapped security forces have been protesting in and around Beirut and closing off major highways for months, demanding that the government take action and negotiate with the Nusra Front and ISIS for their release.

The schism between leading political factions in Lebanon, in particular the March 14 Alliance, in opposition to the Syrian regime, and the March 8 Alliance, in support of the Syrian regime, reflects the polarisation in the country. In addition, the Sunni–Shia divide has deepened, with sectarian fears coming to the fore due to Hezbollah’s military support of the Syrian regime. “Most recently, the rise of Sunni extremism in the Syrian conflict has unleashed disturbing religious and security dynamics in Lebanon, with al-Qaeda affiliates that are fighting in Syria, such as the Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, launching Lebanese chapters.”<sup>27</sup> Breakdown in security occurred in the North province (mainly Tripoli and its environs), an area that has been historically marginalised and poor. The deployment of the army, often previously considered a neutral institution but increasingly viewed as politicised by the Sunni community, struggled to quell fighting. Still, clashes occur sporadically.

**Governance and social services:** The political crisis in Lebanon is ongoing with a presidential vacuum and the parliament extending its own mandate for the second time. Although Lebanese citizens in general opposed this action, with dozens of protesters staging a sit-in in November 2014 in Martyrs’ Square to denounce the extension, the second extension has passed. The absence of elections has served to further weaken citizens’ ability to hold the state accountable, closing the space further for affecting policy-making.

Deficiencies, inefficiencies and ineffectiveness in many sectors and infrastructure in Lebanon are exacerbated by an absence of open debates that pinpoint the source of problems within them and allows for a space on how to tackle them in a holistic and structural manner. Lebanon’s policy-making environment is “almost completely captured by political elite”, with the state having limited capacity in that realm. As Arbid explains, this is due to:

*“... (1) the limited consistency of generated policy; (2) the high turnover rate of prime ministers and their cabinets; (3) the lack of authority for policy-making and its implementation during periods of caretaker cabinets; and (4) the limited input from stakeholders outside of government institutions.”<sup>28</sup>*

The weakness of the state in upholding its social contract is substituted by the political delivery of services, which renders the Lebanese people as clients who provide support to their patron rather than citizens who appeal to the state for public services that contribute to the general good and ultimately foster a stronger sense of citizenship.

Currently, the basics of public services (such as housing, water, electricity, waste management and public transportation) are weak across the country. Lack of basic services in rural and peripheral

26 I. E. Zoghbi, Lebanon’s public schools open doors to Syrian refugees, Al-Monitor, 17 November 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/culture/2013/11/lebanon-syria-refugees-schools-afternoon-classes.html>

27 R. Lefèvre, The Roots of Crisis in Northern Lebanon, Carnegie Middle East Center, 15 April 2014, <http://carnegie-mec.org/2014/04/15/roots-of-crisis-in-northern-lebanon>

28 J. Arbid, Policymaking in Lebanon: potential offshore oil and gas discoveries, American University of Beirut, 2013

areas since pre-independence has led to great internal migration inside Lebanon to major urban cities and created peri-urban centres for populations where many reside in poor conditions due to a lack of affordable housing, prohibitive land costs, and “the absence of appropriate spatial, regulatory and fiscal policies that guide both urbanization and housing supply”.<sup>29</sup>

Even prior to the Syrian crisis, the Lebanese government had been unable to provide access and quality of water and sanitation services mainly due “to the spatial and temporal variations in water availability, delayed implementation of critical storage, distribution and treatment infrastructure and the incomplete institutional reforms needed to enable sustainable operations and cost-recovery of sector institutions”.<sup>30</sup> Supply to urban areas such as Beirut has been deteriorating steadily to reach three hours of water supply per day. In other areas, continuity of water supply averaged from 7.6 to 13 hours/day in the summer and winter seasons, respectively. Shortages in water supply opened the door for private provision of water through random digging of wells across the country that is both costly to citizens and harmful to the environment. Low-income households – most of which are located in the North and Beqaa provinces, currently areas with the highest influx of refugees – are among the areas lacking the connection to water public networks. Many areas lack the networks themselves.<sup>31</sup>

Waste disposal is an intractable problem in Lebanon with 51% of all solids being landfilled and 32% being dumped. Much dumping from coastal cities occurs at the seashores creating severe marine pollution. Landfills are also a cause of concern. Increased numbers of refugees place strains on housing and with unplanned urbanisation problems in wastewater, solid waste, pollution of land and water increases.<sup>32</sup>

Lebanon’s electricity sector is highly unreliable, creating a toll on economic development. It had reached a point “where fiscal sustainability was unattainable without major reform. The sector’s issues stem from very weak governance, low consumer confidence in the sector, high relative cost of electricity production, high non-technical and technical losses, lack of necessary investments and an overall poor track record of reforms.”<sup>33</sup> Supply cuts in Beirut are about three hours per day and increase to about 12 hours per day outside the capital. These high cuts force many consumers to resort to paying for generators that are both costly to consumers and the environment as they are powered with diesel. The additional costs of providing electricity to refugees have risen from US\$206 million in 2013 to US\$432 million in 2014.<sup>34</sup>

The transportation sector in Lebanon suffers from political interferences that limit the capacity of the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation to have proper planning and prioritisation for road works. The ministry estimates that 15% of road networks are in good condition, while 65% and 20% are in fair and poor condition, respectively. A lack of financial resources and weak supervision, procurement inefficiencies and interference with work execution has led to this reality. “Inadequate investments in the past in road maintenance had resulted in serious deterioration in road quality.” Poor maintenance over the years is bestowing high costs on rehabilitation and reconstruction of many road networks. In parallel, there is a lack of a reliable public transportation system, leading to increased traffic jams, especially in Beirut, and creating economic costs for transportation of goods. There are no railways in Lebanon, with freight services provided through trucking and lots of inefficiencies in this sector as well.<sup>35</sup>

29 World Bank, Lebanon economic and social impact assessment of the Syrian conflict, 81098-LB, World Bank, September 2013, p.116, [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDS/IB/2013/09/24/000333037\\_20130924111238/Rendered/PDF/810980LB0box379831B00P14754500PUBLIC0.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDS/IB/2013/09/24/000333037_20130924111238/Rendered/PDF/810980LB0box379831B00P14754500PUBLIC0.pdf)

30 Ibid., p.108

31 Ibid., pp.109–110

32 Ibid., p.125

33 Ibid., p.126

34 Ibid., p.128

35 Ibid., pp.132–135

In parallel, local governance is mired in its own set of problems. Municipalities in Lebanon suffer from high centralisation that impedes them from accomplishing tasks assigned to them by law due to structural, administrative and fiscal constraints. Many are too small to be viable with some completely lacking employees. Community development is often limited by fiscal resources to municipalities. In 2008, the total municipal revenue as a percentage of the total government revenue was, at 9%, lower than many comparable countries of 12–15%.<sup>36</sup> Municipalities are not as dependent on locally collected revenues as they are on transfers from central government and public entities. In 2008, 36% of total municipal revenues came from the Independent Municipal Fund (IMF) and 16% from surtaxes collected by water and telephone authorities on behalf of the municipalities, with direct revenue standing at only 48%. Smaller municipalities had a more difficult situation as their reliance on the IMF for total revenues reached up to 90% in the same year.<sup>37</sup> Calls for reform exist with civil society working on a decentralisation law that empowers municipal unions and establishes elected regional councils to better administer the areas in which they exist, and to clarify responsibilities among municipalities, unions and councils without which clashes and conflicts will arise.<sup>38</sup>

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36 Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS), *The Role of Regional Administrations in the Context of Decentralization*, Beirut: LCPS, August 2012, p.4

37 *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*, pp.5, 8, 13

## 2. Regions in focus

Key information regarding the three regions:<sup>39</sup>

### Wadi Khaled

<b>Area size:</b>	42 kilometres squared
<b>Population size:</b>	34,000
<b>Nature of settlements:</b>	rural villages
<b>Main livelihoods:</b>	education, agriculture, public sector (minimal), smuggling of daily goods, small shops
<b>Sectarian make-up:</b>	predominantly Sunni

### Hermel

<b>Area size:</b>	731 kilometres squared
<b>Population size:</b>	90,000
<b>Nature of settlements:</b>	rural villages
<b>Main livelihoods:</b>	agriculture, education, smuggling of hashish and other goods, public sector
<b>Sectarian make-up:</b>	predominantly Shia

### Badghan

<b>Area size:</b>	2.81 kilometres squared
<b>Population size:</b>	2,000
<b>Nature of settlements:</b>	rural village
<b>Main livelihoods:</b>	education, agriculture, entrepreneurs in trade, cars, carpentry, blacksmith, brokers, etc.
<b>Sectarian make-up:</b>	predominantly Druze

## Wadi Khaled

A feeling of neglect by the central government is deeply entrenched in the mind-set of Wadi Khaled's inhabitants; the absence of the Lebanese state is perceived as the main factor for the region's lack of development. This neglect can be seen through poor infrastructure (such as a high frequency of power cuts, unpaved roads, absence of hospitals and universities, lack of notaries for document issuing and police stations for security provision). The Akkar region, which Wadi Khaled is part of, has a number of vocational schools that are overstaffed by teachers and providing majors (computing, accounting) that are incompatible with the agricultural needs of the region, prompting students to migrate to Beirut and Tripoli for jobs.

