

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

IN PRAISE OF INFORMALITY: EXPLORING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ROLE OF
HOST COMMUNITIES IN REFUGEE ASSISTANCE IN NORTH LEBANON

by
HELEN MACKREATH

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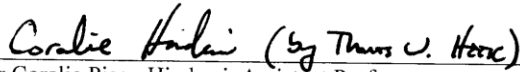
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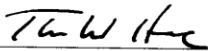
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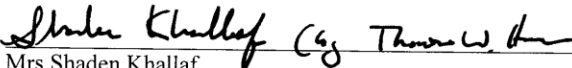
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Helen Mackreath for Master of Political Science and Public Administration

Title: In Praise of Informality: Exploring the Implications of the Role of Host Communities in Refugee Assistance in North Lebanon.

This thesis aims to situate the informal assistance afforded by host communities to refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria within a broader framework of humanitarian assistance.

The Syrian refugee crisis is the largest humanitarian catastrophe of the century and has flooded Lebanon with refugees numbering roughly a quarter of the population. Lebanese host community support forms a substantial proportion of the assistance given to Syrian refugee populations in North Lebanon, alongside assistance from the UNHCR and other IOs, INGOs and NGOs. By host community assistance I refer to Lebanese individuals hosting people directly in their homes (either family members, prior acquaintances or complete strangers); Lebanese individuals lending an empty 'home', or outbuilding to be used by a refugee family without charging rent; Lebanese landlords reducing the rent payment, or accepting long delays in rent payment; Lebanese individuals lending small amounts of money (20,000-50,000LL, or 30-50 USD) to refugees to help them get by in everyday expenses; and Lebanese individuals giving away furniture, clothes, labour and larger amounts of money to Syrian refugee strangers.

This thesis will give an overview of the formal response to the refugee crisis, tracing the role played by different humanitarian actors and their coordination within Lebanon. It will then draw on field research conducted in Akkar, North Lebanon, to assess the forms and significance of informal assistance provided by Lebanese individuals, before analysing the relationship between informal and formal assistance. It aims to focus on the micro-level processes of interaction between refugees and their hosts to understand the experience of refugees at localised scales, while reflecting on how tensions within the broader architecture of refugee assistance are experienced by the refugee. It will be argued that, while the UNHCR has increasingly addressed the vulnerability of host communities as the crisis has evolved, the tensions within and between different levels of interaction, from the international, the national and the local, have impeded host community assistance being fully understood or built upon.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon

On 15 March 2011 protestors gathered in the Syrian city of Deraa following the claimed detention of several youth who had been writing anti-government graffiti. Three days later, with the protests gathering momentum, fighting broke out, resulting in the death of several people. These events sparked a significant escalation in the unrest already bubbling across the country. The following months saw a gradual increase in violence between government forces and protesters. By the end of 2011, the violence had spread across the whole country, with roughly 10,000 people reportedly killed.¹ According to the United Nations, the death toll surpassed 100,000 in June 2013, and reached 120,000 by September 2013.² In December 2014, according to the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, deaths were estimated to be between 202,345 and 282,354³.

The Syrian refugee problem began unfolding in April 2011 and has affected most of the countries neighbouring Syria, including Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey. By late June 2011, the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon had reached around 10,000 people. According to UN High Commission for Refugees, as of November 2013, there were 755,544 registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon. On 3 April 2014 the number of officially registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon had passed the 1 million mark. Unofficial estimates put the figure

¹ World Vision Lebanon and World Vision UK, *Advocacy Report: Under Pressure. The impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on host communities in Lebanon* (July 2013): 8.

² "More than 2,000 killed in Syria since Ramadan began," *Times of Oman*, 25 July 2013, accessed 26 May 2014, <http://www.timesofoman.com/News/Article-20325.aspx>.

³ Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, "About 300,000 people killed since the beginning of the Syrian Revolution," 2 December 2014, accessed 3 December 2014, <http://syriahr.com/en/2014/12/more-that-300000-people-killed-since-the-beginning-of-the-syrian-revolution/>.

of refugees, including those who are not registered and those who are not of Syrian nationality but who fled Syria following the conflict, at between one and a half and two million. This represents a third of the total population of Lebanon.



Figure 1. Map of Syria and Lebanon

Provision of assistance towards refugees has, necessarily, altered in the three years since refugees first started arriving in Lebanon. In March 2012, objectives towards the Syrian refugee crisis were largely short term and oriented towards emergency planning – this strategy was necessitated by the large entrance of refugees within a short space of time and uncertainty about the duration of the crisis. As noted in a July 2013 Word Vision Report, the perception of the scope and scale of the refugee crisis (by international and national actors) was highly limited in the earlier months. This is illustrated by the 2013 UN appeal for the

Syrian crisis, which quadrupled its assessment of the financial needs for Lebanon - \$1.66 billion for the second half of 2013 compared to \$274 million for the first half of the year.⁴

By July 2013 priorities had shifted to four key areas – the protection of refugees, the registration of new arrivals and continuous support to vulnerable refugees, emergency preparedness, and assistance to non-camp refugees and host communities.⁵ By 2013, there was an increasing amount of focus on ‘development-oriented’ approaches by the UN, alongside purely emergency humanitarian support – this recognised that the crisis was becoming protracted and assistance needed to address infrastructural capacity of the Lebanese host community if the refugee issue was not going to exhaust the refugee and host populations. By February 2014, UNHCR’s protection strategy addressed five key challenges. These included ensuring access to territory and reducing the risk of refoulement; ensuring timely registration and adequate reception conditions; preventing, monitoring and addressing protection violations; providing access to legal services and civil status documentation to ensure the rights of refugees are respected; ensuring durable and humanitarian solutions are made available.⁶

Overall the attitude towards the Lebanese host community has shifted in line with changes in thinking of the refugee crisis as a short term ‘emergency’ situation, to a longer term protracted crisis requiring sustained and embedded assistance. From the outset there was recognition that host communities should be helped alongside refugees since they were equally vulnerable to insecurity. In March 2012 there were drives to support community

⁴ World Vision Lebanon and World Vision UK, *Advocacy Report: Under Pressure. The impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on host communities in Lebanon* (July 2013): 19.