The closest hospital is in Qubayat, which is a 45-minute drive from Wadi Khaled. There is a limited number of doctors in Wadi Khaled and just a few pharmacies. People used to seek medical care in Syria before the crisis erupted, and some in Tripoli or Qubayat. The high cost of healthcare impedes Wadi Khaled's residents from accessing proper healthcare services, thus making them a vulnerable population.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Information sourced from key informants in each of the regions.

<sup>40</sup> Development Management International, *Rapid Assessment of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Socio-Economic Situation in North and Bekaa*, Development Management International, August 2012, p.27

This is coupled with a lack of economic investment and support to the local economy by the state. The local economy is primarily based on agriculture; however, this sector is underfunded by the central government and therefore provides only a weak and precarious source of income for the inhabitants. A concentration of poor people is found among the unemployed and workers in agriculture and industry, with one out of four expected to be poor. Of the poor population, 52.5% and 29% are concentrated in the North and Beqaa provinces, respectively.<sup>41</sup> Due to a lack of employment opportunities, the region produces an excess of teachers who cannot find work other than in the education sector. The lack of proper infrastructure and meaningful development has impeded the availability of employment opportunities, thus decreasing the purchasing power of the residents. Moreover, the absence of industry and economic opportunities has led to the burgeoning of cross-border trade that, in its essence, is not sustainable, as it has been keeping Wadi Khaled underdeveloped and “discouraged expansion of less competitive Lebanese markets in the region which has in turn relegated this community to the margins of the state and prevented the residents from enjoying full state sovereignty along with its attendant health, development, security and infrastructural benefits”.<sup>42</sup> Cross-border trading opportunities have been stifled by the Syrian Civil War and periodic closure of border crossings. The economy of Wadi Khaled was largely dependent on the stability and prosperity of Syria, which before the crisis provided a market in the absence of access to other regions in Lebanon.

Wadi Khaled’s unfortunate history with nationalisation precluded its inhabitants from receiving citizenship prior to 1994. When Lebanon’s one and only census took place in 1932, Wadi Khaled’s residents mistook officials conducting the census for Ottoman Empire envoys coming to draft young men into the army. Lebanon was then under the French Mandate; however, Wadi Khaled’s residents’ lack of literacy impeded them from knowing that this change in administration had occurred.<sup>43</sup> This has for years deprived the region of banking on remittances from abroad (as its inhabitants could not travel when they were deemed stateless) that could have been invested in its development. Inhabitants only became eligible for public employment 10 years after the promulgation of the decree to nationalise them. Currently, the issue of citizenship remains problematic as the late nationalisation of Wadi Khaled’s population still prevents them from practising a number of professions, one of which is law.<sup>44</sup>

The absence of diversified sources of income for Wadi Khaled’s residents and their reliance mainly on illicit/illegal cross-border trading and the teaching profession with some agriculture to make ends meet is keeping the region from developing. The coupling of an educated society with a lack of opportunities is producing a sense of apathy by the younger generations who are losing faith in the benefits of education as it is seen as incapable of opening the doors to a better and more fulfilling life.

Prior to the Syrian crisis, the security situation in Wadi Khaled was good. It deteriorated with the crisis, which brought with it mining of borders and shelling by the Syrian air force.

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41 World Bank, 2013, Op. cit., p.94

42 R. Hutson and T. Long, Features of Smuggling in Wadi Khaled, Lebanon, Conflict, Security & Development, 11(4), 2011, p.408

43 Reuters, Forgotten Tribes of Lebanon’s Wadi Khaled Thrive on Smuggling of Goods to Syria, Los Angeles Times, 1 January 1989, [http://articles.latimes.com/1989-01-01/news/mn-191\\_1\\_wadi-khaled](http://articles.latimes.com/1989-01-01/news/mn-191_1_wadi-khaled)

44 R. Majed, The Forgotten People of Wadi Khaled, Now, 7 October 2013, <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reports/features/the-forgotten-people-of-wadi-khaled>

## Hermel

Hezbollah enjoys high support in the community and plays a prominent role in the provision of security and other services in Hermel in the absence of effective state governance.

Similar to Wadi Khaled, Hermel is perceived to be an area long neglected by the state with its population suffering from scarcity of economic resources and low development. Some men serve either as officers in the army and civil servants in government departments, or work in the private sector and agriculture, which includes the illicit cultivation of cannabis and smuggling across Syria. Since 1990, a significant number of projects have been implemented to find other alternatives to cannabis production, but have yielded little success.<sup>45</sup>

The Syrian crisis has negatively affected the income of residents due to border closures (stifling cross-border trade and free movement of people); increased competition for jobs, as Syrians are often more willing to work for less pay than Lebanese labourers and Syrians opening up their own businesses; inability of Lebanese producers to export their products to Syria and other Arab states; and a worsening security situation.<sup>46</sup> The residents further suffer from a lack of access to healthcare and education as they are unable to afford the costs of such services on the Lebanese side of the borders, whereas in the past they were able to access these services for affordable prices in Syria.<sup>47</sup>

Land degradation is another problem the area struggles with. There are many factors, including drought, water erosion, flash floods, improper water management, overgrazing, unsustainable agricultural practices, deforestation, poverty, forest fires and pesticide use. Due to the poor high-tension network, which distributes power in the region, the area of Baalbek-Hermel has been suffering from severe shortages of electricity. After years of neglect, it has become incapable of transferring power from the station to the villages with the same capacity as it used to. Moreover, the network is being further debilitated by encroachment.

There has been a spate of security incidents, including clan 'tit-for-tat' kidnappings and kidnapping of Lebanese soldiers, as well as Syrian warplanes shelling border areas.

## Badghan

Although Badghan has a high level of literacy with some of its inhabitants reaching high posts in the government and other vocations such as ambassadors, state inspectors, officials in teachers' association, lieutenants in the army, university professors, doctors and engineers, it still suffers from poor economic conditions. There is agricultural land yet residents do not fully depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, as this sector was neglected because of wars and the presence of the Israeli and the Syrian armies on the mountains near Badghan during the Lebanese Civil War. In 2014, agriculture suffered from a lack of water, although the soil is very fertile. Badghan has seen 20% of its population migrate outside the country, sending back remittances to their families. Similar to other Lebanese villages, Badghan suffers from a lack of electricity, power outages and water problems. Badghan has one PHC in the area that doesn't receive proper funding to cover its costs and to access needed medicine. Socially, residents of Badghan coexist peacefully with largely no conflicts. This is primarily attributed to their close social ties, which are a result of their strong religious identity.

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45 M. Zbib, Baalbek-Hermel: No substitute for hashish, Al-Akhbar, 13 August 2012, <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/103812> (in Arabic)

46 Development Management International, 2012, Op. cit., p.8

47 Ibid., p.9

### 3. Research overview and methodology

#### Research aim

The ultimate goal of this study was to explore the pillars of resilience within communities suffering from marginalisation by the Lebanese state and external cataclysmic shocks. The purpose is to inform donors, communities and policy-makers of the effective ways to strengthen such local resilience in a reformative framework that addresses the communities' systemic marginalisation, and acts as a means to curb violence locally and prevent it from spreading nationally.

The research took the form of a combination of open-ended and semi-structured questions that delved into current local perceptions and approaches to solving conflict, the issues stakeholders perceive to be affecting peace in their communities, the dynamics at play, the internal and external influences on conflict and peace, the inherent factors within the communities that aid them in absorbing the crisis, the socio-economic problems affecting the area pre- and post-Syrian crisis, assessment of the government's and political parties' provision of services, influence of the geopolitical reality on the villages' political leaning, economic and social behaviour and security, and the role of NGOs and INGOs in alleviating or exacerbating the livelihoods of communities.

Central to the research's aim and approach was to reflect the voices of communities that are often unheard or overlooked. Researchers asked communities about their daily lives and their coping mechanisms to develop an understanding of their resilience.

#### Desk-based literature review

Before conducting field research and collecting the primary data needed to understand resilience in Lebanon, a desk-based review of key reports and available literature on the demographic, historical, socio-economic, security and political situations of the villages was conducted.<sup>48</sup> A literature review on the concept of resilience was conducted to gauge its various definitions, theories and findings that could shed light on the constructs that go into this concept. This literature review helped inform the key lines of inquiry of focus for the research and understanding of resilience in the areas of intervention.

#### Media monitoring

In parallel to the literature review, the research team engaged in media monitoring of online sources (Al Nahar, *Al-Akhbar*, LBC News, Reuters, *The Daily Star*, *Assafir*, Al-Manar, Naharnet, BBC, CNN) to reveal key events, issues and problems within these areas that could have an effect on the resilience of local communities to withstand adversity. This monitoring was mainly for internal use and for better probing during interviews as a way by the research team to better understand the areas of engagement and complement their knowledge. The monitoring showed a clear gap in data on the three villages prior to the conflict, while reports on these villages have gained prominence recently due to the influx of Syrian refugees. In particular, for Badghan, absolutely

48 H. A. K. Mahfouz, *Tarikh El Hermel Kadiman wa Hadithan*, EL Nada, 1999 / G. F. Tah, *Shiite Lubnan Alashira – Alhezb – Aldawla*, The Sapiential Knowledge Institute, 2006 / Development Management International, 2012, Op. cit. / M. Alami, *Averting a Crisis: Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, Carnegie Middle East Center, 28 May 2013, <http://carnegie-mec.org/2013/05/28/averting-crisis-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon> / R. Hutson and T. Long, 2011, Op. cit., pp.385–413 / H. Naufal, *Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: the Humanitarian Approach under Political Divisions*, Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2012

no written documents were available. To fill this gap, initial interviews with key informants were conducted to develop a fuller understanding of the local context of these villages before in-depth interviews were carried out.

## Interviews with communities

Based on the above, a series of in-depth interviews with communities in the three regions were carried out in June and July 2013. These focused on unpacking the foundations of resilience within these communities, the external shocks and the means that the communities employ to deal with these problems. The interviews were conducted in Arabic with 42 people. A diverse group of informants were selected, including different genders, occupations (such as doctors, businesspeople, teachers and farmers) and public figures (for example municipality representatives), as well as private citizens, to solicit a range of perspectives.

## Site selection

To understand the resilience of communities in the face of the Syrian crisis, the research team sought to select sites that hosted a significant number of Syrian refugees, while also choosing communities that exhibited religious, sectarian, political and geographic diversity, in order to capture a range of characteristics and approaches to resilience in the Lebanese context. Therefore, the areas of Wadi Khaled, Hermel and Badghan were chosen.

## Workshops and conferences

Workshops on conflict analysis, advocacy and networking skills for the three regions were conducted. The conflict-analysis workshop dealt with understanding basic concepts of conflict and violence, providing skills and tools for conflict analysis, and mapping key community conflicts, while the advocacy workshop dealt with introducing participants to different topics related to the field and equipping them with the skills to develop advocacy plans. Communities were then brought together to work on a common issue and develop a joint advocacy plan on that issue. The issue chosen was water and the advocacy plan was presented at a conference that focused on expert input into understanding the water crisis Lebanon experienced in 2014. Community members presented their advocacy plans and experts provided communal advice on how to deal with the crisis. A communal water management case study was also conducted.

## 4. Framing resilience

Lebanese people are often described as resilient. This usually comes in the context of continuous adaptation to unfavourable circumstances and the Lebanese people's capacity to find individualised ways around difficulties. Rarely does it come in the context of an ability to ameliorate circumstances in such a way that it builds collaborative foundations across communities allowing for better coordination and participatory decision-making to access services and livelihoods through democratic governance that extends beyond the local initiative.

Adaptation can be a double-edged sword – on the one hand, it maintains social order (status quo) and some sense of stability; however, on the other, continuous reactive adaptation refrains from challenging the deep-rooted structural problems that created the sub-optimal conditions the citizen is forced to endure in the first place. Thus, the resilience Alert hopes to contribute to is the proactive resilience that brings with it a transformation of the general conditions of marginalised communities rather than the adaptive resilience that passively accepts an imposed reality.

Therefore, for the purposes of this discussion of resilience in the Lebanese context and for Lebanese communities, *community resilience* is defined as not merely the ability to adapt to worsening circumstances, but as an engagement in a process of *developmental investment and strengthening*, to become better equipped with the decision-making power, skills, infrastructure and the material resources that allow communities to proactively address and manage adversities. Also important is the mechanism by which this is attained. Ideally, marginalised communities should transform their situation by building foundations (relationships and networks for attaining holistic wellbeing) within and across themselves through collective action that aims to get access to and influence decision-making of the society, central state and local governance structures to reform and improve the provision of services and livelihoods, in order for them to reshape their circumstances.

Resilience here is thus viewed through a spectrum, where at one end we find coping and reactively adapting (a feature that already describes Lebanese communities), and at the other is a proactive investment in progress (a type of resilience for which we advocate in this report) as a gateway for building positive long-lasting peace.

Coping and adaptive resilience is understood as a tacit acceptance, by individuals and communities, of worse circumstances that are in their essence structural and which individuals and communities work around by addressing through local, short-term interventions/solutions that are often inefficient, costly and resurface constantly. Proactive resilience, on the other hand, is viewed as a transformative quality in communities that aims to progress through investments in both 'soft' and 'hard' aspects of resilience, by harnessing collective action among them and other communities facing similar structural sectoral problems and, in that process, creating foundations of trust and a sense of citizenship they can rely on in times of crises.

Alert's perception of 'soft' and 'hard' aspects of resilience can be best described by borrowing from authors who have discussed this concept. 'Soft' aspects of resilience are mainly in the realm of social capital that "involve dense patterns of trust networks, hybrid coalitions forged across a wide range of actors, shared narratives, common interests, multiple lines of communication, good leadership, and a commitment by local leaders to take risks for peace",<sup>49</sup> in addition to

49 K. Menkhaus, *Making Sense of Resilience in Peacebuilding Contexts: Approaches, Applications, Implications*, Geneva: Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, Paper No. 6, 2013, p.6

knowledge, problem-solving, conflict analysis, advocacy skills and decision-making power. Meanwhile, 'hard' aspects of resilience encompass four capital spheres: economic capital (income, savings, investment); human capital (education, health, skills, knowledge/information); physical capital (housing, public facilities, business/industry); and natural capital (resource stocks, land and water, ecosystem). Investment in a "capital-based approach" creates a "sustainable community economy",<sup>50</sup> which allows for better communal disaster preparedness. In that realm, 'soft' aspects of resilience are a sphere that peacebuilding organisations can use to create networks and collective spaces where skills and knowledge are provided to communities to harness local capacities for the attainment of other 'hard' aspects of resilience that are primarily resource-based, and which are necessary assets for communities to possess and utilise in times of crises. Investment in 'hard' aspects of resilience can then be seen as influencing structural domains, which, when at the root of communities' marginalisation, contribute to an amelioration of communities' circumstances and thus to communal resilience. 'Hard' aspects of resilience are then the ultimate aim as "empowerment without resources is counterproductive"<sup>51</sup> and resources are the pillars of community resilience, yet 'soft' aspects of resilience, especially when they are harnessed to influence decision-making, are what ensures that developmental investments match community needs and aspirations. Collectively, 'soft' and 'hard' aspects of resilience act as reserves on which communities can draw in times of crisis.

## Rooting resilience in the reality of the Lebanese experience

The linkage between resilience and disaster preparedness in particular is of the utmost relevance. Prior to the Syrian crisis, borders with Syria were calm. The disaster that shattered this perceived calm has impacted poor and marginalised areas of Lebanon, especially border areas, which are the entry points for fleeing refugees. This new reality has revealed the importance in investing in community resilience, with its entire gamut of capital investments mentioned above to be continuously prepared for any unforeseen events. The central government needs to invest into the foundations – social, economic, human, physical and natural capital – that equip communities to be prepared to deal with adversity. As Lebanon is constantly moving from one conflict to another, short-sightedness in this regard is hardly excusable. Today, Lebanon is faced with another prolonged crisis that necessitates serious, creative, forward-looking, reformative interventions for the country as a whole to be better prepared for confronting and anticipating disasters. The short-sightedness by the government has manifested itself in overinvestment in Beirut at the expense of the rest of the country's regions in parallel with a lack of support and encouragement of productive sectors such as agriculture and industry, which can contribute to development of the peripheries and create much-needed job opportunities that strengthen community resilience in the face of crises.

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50 J. S. Mayunga, *Understanding and Applying the Concept of Community Disaster Resilience: A capital-based approach*, Texas: Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, Hazard Reduction & Recovery Center, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, 77843-3137, USA, 2007, pp.5-6

51 F. H. Norris and S. P. Stevens, *Community Resilience and the Principles of Mass Trauma Intervention*, *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 70(4), 2007, p.324

## 5. Research findings

One-on-one interviews conducted in the summer of 2013 focused on communities' conditions in the villages of Wadi Khaled, Hermel and Badghan prior to and after the Syrian crisis. The interviews focused on: infrastructure and availability of resources and assets (such as water), economic opportunities, communal/citizen participation in collective action, governmental and civil society engagement in resolving problems/issues, social capital, security and leadership.