⁵ UNHCR “From slow to breaking point: A real-time evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the Syrian refugee emergency,” July 2013, accessed 20 September 2013, <http://www.unhcr.org/52b83e539.html>.

⁶ UNHCR Protection Update (February 2014): 2, accessed 1 March 2014
<file:///C:/Users/Helen/Downloads/1ProtectionUNHCRMonthlyUpdate-February.pdf>.

development activities, and attempts to promote ‘quick impact projects’ (QIPs) in host communities in an attempt to decrease the pressure on hosting communities and create job opportunities – however this was only afforded a budget of \$1,016,216 according to a UNHCR report (June 2013), a fraction of the overall budget (\$246,740,887 received to date). Providing adequate education and shelter was also extended to vulnerable host communities. But it wasn’t until 2013 that the host community began to be recognised as *equally* vulnerable as refugees. In March 2013 the UN launched a ‘Lebanese Host Communities Support Program’ through the UNDP in collaboration with the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, which aimed to extend the refugee humanitarian response to host communities and implement initiatives aimed at improving livelihoods, income generation and services in order to promote social cohesion and prevent conflict.⁷ Its implementation through UNDP rather than UNHCR further highlights the shift in focus from the emergency response orchestrated by the UNHCR to the longer term ‘development’ strategies typically governed by the UNDP. By December 2013, the UNHCR’s strategic priorities had shifted to “strengthening outreach with refugees and host communities; empowering and promoting self-management in communities; increasing livelihood opportunities as well promoting social cohesion among Lebanese and Syrians through dialogue and community support projects.”⁸

However, the attitude towards host communities, which remains critical to the humanitarian reaction to the refugee problem, has appeared contradictory. While the host community is recognised as having been remarkably hospitable to the Syrian population in most areas of Lebanon, with acknowledgement that they have provided assistance and shelter, they are primarily, correctly, viewed as being vulnerable to the same insecurities as refugees,

⁷UNDP, “Launching of the “Lebanese Host Communities Support Programme”, 4 March 2013, accessed 7 April 2014, <http://www.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/presscenter/articles/2013/03/04/launching-of-the-lebanese-host-communities-support-programme-/>.

⁸ UNHCR Monthly Update *Protection-Community Development* (December 2013): 2.

particularly resource depletion. As a result of being assisted as a vulnerable group, which is critically important and should be continued, the embedded local capacity and empowerment which they have demonstrated through their collective support of the refugee population has not being adequately built upon. Their ‘vulnerable’ status does not allow recognition of the remarkable civic strength, which should be taken as a starting point for support, rather than ignore.

1. Peculiarities of the Lebanon Case

There are a number of distinctive features of the existence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon which have heavily impacted upon the way the international community has perceived and dealt with the crisis. The Syrian refugee population in Lebanon is peculiar owing to the historical ties between the two populations, and the circumstances of their presence in Lebanon – particularly the Lebanese government’s early decision not to set up refugee camps. These two factors have created reverberations which have been felt in a myriad of ways throughout the three year refugee presence in Lebanon. While refugee movements are always complex, and often disguise entrenched historical, ethnic or religious ties when the movement is between neighbouring countries, the particular circumstances of this crisis makes the response of the Lebanese people even more noteworthy.

The first ‘peculiarity’, which is not unusual in refugee migration but should be taken into consideration, is the closely intertwined history between Syria and Lebanon. Originally one province under the Ottoman empire, Greater Syria, which ruled by a decentralized system, the French split them into two sister republics, both under their mandate, in 1926. They shared the same currency and customs services, but flew different flags and were run by

separate native administrations under one French High Commissioner residing in Beirut.⁹ The civil war in Lebanon reconsolidated links between the two countries. The Lebanese battleground was complicated by the shifting and intertwining relationship between politics and religion, which dictated alliances and geopolitics to varying degrees and often counterbalanced one another. As a means to retain the status quo, of which they were prime beneficiaries, different Christian Maronite factions reached out to Syria, inviting them into Lebanon in 1976 as a means to control the Palestinian population and provide military support to a Christian side ailing in the Civil War.¹⁰ Syria did not officially leave Lebanon until 2005, when a popular Lebanese uprising of one million people forced them out of the country in an event known as The Cedar Revolution. Today the countries remain closely intertwined, evident in the large numbers of Lebanese men fighting in the conflict in Syria, and the porous physical boundaries between the two as arms and refugees spill across borders. In Akkar, the region North of Lebanon where this research was conducted, the statue of former Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, erected in the 1990s in the main square of the capital of the district, got demolished by the local population¹¹ indicating a degree of vitriol towards the Syrian regime and a complex relationship between the two countries.

In addition to their shared history, multiple other identifying groups (religious or ethnicity) straddle the national border, and there is a common language. Economic migration patterns and other flows of networks further blur boundaries between nations and undermine the fixed geographical imagination. In Lebanon, before the refugee crisis, human rights and labor groups estimated there were about 300,000 Syrians working in Lebanon, the majority of whom had no official status (in 2006, the Labor Ministry issued just 471 work permits to

⁹Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions – The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (IB Tauris & Co Ltd, 1993), 26.

¹⁰Rabil, *Embattled Neighbors: Syria, Israeli, and Lebanon* (Lynne Rienner, 2003), 53.

¹¹Carpi, “The Everyday Experience of Humanitarianism in the Akkar Villages,” *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support*, 2014, 6.