In this section, we present the findings under the strands of economy, healthcare, security, education, social services, governance and social factors to better characterise the impact of the Syrian crisis on each of the three communities and the coping mechanisms that have helped abate the situation so far. The findings are based on the perceptions of the interviewees. They highlight gaps and point to opportunities for future interventions to strengthen community resilience.

### Economy

The economic marginalisation of Wadi Khaled, Hermel and Badghan is at the core of the three regions' problems. Scarcity of employment opportunities and the rise in unemployment due to the high competition of cheaper Syrian labour contributes to feelings of resentment. Interviewees would often report that a "Syrian [person] works in everything" for a much cheaper wage, which benefits the employers at the expense of the Lebanese employees who are unable to accept lower wages due to high living costs. Resentment is further fuelled by the perceived advantages of Syrians in accessing aid, which they can consume or resell. The Syrian worker is perceived to be competing in the casual labour market, such as construction, and in the services industry, for example barber, baker and vegetable seller, that create direct competition with the Lebanese worker.

The foundational economic problems in the three villages precede the presence of Syrian refugees. A main similarity among the three areas is the absence of any industrial investment, as factories, perceived as a significant source of jobs, are non-existent. All three are agricultural regions; however, this sector is unable to provide enough income to sustain communities (either to live on or make a living from). Farmers in Wadi Khaled have been unable to access their land due to shelling from Syria. Hermel relies on the plantation of cannabis as the quality of land and climate in the region precludes the ability to grow many other crops (and cannabis cultivation remains more lucrative). As the river Orontes passes through it, Hermel was also a tourist area prior to the crisis.

Prior to the Syrian Civil War, the people of Wadi Khaled and Hermel were able to cope with the lack of employment in their areas by engaging in cross-border trading where goods in Syria could be easily accessed for much cheaper prices. Benefits associated with access to Syria extended to healthcare and education. Such access to cheaper goods and services allowed the border regions to withstand the marginalisation by the Lebanese state. With the fighting inside Syria creeping towards the borders with Lebanon, the mining (with landmines) of borders, presence of explosives and remnants of war, and erection of earth mounds severely curtailed trading and forced people to buy Lebanon's already expensive commodities, the prices of which spiked even further with the increase in demand. Hence, a dual economic catastrophe befell Wadi Khaled and Hermel from an increase in internal competition to a severance of an external market.

Wadi Khaled's residents are unable to access public employment. They received their Lebanese nationality in 1994, yet remained barred from public employment except for some drafting in the army. They are unable to join unions or any state institutions. Apart from agriculture and cross-border trade, the main jobs for inhabitants of Wadi Khaled and Hermel are teaching and nursing. Badghan, on the other hand, depends heavily on public employment in the army and police, especially as agriculture halts in the winter and residents seek other types of employment (such as in security companies or other informal jobs). The regions also highly depend on jobs outside the village.

*“After the refugees came, the situation became more difficult. We were not able to access Syrian markets to get foodstuffs that were much cheaper, which had made our lives easier before. We have had land within Syria for a long time and some villages there are ours. Now, we are unable to benefit from them.”* – INTERVIEWEE FROM HERMEL

With the high presence of international organisations in Wadi Khaled due to the Syrian crisis, job opportunities for social workers developed. At the same time, the distribution of aid ate into the economic potential of many foodstuffs shops. Distribution of food coupons to refugees that could only be redeemed for goods from a selected few shops was perceived as depriving other shops of their ability to sell products. Humanitarian organisations aiding in finding accommodation for Syrian refugees through rent payments and house renovations has produced mixed results. On the one hand, in Wadi Khaled, housing is no longer available for the locals, especially newlyweds or those planning to marry, and rent prices have surged. At the same time, residents with houses to rent benefited from the extra rent money and the finishing of their houses for free (humanitarian organisations had a scheme of finishing the construction of houses if residents of said houses hosted Syrian refugees). Due to this, a construction boom occurred in Wadi Khaled. Housing is especially a problem in this region as refugees are being hosted in the residents' homes. In Badghan and Hermel, however, refugees are mainly renting houses independently of the host community.

Social development centres and municipalities benefited from the presence of refugees as international organisations invested in rehabilitating the former and providing aid and vehicles to the latter. Badghan has no presence of international organisations, with Syrian refugees accessing aid from nearby Aley. However, there is a general perception in the three regions that international organisations are gearing all their efforts towards Syrian refugees to the neglect of Lebanese host communities who, in Wadi Khaled especially, are bearing the bigger brunt (as it is a border area and an entry point for refugees). A perception of corruption by humanitarian organisations was cited by several interviewees in Wadi Khaled who also believed that *makhateers*<sup>52</sup> were also *enriching themselves at the expense of the refugees*.

## Healthcare

Generally, the three regions suffer from poor healthcare. Wadi Khaled and Badghan lack a hospital within their locales and need to access hospitals in Halba or Qubayat and Aley, respectively, which are about 45 minutes away. The hospital in Qubayat supposedly offers services free; however, Lebanese residents are made to pay what are perceived to be high fees. The hospital is also perceived to be of poor quality and hygiene. What there are instead are dispensaries that are unable to provide more than primary healthcare. Hermel, on the other hand, has one public hospital, with good equipment but an ineffective cadre of health providers. Thus, for proper healthcare, one needs to access hospitals in Zahlé.

*“We lost my sister. We got shelled and there was no ambulance and the hospital in Qubayat did not allow us to admit her without paying. We had no insurance and so we couldn’t pay. She died on the doorsteps of the hospital.”* – INTERVIEWEE FROM WADI KHALED

Wadi Khaled has seen the opening of dispensaries by humanitarian organisations including the Qataris that cater only for Syrians. Whereas Syrian refugees can access these for free, the Lebanese, who now suffer from compounding poverty, must pay for healthcare. Healthcare providers have become more interested in treating Syrians as they benefit from guaranteed support.

Prior to the crisis, Wadi Khaled and Hermel residents were able to access good, cheap healthcare in Syria. One interviewee mentioned that medical check-ups would cost US\$12 in Syria in comparison to US\$50 in Lebanon.

## Security

Due to their close proximity to the borders with Syria, Wadi Khaled and Hermel have been victims of shelling, which has resulted in injuries and fatalities. In Hermel’s case, some shelling was thought to have originated from inside Lebanon, specifically Aarsal, a town that has been engaged in some retaliation clan-based kidnappings with Hermel. The borders between Syria and Wadi Khaled have been mined to prevent cross-border movement of goods and personnel that could be destined for deployment in the Syrian Civil War. Moreover, the increase in the number of Syrian refugees within these two locales has created a sense of insecurity for their inhabitants, who were familiar with one another prior to the influx. Badghan, Wadi Khaled and Hermel don’t have a police station or army that can provide protection. Wadi Khaled used to have one police station that was moved to another town, and the army that was deployed after security incidents occurred is deemed impotent in protecting the population. Wadi Khaled and Hermel lean on their clan system for matters of conflict resolution and only in some cases, when conflicts become crimes, do they resort to the judicial system. However, resolution through state mechanisms is not always seen as providing closure to affected family members who may still seek revenge to retrieve their ‘rights’. Security in Wadi Khaled has been the purview of the clans in the total absence of the state, but, in the current context, this system has broken down and security has deteriorated. Hezbollah, which has a stronghold in the region, provides the security in Hermel.

*“There is no one to go to. The government is totally absent. If two people fought one another, even if in front of the army, the army does nothing.”* – INTERVIEWEE FROM WADI KHALED

Wadi Khaled has seen some new groupings of Salafists (associated with extremist interpretations of Islam). Fallout from the Syrian crisis is credited with this rise in Salafi Islam, which is seen as alien to the host communities’ moderate tradition and practice of Islam. Hermel, on the other hand, is tightly secured against such groupings, given the presence of Hezbollah that deters any internal military activity and provides security. Badghan is able to provide its own security through communal policing by its own inhabitants that volunteer to patrol the area, which means the municipality can deal with minor disputes without the interference of the state. Wadi Khaled and Badghan have put in place a curfew for Syrian refugees, which they consider important to maintain security, although this contravenes national law.

Badghan is the least-affected region in terms of security. However, there is fear that, if fighting in Syria evolves to include the targeting of Druze, then Syrian Druze communities will potentially seek refuge among their co-religionists similar to other sects fleeing the Syrian Civil War that tend to prefer residing in areas whose population belongs to their same sect. Such a matter could drive Badghan into a full crisis similar to what happened in Wadi Khaled if the state remains

distanced from engagement in shouldering the burden of refugees. The Druze, unlike other sects, see themselves as lacking an external patron<sup>53</sup> that can be motivated to provide aid to the new refugees. There is fear of the destabilisation and burden that such a scenario may incur and for which the area is ill prepared, without a recourse to external support.

There is also a general fear in the three regions that security could deteriorate and result in an increase in crime, particularly theft, and that the mismanagement of the Syrian refugee crisis could drive already destitute populations to commit such crimes. Interviewees also reported that the UNHCR cutting its assistance, the increase of Syrian refugee influx combined with their inability to cater for their needs and the presence of Syrian militants who could group themselves could all pose security threats.

## Education

The education level in the three regions was deemed to be good by the interviewees; however, no universities exist in these regions. The closest to Wadi Khaled is in Tripoli and Halba (71 and 40 kilometres away, respectively), whereas, for Hermel, it is in Zahlé (91 kilometres away). Wadi Khaled's respondents complained that the distance to the universities affected the majors students chose. Given that studying literature in Lebanese universities does not require daily attendance in comparison to scientific majors, most students opt for that major, as daily attendance entails prohibitive costs of transportation and accommodation. Halba opened a scientific branch in 2012 that only provides courses for the first academic year for a major. Wadi Khaled has some vocational schools; however, the job market is not commensurate with the courses provided. Graduates end up teaching rather than practising their majors. Hermel has both private and public schools, of varying quality. Badghan has one school that provides education up to the intermediate level and attracts a student body from outside the village. Those wishing to continue education must go to neighbouring villages.

All three regions reflected that the presence of Syrian refugees in their schools has affected the quality of education provided, as Syrian students struggle to understand and keep up with a different curriculum, especially in terms of language (Lebanese students study mainly in English or French). Moreover, with the presence of Syrian refugees, bigger class sizes and differences in Lebanese and Syrian levels of education as well as the systems of education have caused tensions between students. This situation created frustration and interviewees have suggested that separate schools be provided for Syrians as a solution.

*“The educational problem is occurring due to the fact that the Syrian students have different curricula. They can't study in English.”* – INTERVIEWEE FROM BADGHAN

## Governance and social services

There is a chronic absence of support by the central state in all three regions and a lack of belief in the state as an establishment in its capacity and willingness to address historic and current developmental needs and current crisis-related problems. Interviewees in all three regions reflected that the central state did not engage in any exceptional measures to respond to the current crisis, which is in line with its lack of responsiveness to the needs of the regions prior to the crisis. Security incidents, such as shelling on Hermel and Wadi Khaled, have not seen any response from the government, either in carrying out assessments of the situation or in countering the bombardment. Badghan has a very strong relationship with its municipality that is perceived

<sup>53</sup> It is perceived by the Druze community that Sunnis have Saudi Arabia and Shias have Iran as external patrons that can be motivated to support refugee communities belonging to these sects, while the Druze community does not have such a patron.

by its residents to be an enclave of communal problem-solving, accountability and responsiveness to the Syrian crisis. The municipality has been keeping a log of all Syrian workers in Badghan prior to the crisis and has continued documenting the entry of any refugee. It is also seen to be able to delineate the priorities and needs of the region given its extensive knowledge of the area and record-keeping habit. On the other hand, its budget is limited and doesn't suffice to finance all the necessities of Badghan. Interviewees have reflected that the government – specifically the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Public Health and Ministry of Education – has provided no aid to the village. Given the lack of security forces in the area, Badghan's municipality members volunteer to patrol the area and ensure security. International organisations and political parties are generally absent from responding to the refugee presence in Badghan, although political parties have provided some aid to the refugees.

Wadi Khaled's and Hermel's municipalities operate under different circumstances. Wadi Khaled's municipality was established in 2011 and has been working mostly on responding to the Syrian crisis and the great influx of refugees to the area. It is perceived to be more geared towards the Syrian refugees in its distribution of aid and less towards the improvement of the region. The municipality has in the past worked on asphaltting the streets, providing a sewerage system and erecting stonewalls on the side of the streets. The problems that Wadi Khaled is facing, especially the drain on resources, rubbish collection, electricity cuts, unemployment and security incidents, are all perceived to be outside the control or influence of the municipality. Instead, they are deemed the prerogative of the state that needs to intervene to alleviate these burdens. Since the state is perceived to be unresponsive, it is deemed that the municipality should advocate and place pressure on the state to intervene. Islamic charitable organisations in the area are active in receiving aid from Saudi Arabia and Qatar and distributing it to the refugees. Most of the burden is shouldered by international organisations such as the UNHCR, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children and Qatari organisations that are catering to the needs of Syrian refugees by providing humanitarian aid, housing and funding for healthcare and education. This assistance, however, is perceived to be unfairly geared towards Syrian refugees, even though the host community is also suffering the repercussions of the crisis. Moreover, in terms of aid distribution, perceptions of corruption were cited by a number of interviewees that felt the crisis is being taken advantage of, in order to enrich some people. Political parties are seen as completely absent in responding to the crisis and provide support only when it can be leveraged for political gains.

Hermel has more substantial support from political parties, especially Hezbollah, which has provided refugees with funding to pay for rent and household needs. The municipality has a lesser ability to influence the management of the crisis, given its meagre resources and the bypassing of it by international organisations working in the area. Its work is more focused on public works. It was felt by some interviewees that it runs on personal relations and thus is not entirely dependable. Solving problems through the state has become increasingly difficult due to its absence, which in turn has enhanced the status of the clans and parties as problem-solvers and security providers. The few improvements in the area on the developmental level are perceived to be due to the international organisations and donors, such as the European Commission, that has been involved in agricultural projects such as irrigation. Service provision by the parties and the state is viewed as wanting.

## Collective action and communal characteristics

As previously explained, a key facet of positive resilience is collective action, whereby communities address issues and problems jointly for the benefit of the community, rather than individually and for the benefit of the individual. Communal characteristics refer to traits that the community possesses to be descriptive of itself as a group, such as generosity and hospitality towards guests.

In the three regions, the first resort to conflict resolution or collective action was through informal channels of clans, political parties and religious figures. State institutions were mainly seen as a last resort due to informal channels being seen as swifter, more containing of the situation and more in line with tradition, while the state was seen as generally unresponsive. No examples were given where local communities would reach out to other communities and harness their collective power to work on common issues.

However, participants in the project from all three regions did provide a series of needs to be addressed to counter some of the adversities and sources of conflict highlighted in this paper:

- More engagement by municipalities with donor and international organisations in addressing the crisis, as some respondents reported the bypassing of municipalities by international organisations in their aid provision and interventions.
- Awareness raising for inhabitants to better deal with the Syrian refugees by understanding their conditions and the challenges they face.
- Response by the national state to the economic needs of the regions such as increasing support for agriculture and investing in the creation of factories that can employ residents.
- Better state support/interventions to reduce communal burdens and solve problems.
- A strong civil state that can render ‘security by consensus’ among political parties (*amn bil tarade*) and ‘personal security’ (*amn zati*) unnecessary, i.e. enhance formal state provision of security that can diminish the role that clans and parties play in its absence.
- Establish communication and dialogue between refugees and host communities.
- Sustain support for Syrian refugees.
- Conduct needs assessment studies to better understand the needs of these regions in order to determine which interventions have to be specifically tailored.
- Increase coordinated interventions between international organisations working in the regions.
- Provide psychological support for refugee and host communities.
- Resort to the justice system to resolve conflicts.

The three regions exhibited various communal qualities that have aided them in hosting refugees and enduring the strain the crisis has bestowed on their residents. A tradition of generosity towards guests (hospitality), cultural and religious morals, historical business relations, family ties, humanitarian inclinations, historical ties of one land and one people,<sup>54</sup> reciprocity for hosting Lebanese fleeing the July war in 2006 and the civil war, and Arab origins are common reasons provided by interviewees for hosting the refugees. In addition, Wadi Khaled’s population shares a similarity in religion and sect with most Syrian refugees, and its geographical proximity (with close interactions) plays a role in it being one of the first regions to welcome the influx of refugees at the onset of the crisis and its relative acceptance of their continuing presence.

<sup>54</sup> Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan are historically known to be ‘Bilad al-Sham’ since the Arab conquest of that region in 7th century AD. The Sykes–Picot Agreement of 1916 divided the Middle East into its different states. Lebanon was carved out of Syria in 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference after the end of the First World War, thus historically and geographically it used to be part of Syria.

However, as the crisis endures, the influx increases day by day and the pressure mounts, the ability and inclination of host communities to remain welcoming decreases, creating tensions and conflicts locally and sowing seeds for wider repercussions on a national level.

## Analysis and implications for resilience in peacebuilding

A common finding in all three regions is their historic marginalisation by the central Lebanese state and underdevelopment that manifests itself in different ways in each region. As human development indicators do not exist for regions in Lebanon, some indication of marginalisation can be seen through poverty indicators whereby the North province has a very high prevalence of poverty (18%) and the Beqaa province an above-average prevalence of poverty (10–12%), in comparison to low prevalence in Beirut (6%).<sup>55</sup> More comparative information can be found in Annex 2. This marginalisation, however, has been countered with resilience – in the adaptive sense – and coping mechanisms that allowed for the tacit neglect of the state in the pre-Syrian Civil War era, as the Lebanese state could essentially depend on the stability inside Syria to translate itself as stability on its borders and beyond, in some locales. Underdeveloped communities close to the borders were able to sustain themselves through access to the Syrian market with its cheaper prices. The outbreak of the Syrian Civil War has changed the realities on the ground. The settlement of Syrian refugees in marginalised communities all over Lebanon has exposed the repercussions of the Lebanese state's urban-centric developmental policies and exposed the negative effects of its centralised, Beirut-focused investments. The Syrian refugee presence in Lebanon has severely impacted communities; however, the devastating impact of the current crisis would have been less severe had the Lebanese regions been adequately serviced and invested in during the years prior to the crisis.