Syrian nationals).¹² The existence of large numbers of Syrians in Lebanon is not an aberration, but a norm, an embedded and systemic part of both Lebanon's economy, and sense of identity. Furthermore, there is a history of reciprocal assistance between the two countries, displayed throughout the duration of the 15 year civil war in Lebanon, when thousands of displaced Lebanese routinely sought (and found) shelter with Syrian families.

The second peculiarity is the early decision taken by the Lebanese government not to impose refugee camps. This was informed by the perceived negative impact of Palestinian refugee camps – of which there are twelve in total, with a combined population of 450,000 before the influx from Syria –¹³ on the country. The government feared the permanence of such camps, and the broader repercussions on security created by having concentrated masses of vulnerable people. The impact of this early decision on the trajectory of the refugee movement in Lebanon has been significant, both for the manner in which the refugees are dealt with by the national government, international community and local individuals; and, more broadly, for the ramifications that such a 'no-camp' policy might have for future UNHCR strategy. In particular the no camp policy impacts upon the two 'core' mandates of the UNHCR – their commitment to finding durable solutions to refugee displacement, and their protection of the refugee. The former mandate may be forcibly addressed by the 'no-camp' reality, and the latter may become more complicated by the blurring of the boundaries between 'refugee' and other 'vulnerable individuals' (such as poor Lebanese or migrants). The fact of having no camps also alters the relationship between the UNHCR and the host state. Since "so long as UNHCR is the main provider of assistance to refugees in camps, states are able to defer considering longer-term solutions to protracted refugee situations", the fact of having no camps makes the refugee issue very much the Lebanese government's

¹² Anderson, "Wretched Conditions for Syrian Workers," *The Electronic Intifada*, 14 April, 2009, accessed April 2013, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/wretched-conditions-syrian-workers/8182>.

¹³ United Nations Relief and Works Agency, "Where we work," accessed 3 August 2014, <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>.

problem, and this may impact on the way in which they interact with the UNHCR and other international bodies.

The third peculiarity concerns the particular machinations of the Lebanese state – or the lack of a state – and its poor infrastructure. There exists overlapping power structures and authorities of governance in the day-to-day running of the country which has proven problematic for cooperation with international organizations. A number of groups, including civil society, religious and sectarian, have accumulated to fill the “vacuum of power”¹⁴ of state support and these are all responding in different ways to the refugee crisis, some in coordination with others and some not. The case of Hizbollah is particularly illuminating as an example of a non-state actor more powerful than the Lebanese state and which provides the welfare support for the Shi’a community (funds for roads, infrastructure, schools, health provision) normally within the state’s domain. Whilst the strength of Hizbollah is beneficial to the Lebanese state in some respects, in its provision for the Shi’a community, the weakness of the Lebanese state turns Hizbollah into a threat, rather than a support mechanism. Fregonese argues that the display of hybrid identities in Lebanon, which blur the boundaries between state and nonstate actors, is a new form of hybrid sovereignty.¹⁵ This has ramifications for the response to the refugee crisis, both in the organization of refugee assistance and the existent infrastructural weaknesses of the country which have been exacerbated by the sudden population influx. In terms of the latter, infrastructure such as water, electricity and sanitation have been particularly tested.

¹⁴ Atzilil, “State Weakness and ‘Vacuum of power’ in Lebanon,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 8 (2010): 759.

¹⁵ Fregonese, “Beyond the ‘Weak State’: hybrid sovereignties in Beirut,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30, no. 4 (2012): 655-674.

B. Overview of Thesis Objectives

This thesis aims to situate the informal assistance afforded by host communities to refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria within a broader framework of humanitarian assistance. It seeks to achieve a critical appraisal of the situation of the Syrian refugee in Lebanon through the lens of host community assistance to the refugees in North Lebanon. It will examine the differences in the manner in which assistance is distributed at an ‘informal’ (individual) and private level, as opposed to that ‘formally’ distributed by IOs, INGOs, NGOs and government structures; this in turn will prompt questions about the manner in which humanitarian assistance is distributed and conceived.

These matters of interest will be explored through examining a snapshot of Lebanese host community support to Syrian refugees in areas within Akkar, North Lebanon. Akkar district is one of the poorest districts in Lebanon with many households suffering from socio-economic vulnerability. It is made up of largely Sunni Muslims and Greek Orthodox Christians. Owing to its location as a border region with Syria it has experienced a heavy influx of Syrian refugees, thereby increasing pressure on resources (such as electricity, water and jobs); it may also be subsequently more vulnerable to tensions between the Lebanese and Syrian communities. Lebanese individuals who are hosting refugees are people from a diversity of socio-economic backgrounds – some poor families assisting their relatives and living just within their means, and some slightly wealthier individuals with multiple homes or homes with outbuildings which they are able to give or rent to Syrian refugees.

In the context of a deficit in funding and manpower of international and local humanitarian actors, the role played by the Lebanese host communities in assisting Syrian refugees in highly localised scales, has been crucial in making up for gaps in international refugee support (although it should be noted that the North is being particularly hospitable, and this

level of support may not be true across the whole of Lebanon). This assistance takes many different forms. Lebanese individuals host people directly in their homes (either family members, prior acquaintances or complete strangers); Lebanese individuals lend an empty 'home', or outbuilding to be used by a refugee family without charging rent; Lebanese landlords reduce the rent payment, or accept long delays in rent payment; Lebanese individuals lend small amounts of money (20,000-50,000LL, or 13-33 USD) to refugees to help them get by in everyday expenses; Lebanese individuals give away furniture, clothes, labour and larger amounts of money to Syrian refugee strangers. As an example of decentralized assistance, it demonstrates efficiency of manpower and resources and increased civic engagement within certain localized areas of Lebanon. While it is ad hoc, and poses problems of accountability, it remains a potent example of local capacity and civic empowerment.