The research showed various constructs of communal resilience that are relevant to our purpose of understanding and strengthening the foundations of resilience in Wadi Khaled, Hermel and Badghan. Social capital in terms of trust networks within each region was clearly high, as the clan system and communal bonding through common religion and sect play a key role in communal management of issues, abating problems and resolving conflicts. Shared community values, social trust, norms and identity have also been at the heart of acceptance of Syrian refugees, given the historical ties, reciprocity in hosting during wars and the familiarity with refugees, be it through family ties or business relations. These 'soft' foundations of resilience contribute to weathering the crisis to some extent. The scarcity of resources that directly affects livelihoods and wellbeing, such as economic resources, assets and skills, access to services, income, savings, investments, housing, public facilities, business/industry, education, infrastructure, land and water, and resource stocks, weaken the resilience of communities. Addressing these deficits in times of crisis is necessary to prevent the breakdown of communal resilience and the capacity to continue hosting Syrian refugees.

In terms of practical strengthening of resilience, skills transfer and development, as well as adequate resourcing for communities to advocate for and gain access to resources and concrete capital, are necessary for a healthier society and can enhance a community's resilience in the long run. Peacebuilders can contribute to supporting the 'soft' aspects of resilience by providing skills such as communal problem-solving and decision-making, citizenship empowerment, networking, and communication and advocacy skills that can be harnessed for the attainment of 'hard' aspects of resilience, which cross into the sphere of development and should primarily be under the purview of the state (employment, security, healthcare, resources, utilities, infrastructure). The latter are crucial for communities' abilities to withstand crises and adapt to new risks and adversities.

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55 H. Laithy, K. Abu-Ismaïl and K. Hamdan, *Poverty, Growth and Income Distribution in Lebanon*, Brasilia: International Poverty Centre, UNDP, August 2008, pp.18–19

Interventions by civil society should support the creation of a space to influence decision-making by creating coalitions across a wide range of actors, infusing collective action mechanisms for problem-solving and decision-making that produce a stronger voice for advocacy on issues that are common between the different regions in Lebanon. Harnessing issue-based collective actions can contribute to social cohesion, whereby communities with different sectarian and political leanings can nonetheless find common ground in addressing problems that they share. In parallel, there is a necessity to change the “cultures of power”<sup>56</sup> by designing interventions that engage with all major stakeholders especially through greater involvement by parliamentarians in purposeful consultation of marginalised communities, as the process by which needs are to be identified and addressed are just as important for strengthening resilience as capital investments are. Issue-based national debates should be pushed for to create ownership for a reform agenda that is inclusive of parliamentarians, civil society and citizens at large, and paves the way for strengthening accountability to counter state institutions that are fragmented along factional lines and interests.

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56 E. Bell, *The World Bank in fragile and conflict-affected countries 'How', Not 'How Much'*, London: International Alert, May 2008, p.7

## 6. Intervention: developing skills for proactive resilience

After exploring the facets of communal resilience through research interviews, as peacebuilding organisations, Alert and its partner sought to influence the ‘soft’ aspects of resilience by providing communities with training and guidance on conflict analysis, advocacy and networking skills for the three regions to come together to discuss a common issue affecting the daily lives of its residents. While training workshops alone cannot develop and enhance resilience, equipping a community with skills is an important step for harnessing collective action geared towards the attainment of ‘hard’ aspects of resilience. This is one contribution that peacebuilding organisations are able to provide for the aim of strengthening community resilience.

The conflict-analysis workshop dealt with understanding basic concepts of conflict and violence (structural, physical and cultural), providing skills and tools for conflict analysis and mapping key community conflicts. Through group work, participants identified the main needs and issues that are sources of conflict affecting their communities. They agreed on a common list of priorities for development and conflict intervention to be addressed in their area. These priorities could be the basis for future interventions and/or local policy-oriented or advocacy actions. The main purpose of the conflict-analysis workshop was to uncover the real sources of tensions that these regions are currently experiencing especially at a time when the country is hosting more than a million refugees who, at face value, can be blamed for weak infrastructure. By delving deeper into the conditions these regions are in, clarity between symptoms and root causes of problems emerged where ineffective and inadequate governance, mismanagement of resources and historic marginalisation by the state were revealed to be the sources of core problems, pinpointing where remedies should be administered.

Additionally, the advocacy workshop introduced participants to different topics related to the concept of advocacy and equipped them with the skills to develop advocacy plans. They discussed characteristics and components of advocacy campaigns, identified issues to work on and then defined goals and objectives. This workshop was preparation for further collective action supported by the project, and brought together groups from each region to devise an advocacy plan on a common issue of concern to all three locales.

Water was chosen as the main focus for the advocacy work, given that Lebanon experienced extreme water shortages in 2014 due to severe drought, and this was affecting the three communities significantly. With this exercise, the project contributed to strengthening resilience by expanding these communities’ networks and opening a space for participants to learn from one another about the water sector in Lebanon and water projects being implemented in other regions. It also helped to build trust between and within communities and developed a sense of common purpose, which can be harnessed in the future. This trust building is especially important at a time when sectarian and political schisms are at their peak and communities may be apprehensive of the ‘other’.

By focusing on water as an issue, these workshops were designed to develop ‘soft’ aspects of resilience (skills, knowledge, networks, trust) that can be garnered to attain ‘hard’ aspects of resilience (concrete development and infrastructure to meet basic community needs). Water in particular is a resource that is important for a community’s resilience and is one of the many ‘hard’ aspects that communities require for survival. Presenting a common advocacy plan on water between three regions that belong to three distinct geographical, sectarian and political spheres was in itself an important collective action step that placed the water issue as not merely a

communal problem for which each community needs to figure out its own solution, but also as a cross-communal issue and ultimately a national one requiring a solution under a framework that reaches all Lebanese territories and citizens.

### **Understanding the water crisis: Water experts delineate the climactic, managerial and quantitative aspects influencing the availability of this resource**

At the conference 'Water resources in fragile contexts: Strengthening community resilience in Lebanon', a diagnosis of the crisis was provided by water experts who revealed that the per capita share of water decreases every year in Lebanon. Currently it is 926 and will be 839 cubic metres by next year, whereby 1,000 cubic metres is the scarcity threshold. The shrinking annual per capita share of water is attributed to the increase in the pressure on water resources, 48% of which is wasted due to worn-out networks for the distribution of water and mismanagement. The situation is expected to worsen in the coming years with climate change, lowering precipitation by 20–40%. The new reality may even see a year of natural rainfall in every 6 to 10 years of drought, with an increase in fires. After fires, the soil would be eroded if the mountain land is not shrouded, and land is not being shrouded due to the decrease in agricultural labour as rural residents migrate internally to cities to attain employment. Much of this internal migration is due to underdevelopment in rural areas for economic purposes. This displacement would eventually deprive cities of drinking water as the soil erosion that occurs due to the neglect of the land will increase the proportion of precipitation being wasted into the sea instead of going into the groundwater. Precipitation would suffice for the needs of the population in Lebanon if managed efficiently but rivers have been left to become sewer channels with the Qaraoun Lake, for example, becoming a huge reservoir of sewage. This is due to the power configuration and general management of the state, which diverted water from being a basic right to a commodity, with the poor unable to attain their rights to clean water.

Despite the warning of potential disastrous scenarios, the state has not been proactive in creating an effective response to the challenge. It continues to neglect the pollution of rivers and groundwater, mainly due to poor sanitation outside Beirut, and it does not erect wastewater refining or any rain-harvesting capacities to collect water in times of abundance of rainfall.

Population growth was deemed one of the most important burdens on water sources, despite the fact that it has declined to the proportion of 0.96%. On the other hand, the number of refugees has increased by more than a million people in recent years (with admittance that the pattern of refugees' consumption of water in the camps is much lower than the pattern of the domestic sector's consumption, and that, in turn, the latter is significantly lower than the pattern of the tourism sector's consumption).

The absence of a water policy leaves 80% of the rivers polluted in addition to the decay of infrastructure and public services outside Beirut. Presence of sewerage systems ranges from about 96% in Beirut to about 1% in Batroun, with refining plants treating only 8% of the wastewater. Dams were deemed less of a priority, given that an alternative exists with wastewater refining of about 300 million cubic metres per year (at a cost that is less than the cost of the construction of dams), and when used for irrigation would save 2.3 billion cubic metres of water.