Against that background, the major question of this thesis is to understand the extent to which host community assistance for refugees exists, and how it fits into broader assistance for refugees given by IOs, INGOS, NGOs and the Lebanese state. There are three lines of research taken to help answer this overall question. The first of these concerns the type of host community support existing for Syrian refugees: Can it be considered extensive, or sustainable, and what does it indicate about the relationship between the refugee and host community? The second line of research tries to understand the relationship between the 'private', or individual assistance, and the 'public' assistance provided by IOs, INGOS, NGOs, the Lebanese government and faith based organizations. The third line of research concerns the broader objectives of the UNHCR, and whether the fact of host community assistance disrupts the UNHCR's previous engagement with state, rather than localised, bodies. How does a highly influential international organization, with the increasing complexity and breadth of the UNHCR, respond to local political realities, dynamics and

interests as it seeks to advance its mandate? How do the local, the national and the international interact in a manner which is beneficial to the long term plight of refugees?

The first line of research, exploring the existence of host community support for refugees, will use empirical research from a snapshot of communities in North Lebanon to present a picture of host community support for refugees, the motivation for this support, and the extent to which it is being recognised by ‘public’ sources of assistance.

The second line of research will address the current architecture of international refugee management, particularly in the relationship between the UN High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR) and individual nation states. Firstly, the fact that Lebanon is not party to the 1951 Convention on Refugees, and therefore is not legally obligated to carry out the mandates of the UN High Commission of Refugees, highlights the possibility for national versus international disjuncture on refugee policy. This has most clearly manifested itself in the Lebanese government’s refusal to set up camps for the Syrian refugees, which has denied the UNHCR the working environment that they are traditionally most used to working in. It has also created problems in disputes over the legality of Syrian refugees, with the legal documents of officially registered Syrian refugees, which are recognised at an international level, being rejected by Lebanese national security systems.¹⁶ This has made some Syrian refugees legally vulnerable, and exposed some of the complexities of the UNHCR’s relations with national governments. Secondly, the fact of Syrian refugees existing outside formal camps, the depth and breadth of international and local assistance for the refugee situation (ranging from INGO actors providing long-term development support, to national governments supporting Lebanese sovereignty through security mechanisms, to individual hosts offering small-scale one-on-one assistance) poses renewed questions about the exact

¹⁶ Norwegian Refugee Council, *The Consequences of Limited Legal Status for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*. NRC Lebanon Field Assessment (2014).

role of the UNHCR in protracted refugee situations. The UNHCR's two core mandates remain to 'protect' refugees by preventing refoulement (forcible repatriation to their own country), and to provide durable solutions to refugee crises, but these have been diluted in the past thirty years by shifts towards providing direct and sustained humanitarian assistance. The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon has exposed the challenges of trying to cover such a large remit, with budget and manpower deficiencies.

At its heart the thesis tries to explore the different ways the refugee relationship is played out at the civil society level versus the national and international. The differences in reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis across different parts of Lebanon highlight that the refugee influx cannot be detached from the politics, society and religious fractious of the host community. Refugees never enter a host country in a political vacuum, and this invariably impacts upon the manner in which they are received by their hosts. Lebanon and Syria share historical ties and much recent entanglement in conflict which has strained relations between the two, and made the absorption of Syrian refugees into the country more politically fraught. The Lebanese population have largely been hospitable to their Syrian neighbours, but there are also cases of tensions over unemployment and resource depletion, and fears over long-term repercussions of the Syrian conflict. The mixed agendas of personal welfare security, political and religious belief and humanitarian sympathy highlight questions over the relationship between humanitarianism and politics.

C. Literature Review

The starting point for this research was policy reports and journalistic accounts about the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Both of these sources mentioned, often sporadically, the role of host communities in providing assistance to refugees, which sparked questions

from an array of angles – in terms of the logistics of assistance, how was this support being given and what proportion of the ‘official’ support from NGOs and INGOs did it make up? How could this assistance be reconciled with contradictory reports describing tensions between Lebanese and Syrians, and the historical legacy between the two countries, which has been shrouded in conflict and controversy for the past half century? Is there any precedence of support from host communities towards refugees in other contexts, and how does this fit within the UNHCRs wider frame of refugee assistance?

Research for this thesis has tried to pick up these diverse pieces as it seeks to make sense of empirical research on the ground by contextualising assistance given to host communities within broader areas of humanitarianism and politics, the state and civil society, public versus private refugee support, and the international refugee architecture. There is little existing literature which combines an empirical and theoretical approach to refugee studies. Nor is there currently a broad interdisciplinary approach to refugee studies. Bett’s laments this in “*Forced Migration and Global Politics*”, and his incorporation of an International Relations and Refugee Studies approach is amongst the first which recognises the potential fertile interchange between the two. He calls for greater “top-down” level of analysis of refugees in order to understand the macro-level structures that influence states’ responses to migration.¹⁷ This thesis attempts to situate an awareness of broader macro-processes occurring on an international and state level, alongside a close “bottom-up” perspective of practical refugee assistance on the ground, in order to better understand their exchange.