## 7. Conclusion and recommendations

This intervention was a pilot for reconfiguring how to deal with the concept of resilience. The framing of resilience in this project from adaptive and coping to more proactive and transformative is meant to look at addressing marginalisation from a structural angle rather than a series of local actions meant to alleviate repercussions of chronic structural problems, but which ultimately do not create real, lasting positive change. This pilot provided knowledge for Alert to build on for future projects and develop community action projects that use a ‘soft’ skills-building approach to attain ‘hard’ aspects of resilience. Currently, Alert with partners<sup>57</sup> is piloting a citizens’ consultation mechanism across Lebanon that aims to channel citizen voices regarding priority issues to parliament. This is done through the implementation of a citizen consultation mechanism, networking groups of individuals across the country to coalesce on common priorities and having open debates in parliament on vital everyday issues that affect Lebanese citizens. An important part of these processes is appealing to national institutions, as policy-making on that level is better able to trickle down to larger communities within the country and, ultimately, developmental improvement strengthens communal resilience on a national scale.

In the same vein, systemic changes would need to be brought about through institutional reform that empowers Lebanese citizens to influence policies at the local and national levels, and gives them a stake in how the country is run. A new *modus operandi*, whereby the state’s interventions are informed by citizens’ input that is actively solicited by local governance to feed into central government’s policies, opens the door to building trust between the state and its citizens and contributes to better progress on key developmental and security issues that in Lebanon’s current context is crucial. The continuous marginalisation and disempowerment of the Lebanese citizen, especially in the current context of crisis, risks compounding historical grievances with new grievances to a breaking point. If communities hosting Syrian refugees in peripheral and marginalised areas reach their breaking point, the consequences will extend beyond their locales to reach the very heart of the country and its capital Beirut. This places a great importance on strengthening local resilience to proactively address communities’ systemic marginalisation that would curb violence locally and prevent it from spreading nationally.

Whereas past investments in better infrastructure and the creation of viable local economies could have enhanced the support capabilities of the Lebanese host communities towards the Syrian refugees, today the Syrian crisis needs to be seen as a wake-up call to state authorities and international organisations to reconfigure how and what resources need to be shifted towards marginalised communities to contribute to their transformative community resilience. With a great impasse between political factions at the national level reflecting a sense of a total lack of engagement by the government in addressing the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on the local level, a more engaged *modus operandi* with the local communities can provide an opening for decreasing the detachment of the national from the local levels and produce a political dividend that can aid in weathering the crisis. Lebanese communities need political empowerment, resources and support to move from simply coping with this crisis to being prepared and adequately equipped to continue hosting the influx of refugees.

Moreover, economic reform is particularly crucial as the substitution of Syrian labour for Lebanese labour is not only creating resentment among host communities but is also depleting its capacity to continuously host refugees, leading to evictions of and violence against refugees in different

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<sup>57</sup> International Alert, FRAME Beirut and Legal Agenda have partnered to launch a citizen consultation mechanism across Lebanon, [https://www.facebook.com/consultcitizens?ref=aymt\\_homepage\\_panel](https://www.facebook.com/consultcitizens?ref=aymt_homepage_panel)

areas. Evictions from the peripheries towards the interior of Lebanon are not only catastrophic for Syrian families but also affect the Lebanese population as the burden gets shifted from one locale to another, with each locale eventually reaching a breaking point. Beyond the reasons of social justice and equitable development, the Lebanese state is urged to reconsider and reform its economic and development policies towards the peripheries and growth-generating sectors (agriculture and industry) that ensure high employability and better incomes. An excess of labour exists in the country that can be turned into a win-win opportunity for both Lebanese and Syrians if that labour can be directed to respond to the needs of host communities and reinvigorate economic sectors long neglected by the state. Such a response can create jobs for both communities through much-needed infrastructural projects in a vast number of regions across the country.

As previously argued, the resilience that Alert advocates for is a proactive transformative resilience that, at its core, necessitates structural changes in Lebanese communities bearing the brunt of conflict. Hence, such resilience will come about through developmental investment by the state in increasing the capital and resources of communities to fall on when and if crises erupt.

It was mentioned earlier that “empowerment without resources is counterproductive” when dealing with strengthening community resilience. For that matter, the empowerment that comes from providing communities with skills, knowledge and networks needs to be closely coupled with concrete capital that can transform the reality of communities into one where basic rights (housing, water, electricity, healthcare, education, security) are attained to open the door for communities to be creative in dealing with crises through available resources. With the coupling of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ aspects of resilience, communal resilience will be strengthened. Such development-related rights, however, need to be attained from the state or under the rubric of the state rather than independently by international and local NGOs who work on aid provision or localised interventions. The problems of Lebanon are structural, whereas ad hoc localised interventions serve only as stopgaps without fundamentally changing the realities of the communities where they are being implemented. It is important to keep in mind that, even if aid is provided without a political agenda, it nonetheless has implications on citizen–state relations and on the social contract between the state and its citizens, ultimately affecting state-building. External development and humanitarian aid have an effect on the political and socio-economic context, and the “evolution of politics and the distribution of power and wealth”<sup>58</sup> all necessitate that they be complementary rather than substitutive to state action.

An overarching recommendation is for all actors who are able to contribute to the new *modus operandi* regarding the resilience described above to take it on board and recognise that such an endeavour is a long-term commitment. Below are recommendations for specific actors.

## Recommendations

### To the central government and politicians:

- Introduce political reform, in the shape of communal empowerment that provides a space for communities to influence the central government’s economic, public services and developmental policies, to counter historical marginalisation.
- Create linkages between local and national governance that can pave the way to decrease tensions produced by the presence of Syrian refugees as communities get engaged in shaping responses to this crisis. A concerted effort by parliamentarians and mayors to consult citizens and allow their voices to influence policy-making can help achieve this.

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<sup>58</sup> Bell, 2008, Op. cit., p.16

- Uphold responsibility in administering the affairs of the state for the public good rather than private interests.
- Usher in comprehensive solutions encompassing legal, managerial and technological frameworks to address broader sectoral problems rather than only localised interventions.
- Engage in regional development by redistributing resources downwards. Disenfranchisement today has a risk of radicalising the disenfranchised when alternative ideologies and systems are appealing to the politically and economically weak.
- Direct resources towards creating sustainable solutions that respond to communal needs in terms of utilities, education, healthcare and job creation in industry and agriculture. With the receipt of an economic dividend by host communities that can be attributed to a governmental reform long overdue but prompted by the Syrian crisis, tensions can be lessened within host communities and absorption of the impact of Syrian refugees can be enhanced.
- Clarify the different responsibilities within various ministries for the administration of the response to the Syrian crisis, and ensure that these responsibilities are fulfilled effectively.
- Encourage investments in rural development by providing private investors with incentives to invest in peripheral and marginalised areas, along with safeguards for the livelihoods of those already living there.

#### **To donors:**

- Ensure funded interventions are designed to move away from adapting, coping and returning to status quo ante and move towards transformative relations between state and citizens and the means by which citizens attain their basic needs. All donor interventions should have built-in mechanisms that support transformative resilience.
- Include, in assistance to Lebanon, support for reform in state institutions with the government having a proactive role in implementing developmental projects rather than relegating such projects to the international community. Without an institutional reform, developmental projects hit bottlenecks and political obstacles and end up being ineffective, all the while providing a semblance of activities happening.
- Support the design by the government and with participation of NGOs (humanitarian, developmental and peacebuilding) of a developmental plan for marginalised communities where NGOs can plug in their expertise and implement different parts. This would be under the rubric of the state, which needs to have a clear strategy to invest in strengthening communal resilience by combatting poverty, redistributing resources and investing in marginalised areas to ensure that civil society and donors do not contribute to a further weakening of the social contract between state and citizens.

#### **To civil society:**

- Engage Lebanese communities in cross-communal initiatives and aim to stimulate collective action that advocates for reform. Cross-communal engagement towards the state builds trust between otherwise antagonistic communities, places issues that affect the communities' daily lives at the centre of the political discourse and contributes to forging an enhanced sense of citizenship. Transformative collaborative relationships between communities, once established, can be harnessed to build their resilience further.

- Advise the government on the reforms it should be undertaking and advocate for the government to implement those reforms.
- Engage in an exercise of self-reflection on its role in substituting the state in provision of services, and transform such a role into a supportive rather than a substitutive one.
- Harness collective action among its many branches in humanitarian, developmental and peacebuilding organisations to work collectively on structural problems by advocating for a holistic governmental plan.
- Complement local interventions by working also on a holistic, structural level.

## Annex 1: Interview questions and structure

Researcher starts by introducing himself/herself.

General information about the respondents:

- Name (unnecessary)
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Place of birth
  - Academic level
  - Occupation
  - Place of residence (any changes in residency?)
  - Belonging to a movement or a political party: Yes or No
1. How would you describe the state of the town in general and the status of living (existence of businesses, income level, food, security provision) and social services (health, education) now, before the emergence of the crisis in Syria and the start of the Syrian displacement to your village?
  2. Since the beginning of the events in Syria and the number of displaced Syrians on the rise, how do the townspeople perceive this new reality?
  3. Is there friction and interaction between the townspeople and the displaced? What kinds of relationships exist between them? (Daily interaction, directly, indirectly, common interests, etc.)
  4. Does the Syrian exodus to your village have a positive or negative impact? How does that show? (Clarification: Is the impact of the displacement of Syrians and Syria's growing presence on the townspeople negative or positive? How are people affected in the different areas of employment, food provision and prices, housing, medical care, education, cleaning services, etc.)
  5. Pinpoint the major problems the townspeople suffer from as a result of the Syrian displacement?
  6. Who is the entity that the townspeople complain to and to what extent are their voices heard?
  7. In your opinion, what are the real reasons behind the emerging problems in the town with the Syrian displacement?
  8. In your opinion, where will these problems lead if they continue as they are?
  9. Are there any subjective aiding factors that townspeople exhibit (family ties; cultural factors; religious, moral or educational foundations; customs and traditions; interests) that give them the ability to overcome emerging problems? (Can be followed by an explanatory question: Are there mitigating factors that diminish the intensity of the problems the townspeople are facing and that allow them to manage or deal with the developments in a positive and effective manner?)

10. How are these problems dealt with and thus handled by the townspeople and those directly involved?
11. Tell us about some of the means and methods used to solve problems or to alleviate the repercussions on the town? (examples)
12. What in your view is the best and most effective way to solve problems and respond to emerging ones?
13. Are there mechanisms that strengthen local capacity (creating jobs, helping to accept one another, integration, training to resolve differences and conflicts)?
14. Who do you think has the ability and effectiveness to determine the basic needs of the different players and therefore the sources of gaps and problems, and is capable of addressing them?
15. How do you assess the role of political party leaders, opinion leaders and the clergy regarding the consequences of displacement? Are they dealing with problematic issues? How?
16. What about the role of the state and its institutions (through the Ministries of Social Affairs, Health, Education and Higher Education, and the Interior) with respect to the townspeople that have received displaced people?
17. What about the associations and local and international organisations regarding their role in the emerging reality?
18. What do you expect from the leaders in your community (state, parties, organisations)? What actions can they take regarding this issue?
19. Are there any precautionary and preventive measures that are possible to take that will strengthen the effective dealing with the developments?
20. What suggestions do you think are appropriate and possible to enable the local community that is hosting the displaced people to better deal with the tensions and problems emerging?
21. What do you think are the best ways to convey the voices of the people and their demands stemming from the pressures they face from displacement?
22. Are you optimistic or pessimistic for the near and distant future towards the reality of the town in the shadow of displacement?

## Annex 2: Comparative numbers on marginalisation

Number of total households that are deprived or severely deprived, according to the living conditions guide (%), in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and the North and Beqaa provinces.<sup>59</sup>

	Beirut		Mount Lebanon		North		Beqaa	
	Deprived	Very deprived	Deprived	Very deprived	Deprived	Very deprived	Deprived	Very deprived
Education	6.3	6	37.1	30.6	25.0	17.3	12.9	20.2
Healthcare	1.8	0.6	33.3	28.0	26.8	27.9	16.1	24.8
Housing	11.2	14.1	38.1	44.1	19.7	18.1	9.5	4.0
Water/ electricity/ sewerage	3.6	1.2	41.0	45.4	23.8	30.4	10.1	7.0

59 UNDP, Mapping of Human Poverty and Living Conditions in Lebanon 2004, 7 April 2008, pp.235, 240, 244, 248 (in Arabic)

## Annex 3: Main conflicts and development needs for Wadi Khaled, Hermel and Badghan

This information reflects the findings from the conflict-analysis workshops conducted in each region, and summarises the issues agreed on by all participants. Gaps in information, specifically for Hermel, are due to participation issues on the day of the needs identification.

Region	Main conflicts	Main development needs/issues
Wadi Khaled	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conflict about establishing a municipal union whereby the tribal/family background of different contenders is impeding the establishment of the union. Points of conflict are in agreeing on the premises of the personal status registrar, religious court, public hospital, union of municipalities and agricultural guidance centre.</li> <li>2. Diverse conflicts due to high numbers of Syrian refugees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• economy: competition with Syrian labour in trade and small businesses;</li> <li>• infrastructure: lack of sewerage systems and roads creates problems (high population density);</li> <li>• cultural: perceptions that Syrian refugees bring in new traditions and practices that are unfamiliar to local communities and that are affecting the predominant culture;</li> <li>• new extremist religious beliefs and some Salafi groupings that arrived during the Syrian crisis and whose ideologies are considered alien to the region;</li> <li>• education: differences in curricula between Syria and Lebanon and high numbers of Syrian students in classrooms are creating tensions between Syrian and Lebanese students;</li> <li>• security: clashes and incidents on the border areas prevent locals from using their agricultural lands, in addition to violent incidents between Lebanese and Syrians (prevalence of weapons among civilians);</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public infrastructure: sewerage systems, potable water, paved roads.</li> <li>2. Basic health services.</li> <li>3. Public job access: Problems with the naturalisation decree of 1994. The decree that granted Lebanese citizenship to a large majority of Wadi Khaled residents was repealed and no decision has been pronounced yet by judicial authorities. This situation prevents most of the residents that were naturalised according to the decree from accessing public jobs. As a result, the young population tends to not pursue education, believing that a university degree will be of no help to them in starting a career and earning a living.</li> <li>4. Support by central government for agriculture: This sector is the main economic activity in the area and the increased pressure on it due to the Syrian crisis and the closure of the border with Syria has increased production costs, with local produce aggressively beaten by competitive prices of imported products.</li> </ol>

Region	Main conflicts	Main development needs/issues
Wadi Khaled (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• political: increased political polarisation; and</li> <li>• social: more stress on unmarried women where local women are having diminished opportunities for finding a husband and getting married as local men can marry Syrian women easily for little financial requirements, especially that the laws and local culture allow polygamy.</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Conflicts between municipal councils and Lebanese and international relief organisations, especially with prioritisation of relief actions and services towards Syrian refugees. Moreover, employment procedures, whereby the majority of people hired on projects are from outside the region despite the presence of qualified persons locally, is upsetting residents.</li> <li>4. Conflicts between locals and the Ministry of Education and public schools administrators due to the employment of teachers in local schools from outside the region.</li> <li>5. Conflicts between citizens and municipal councils on the role of municipalities and their procedures for tax collection, administration and setting of the municipal budget. Municipal councils are new in the region and there is a lack of experience and culture of local governance. Ignorance of municipal laws is common, even among council members.</li> <li>6. Land conflicts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• between Wadi Khaled villages and Akroum village on non-registered lands;</li> <li>• between villages of the Wadi Khaled region on non-registered lands; and</li> <li>• among residents of the same village in all villages of Wadi Khaled.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	

Region	Main conflicts	Main development needs/issues
Hermel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The lack of a proper sewerage system.</li> <li>2. Lack of proper plans to distribute water to all neighbourhoods in the region.</li> <li>3. The systematic cutting of old trees that are an important natural heritage.</li> <li>4. Inappropriate municipal management of the city by the municipality and absence of its development role (lack of transparency, bad management, wasting money on 'useless' projects, etc.)</li> <li>5. High unemployment among the young population.</li> <li>6. Constant violent conflicts between young people (groups) leading, in most cases, to the use of weapons and physical fights.</li> <li>7. Increasing proliferation of arms in the hands of people, especially youth.</li> <li>8. Land ownership conflicts.</li> </ol>	
Badghan	<p>The group was not able to identify any key community conflicts worth noting. Participants' analysis shows that conflicts are not on the community scale. Most of the time, they are of an individual nature. Participants said that, even when it comes to issues related to the Syrian refugees crisis, the local community is managing them well and the conflicts are not of great impact.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the sewerage system problem is having some negative effects on relations between citizens. Participants insisted that the conflicts related to this issue are not too serious so far, but the analysis showed that it is a major threat for the environment and a source of larger-scale problems that may spill over if it remains unsolved.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inexistence of proper sewerage systems in the region and neighbouring villages. Impact is high on public health and the environment. Water sources, rivers and underground water are all being gradually polluted. Sewage of houses and buildings are flowing into water canals or end up leaking in unmaintained sewage pits.</li> <li>2. Scarcity of drinking water in dwellings due to ascending water pollution and bad management by local water authorities.</li> <li>3. Lack of basic urgent medical and health services in Badghan. In medical emergencies, people could lose their lives before reaching the closest hospital, as there are no qualified first-aid teams or medical equipment available.</li> </ol>



**International Alert.**

346 Clapham Road, London SW9 9AP, United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0)20 7627 6800, Fax +44 (0)20 7627 6900

[info@international-alert.org](mailto:info@international-alert.org)

[www.international-alert.org](http://www.international-alert.org)

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