For the empirical aspect of this paper, which is concerned with grounding the actions of the host community within wider discourses on humanitarian assistance, the literature review sought to understand the critical analysis about alternative methods of humanitarian distribution, such as network analysis and decentralized support mechanisms. Information

¹⁷ Bett, *Forced Migration and Global Politics*, John Wiley & Sons (2009): 2.

about this manner of distribution was found largely within disaster management literature. Regarding the wider context, Beggs et al. draw attention to the development of the social support of network analysis, which has demonstrated that people operating outside the professional and bureaucratic arenas are beneficial in times of crises.¹⁸ They highlight that researchers have begun to move away from sociologies that decontextualise the individual by emphasizing the constraining and enabling aspects of the social structures that are produced and reproduced by individuals in their everyday lives. They emphasise multiple types of support offered, for different motivations (emotional aid, instrumental aid),¹⁹ and conclude that situational contingencies, such as local community context, receipt of formal support, and personal networks, must be considered simultaneously when analysing the role of individuals in the support process. In a separate discussion relating to aid dispersal, Barder notes the need for a “collaborative” market for aid, to include, amongst other things, unbundling funding from aid management to create more explicit markets; better information gathered from the intended beneficiaries of aid; and decentralized decision-making about aid spending.²⁰ This analysis has much to offer studies of refugee support networks, particularly notions of burden sharing among host populations within one state, and between NGOs, the state and the host community. However, it draws attention to the current lack of empirical or theoretical work concerned with dissecting the existence of, or potential for, informal assistance for refugees at localised scales.

Research was also carried out on refugee policies, including the architecture of refugee rights and how these have altered in the past half century, the core mandates which the UNHCR are obliged to consider, and the ways in which refugees fit into the broader picture of global

¹⁸ Beggs et al, “Situational Contingencies Surrounding the Receipt of Informal Support,” *Social Forces* 75 no. 1 (1996): 201-222.

¹⁹ Beggs et al, “Situational Contingencies Surrounding the Receipt of Informal Support,” 203.

²⁰ Barder “Beyond Planning: Markets and networks for better aid,” *Center for Global Development Working Paper* 185 (2009): 2.

governance and state sovereignty. Kelley points out that an increasing number of industrialised States are expressing an interest in comprehensive strategies to strengthen protection capacities of host countries (such as building asylum systems, providing support for migration management, and targeting development assistance for refugees and local communities).²¹ She highlights that a number of international agreements are intended to strengthen these capacities – such as the special fund created by the EU in 2004 for ‘Co-operation with Third Countries in the area of migration’, which was designed to finance projects to strengthen capacity of hosting countries to protect refugees. Working from a similar perspective, Betts discusses the ‘public goods theory’ in relation to sharing the burden of refugees between states.²² He praises the value of public goods theory in assessing burden-sharing since it allows consideration of both cost distribution and benefit distribution and therefore permits an assessment of the type of incentives that are required to induce provision.

Much existing literature is devoted to debating the merits of durable solutions to refugee problems – traditionally assumed to be resettlement in a third country, local integration, or voluntary repatriation.²³ Presently voluntary repatriation is regarded to be the most desirable option, and the most desired by refugees, although much debate exists about how this might be feasibly achieved – in many of the regions from which refugees originate, the nation state was never a coherent historical or political proposition, and state institutions remain relatively weak. Bradley produces interesting work about the relationship between repatriation, political membership and sovereign power.²⁴ This is pertinent for this thesis, both in demonstrating blurred lines between host countries, countries of origin and the limbo spaces in between; and

²¹ Kelley, “International Refugee Protection Challenges and Opportunities,” *International Journal of Refugee Law* 19, no. 3 (2007): 401-439.

²² Betts, “Public Goods Theory and the Provision of Refugee Protection: The Role of the Joint-Product Model in Burden-Sharing Theory,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 16, no.3 (2003): 274-296.

²³ Chimni, *International Refugee Law: A Reader* (SAGE India, 2000).

²⁴ Bradley, “Rethinking Refugeehood: Statelessness, repatriation and refugee agency,” *Review of International Studies* 40, no. 1 (2014): 1-23.

in demonstrating that little work focuses on the act of *short-term* integration amongst host communities (which represents the current situation in Lebanon).

Understanding these blurred lines is highly dependent upon notions of who constitutes a refugee, which is another much debated subject. Haddad critiques four implicit assumptions which underlie the 1951 Convention on refugees – that a bond of trust, protection and assistance between the citizen and the state constitutes the normal basis of society; that in the case of the refugee this bond has been severed; that persecution and alienage are always the physical manifestation of this severed bond; and that these manifestations are necessary and sufficient conditions for determining refugeehood –²⁵ by suggesting that the assumption of ‘persecution’ and ‘alienage’ should be contested,²⁶ or made less black and white to allow from nuances arising from specific contexts. Starting with the notion that ‘persecution’ and ‘alienage’ may take different forms opens the way for exploring in greater detail the lived realities of refugees with host communities, the *ways* in which they are either rejected or integrated, and how this might be used as a starting point to create more sustainable response mechanisms to the short-term integration of refugees into host communities.

Within the UNHCR itself, the various working papers that they have commissioned or produced demonstrate that the institution is aware of the complexities surrounding refugee protection and the potential role of the host communities in providing support of sorts. Reports track the integration of refugees into urban environments and the various coping mechanisms which they employ, largely incorporating the host community;²⁷ an analysis of community empowerment projects, which are described as being both “a catalyst and a

²⁵ Shacknove, “Who is a Refugee?” *Ethics* 95, no 2 (1985): 274-284.

²⁶ Haddad, *The Refugee in International Sovereignty: Between Sovereigns* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁷ Hough, “Newcomers to Nairobi: The protection concerns and survival strategies of asylum seekers in Kenya’s capital city,” *UNHCR Working Paper* No. 260 (2013).

bridge”;²⁸ how the peace programmes of refugee camps contribute to post-conflict peacebuilding strategies;²⁹ and the notions of home and belonging built by Somali refugees in Nairobi.³⁰ These papers highlight the nuanced understandings of the situation of the refugee across all stages of their ‘refugeehood’, and an understanding of the need to be creative in initiating sustainable solutions for protracted refugee situations. Most pertinent to this thesis is a paper produced in July 2013, entitled “Writing the ‘Other’ Into Humanitarian Discourse: Framing theory and practice in South-South responses to forced displacement,” which aims to highlight the value of localised, horizontal networks of support offered to refugees, either by host community actors or ‘Southern’ donors (those countries who are considered ‘underdeveloped’).³¹ This paper “reengages with the popular debates around politics and humanitarianism to argue that politics pervades not just humanitarian practice, but the ‘humanitarian’ epithet itself... Further it engages with the notion of solidarity to argue for an expansion of the field of humanitarian studies to incorporate these multiple and overlapping solidarities.” It highlights that “unless forms of local capacity and action emanating from the South are expressed in the form of Western-style institutions or in other recognizable ways, they have often been willingly ignored by outsiders. Recognizing the insights emerging from diverse systems of knowledge across both the global North and global South, therefore, prompts us to engage with the ‘local’, moving beyond the highly institutionalized and even more highly Westernized international humanitarian regime to consider ‘other’ forms of humanitarian action, from the micro-level upwards. This is not to ignore the importance of global processes in shaping the local, but to assert that a more comprehensive engagement

²⁸ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “A Catalyst and a Bridge: An evaluation of UNHCRs community empowerment projects in Sierra Leone.” (2012).

²⁹ Lawson, “What Happens After the War? How refugee camp peace programmes contribute to post-conflict peacebuilding strategies,” *UNHCR Working Paper* No. 245 (2012): 2.

³⁰ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “In the Shelter of Each Other: Notions of home and belonging amongst Somali refugees in Nairobi,” *UNHCR Working Paper* no. 233 (2012).

³¹ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Pacitto, “Writing the ‘Other’ Into Humanitarian Discourse: Framing theory and practice in South-South responses to forced displacement,” *UNHCR Working Paper* No 257 (2013): 2.

with the ‘local’ is essential in order to begin to address the Western biases inherent to academic theorizations of humanitarianism.”³²

The broader background of this thesis has drawn from literature on international governance, the history of humanitarianism and the UNHCR on the one hand; and political philosophy examining the rights of the refugee through a conceptual lens. The theoretical elements of the thesis have drawn from philosophers Kant, Arendt, and Benhabib, to try to analyse implications of fluid notion of rights and belonging.

From Kant it draws on the notion of ‘cosmopolitanism’, articulated in his essay ‘Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose,’³³ which highlights the rights of man which exist outside nation states. Background work to this thesis tries to connect the sphere of rights between domestic constitutional and international law with ideas of the everyday rights of refugees existing in a host community. In particular it focuses on the manner in which Syrian refugees are embedded within the civic rights of their particular Lebanese host community more than within the framework of rights provided by the international or national law. Benhabib was helpful for clarifying some of these ideas, particularly her work on the ‘rights of others,’³⁴ since she introduced the notion that the bestowing of rights requires recognition from whoever is doing the bestowing, and thus the identity of the refugee, and their ‘acceptance’ into a community, is dependent on the individual members of that civic community recognising them as having rights in the first place.

³² Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Pacitto, “Writing the ‘Other’ Into Humanitarian Discourse: Framing theory and practice in South-South responses to forced displacement,” *UNHCR Working Paper* No 257 (2013): 8.

³³ Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent,” in *German Essays on History*, ed. Saltzer, translator Thomas M Greene and H Hudson (New York: Continuum, 1991).

³⁴ Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

D. Methodology

There were two strands of research necessary to complete this paper – firstly to conduct empirical research on the ground, trying to gain a better in-depth picture of the role of host communities within a particular locality, and secondly to make sense of those findings within the broader history of the UNHCR and refugee governance. Starting with the empirical research, it sought to understand exactly the dynamics of the relationship between the host community and their Syrian guests, their motivations for providing assistance, and how that assistance fit within the ‘official’ assistance of refugees within this particular context. I chose the region of Akkar, in North Lebanon, to carry out this fieldwork, as a location which I knew had a large proportion of hosting Lebanese families – from the very beginning this was a biased choice since I actively sought out hosting communities, rather than presenting a more balanced picture which took into account those areas which were not hosting refugees, or were even antagonistic to them. However this research is intended merely to describe in-depth the situation of a particular geographic area as an interesting case study, without intending to extrapolate it as being representative of the whole picture within Lebanon.

For this empirical side of the paper, two key areas of research were needed. Firstly this involved assessing the response of humanitarian actors towards Syrian refugees in Lebanon, primarily inter-governmental Organizations (IOs), local NGOs, the Lebanese government, and local actors (host communities), which was done using both secondary and primary research. Secondly, this required questioning the existence of host community assistance, understanding how it operates within the research area of Akkar in North Lebanon, and how it is viewed by larger and better funded bodies (the UNHCR, INGOs and local NGOs). This research helped build a picture of how the assistance given by host communities fits into the wider framework of refugee assistance within North Lebanon.

Primary research techniques were semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with NGOs working within Akkar region, local actors working within Akkar region, the host community within Akkar region (both those who are involved in assisting refugees, and those who are not), and refugees based in Akkar region. Interviews were in-depth and semi-structured, each lasting between 30 minutes and one hour. The data sample was about 30 refugee families, 20 hosting families, 5 Municipality Chief Executives, and representatives from 10 NGOs. Interviews were conducted in person, through home (or office) visits.

As part of contextualising and understanding the changes over time of the role of the host communities, I carried out secondary research by reading policy reports, assessments and objectives of leading NGOs, focusing particularly on the UNHCR and partner UN agencies, and reading newspaper reports and other journalistic accounts of the refugee crisis and relief efforts. Other empirical research also involved getting a basic picture of some informal assistance offered to refugees through social media, university networks, word of mouth. Unfortunately it was not possible to conduct interviews with UNHCR employees, despite attempts, owing to lack of availability or time. This limitation must be taken into account considering the extent to which this thesis is exploring UNHCR interaction with host communities, and the wider relevance the Syrian refugee influx into North Lebanon has for the UNHCR. All data from the UNHCR is therefore taken from their publicly available documents and secondary sources.

The second aspect of this paper attempts to make sense of empirical findings within a broader framework of political philosophy and political humanitarianism in the international refugee architecture. This involved secondary research into an array of literature, including the politics of humanitarianism, the architecture of the UNHCR, the changing role of the nation state in international politics, the role of civil society within national and international governance, and the rights of the refugee and how these have altered within the past fifty

years. This reading was ultimately geared towards furthering understanding on how informal assistance could be better understood in future refugee crises.

E. Chapter Summaries

Chapter Two will be focused on giving an overview of the current Syrian refugee situation, focusing on the role of the UNHCR as the primary actor in charge of assistance. It will also examine the complex web of other formal actors involved in providing humanitarian assistance, and how their methods of assistance have changed during the three years of the crisis. It will discuss how assistance is organized between various formal actors, what this assistance is attempting to achieve and what challenges it has, and continues to, face.

Chapter Three will examine in closer depth the extent and type of informal assistance which is being provided for refugees by the Lebanese host community, which is not taken into account by the reports of official ‘formal’ actors. This chapter will draw on case studies and interviews conducted through my own empirical research in Akkar, North Lebanon, in Spring/Summer 2014. It will attempt to draw a comprehensive ‘alternative’ picture of the level of support provided by INGOs and NGOs within this locality, the level of support provided by individual host actors, and the degree to which the role of host communities in providing assistance is supported by INGOs and NGOs. This analysis will draw only on a small snapshot of the situation of host community support within a small area in Lebanon. Nevertheless, despite the constraints of this scale, benefit can be drawn from understanding in close detail the response within a small locality, without intending to extrapolate or make sweeping assumptions. This redrawn analysis will allow a close reading of the extent of the burden of refugee assistance being carried by informal assistance, in the context of all

support, and the extent to which this is supported by more formalised streams of funding and technical support.

Chapter Four will try to place informal assistance within the broader architecture of humanitarian assistance by looking at tensions within and between different levels of interaction, in the international, the national and the local. It will discuss different measures implemented by the international community throughout the duration of the crisis, such as the ‘Lebanese Host Communities Support Program’ in March 2013 and ‘Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan’ in December 2014, which demonstrate evolved attitudes towards the host community. But it will conclude by highlighting that conflicts within the existing formal humanitarian apparatus are still impacting on the perceptions of informal assistance.

Chapter Five will conclude the thesis by summing up the outcome of my research. It reflects on the how the Syrian refugee crisis has impacted on the role and position of the UNHCR, specifically in relation to the ‘no camps’ policy imposed by the Lebanese government. It examines the impact that this circumstance has had on the manner of refugee assistance within Lebanon, and whether this situation holds longer term implications for the core mandates of the UNHCR, of refugee protection and finding durable solutions for their situation. It concludes that the potential that host community assistance has for future community cohesion and civic engagement could be further strengthened, and the perspective of the host community should shift towards a more nuanced view of their potential capacity, alongside their vulnerability, in order to achieve this.

CHAPTER II

DISTRIBUTION OF FORMAL ASSISTANCE IN THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS IN LEBANON

A Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of how formal assistance for Syrian refugees living in Lebanon is operating on the ground – how it is distributed, who is targeted, and what form the assistance takes – with a particular emphasis on the role of the UNHCR. I use the term ‘formal’ to refer to that assistance implemented by international organizations (such as the UNHCR), international NGOs, the national government, the local government (municipalities), and those projects funded by other national governments. Information for this overview will be provided both by publicly available policy reports, and by interviews conducted with NGOs, local Municipalities in Akkar province, and Syrian refugees based in Akkar province. Particular focus will be placed on how the response of the UNHCR demonstrates their prioritisations, and how this can be situated within the historical trajectory of their organization.

There are several key points to draw out of this research into formal assistance for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The first point concerns actors. There are multiple layers of actors operating in refugee assistance, and the extent to which their agendas and objectives align (in theory and in practice) is critical for a streamlined and efficient response to the crisis. International bodies (various UN agencies and other NGOs), national governments (both the Lebanese government and other national governments offering assistance and funding), local

governments (who have their own internal politics and agendas), and local NGOs are all aiming to assist Syrian refugees, but their methods are not always coordinated. Not only is the refugee crisis a reflection of how international agencies coordinate with each other and with sovereign bodies, but it is also a lesson in the importance of the sovereign state in refugee assistance. As will be discussed, many of the issues facing Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities result not solely from this crisis, but from engrained infrastructural problems with the Lebanese state. This poses questions about the extent to which international bodies should infringe into national affairs, and the blurred line between the mandate of the UNHCR between providing ‘protection’ and ‘developmental assistance’.

The second point concerns temporality. There has been a shift (which has been ongoing throughout the duration of this thesis research) in both NGO policy and theory about how the refugee crisis should be dealt with. The shift is moving towards more ‘development’ oriented solutions, and instilling “resilience” (a favourite NGO buzzword) within refugee and host communities. The shift is resultant firstly from the perception of the crisis changing from a medium term ‘emergency’ to a longer-term more deep-rooted problem, which requires greater sustainability in approach. Secondly the shift is resultant from an increase in sensitivity to the specific complexity of this Syrian refugee crisis within Lebanon – the lack of refugee camps and subsequent ‘integration’ of Syrians into Lebanese communities and the integral role played by the Lebanese host community in supporting the refugees. This complexity can only be properly understood with a thorough appreciation of the history between Syria and Lebanon, and the shared recent traumas which both groups have experienced together in the past century. Such a shift further emphasises the stretched UNHCR mandate, originally focused solely on ‘protection’, which has now bloated to encompass more development-style interventions, in the name of protecting the rights of the refugee.

The third point, which relates to both of the other two, is the role of the Lebanese host community in providing assistance to refugees. The role of the Lebanese community in assistance efforts is fundamentally important in their relationship to the Lebanese government (their demands on the state, and how the role of decentralization may shape a future Lebanese state); in their relationship to the international humanitarian community; and in how they impact the dynamic between the Lebanese government and the international humanitarian community. The failure of the international humanitarian community to understand fully the role by host communities in assisting refugees, and the complex social and political dynamics on the ground, has created a significant gap in humanitarian assistance, which threatens to create and embed tensions between the two populations. The blurring of the boundaries between ‘private’ and ‘public’ assistance for the refugee, and the impact this may have on the empowerment of the refugee, is a significant phenomena for this specific crisis.

B A Complex Web of Formal Assistance

The Syrian refugee crisis began in March 2011. By October 2012 there were 45 organizations working in 16 sectors in 5 districts (Beirut, Bekaa, Mount Lebanon, South Lebanon and North Lebanon). By 2014 there were over 104 organizations working across the country. They are theoretically working in collaboration with the Lebanese government – in particular the Ministry of Social Affairs, Education, Health, Interior and Defence and High Relief Commission (HRC).

There is conflicting information presented within public reports about levels of coordination between humanitarian actors. By September 2013 poor coordination was identified as one of

the main failings of the humanitarian effort.³⁵ but many NGO workers interviewed for an InterAction and International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) report on the NGO Response to the crisis in Lebanon reported improved interagency coordination since January 2013.³⁶ This report suggested that part of the improvement was “due to the additional capacity that UNHCR has contributed for refugee coordination, including those with previous Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) experience”³⁷ It seems clear that coordination between agencies has been difficult to achieve and, furthermore, differs depending on the context of specific localities. Nevertheless, trying to forge better coordination between organizations is something which the UNHCR has prioritised to achieve.

In addition to the regular coordination meetings at various levels throughout the year to discuss operational strategy, a series of strategic and technical meetings were convened with partners at the regional and country levels between September and November 2013 to review progress and agree on planning parameters for the 2014 Regional Response Plan 6 (RRP6).³⁸

The key concern for all actors at all levels is gaining an understanding of which role which actors play, and how they coordinate together. This is particularly important at grassroots levels, where information is likely to be less easily broadcast to all actors. One sheikh interviewed in Akkar for the purpose of this research described the question of responsibility as being the biggest issue in aid distribution, and highlighted the prevalence of confusion regarding whether distribution is the job of the international community or the Lebanese

³⁵ Caritas Lebanon: Emergency response for displaced populations from Syria: A hand to support a person in need, accessed 5 December 2014, <http://cmsny.org/wp-content/uploads/Caritas-Response-to-Syria-Displaced-Population-Oct-2013.pdf>, 27.

³⁶ InterAction and ICVA Mission Report: An NGO Perspective on the Response to the Syria Crisis, (March 2013), accessed 20 April 2014 <http://www.interaction.org/sites/default/files/Syria%20Trip%20-%20Mission%20Report.pdf>, 4.

³⁷ InterAction and ICVA Mission Report: An NGO Perspective on the Response to the Syria Crisis, 4.

³⁸ The 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP6) was made up of over 155 actors including host governments, UN agencies, IOM, NGOs, foundations and donors; 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview, accessed 28 March 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/docs/Syria-rrp6-full-report.pdf>, 42.

government (Appendix interview 1). This confusion is particularly prevalent amongst the refugee population themselves, which is problematic since it leads to negative perceptions of all potential aid contributors. The disjuncture between the responsibility of the national host and the international community is increasingly an issue of the long-term versus short term response to the refugee crisis and highlights something of a grey-area between the remit of the international community (specifically the UNHCR) in extending its mandate to areas of national concern, such as improvements in basic national infrastructure. These, seemingly broad strategic debates, have repercussions on the ground in day-to-day assistance to refugees.

1. The UNHCR, the Network's Core

Multiple UN agencies coordinate to respond to the refugee crises, predominately the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN Development Program (UNDP). Of these the UNHCR is the most dominant, as the UN's sole refugee agency.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the international community's official body for dealing with refugee crises and, as such, is the most prominent international actor working with Syrian refugees in Lebanon and other host countries. Established in 1951 to cope with the large number of refugees created by the Second World War, the UNHCR has a core mandate of two key principles – ensuring refugees' access to protection, and ensuring durable solutions for the refugee population³⁹. In Lebanon, the UNHCR is working in collaboration with: the Lebanese Government (the Ministry of Social Affairs, Education, Health, Interior and Defence and High Relief Commission (HRC)), other

³⁹ Loescher, Betts and Milner, *The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): The politics and practices of refugee protection into the twenty-first century* (Routledge Global Institutions, 2008): 1-2.

UN agencies (such as UNICEF and UNDP), and other large international organizations (such as World Food Programme (WFP), Save the Children, Oxfam, Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Currently, UNHCR is officially partnered with 104 organisations specifically in Lebanon.

The UNHCR has always had good relations with NGOs. It has two broad categories of partnerships with them – firstly as ‘implementing partners’, where the UNHCR provides financial support to an NGO to deliver specific programs to refugees, as specified in a formal project agreement. And, secondly, as ‘operational partners’, where there is voluntary coordination between the UNHCR and an NGO in areas such as emergency relief and refugee resettlement, but where the NGO receives no financial support from UNHCR for the services it delivers.⁴⁰

By 2014, according to the UNHCR Rapid Response Program 6 Report, more than 100 entities had collaborated to “assess needs, identify gaps and design response strategies throughout the region”, under the overall coordination of the Regional Refugee Coordinator (RRC). The RRC further collaborates with the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator to ensure a common strategic vision and a coordinated response to the humanitarian situation inside Syria and in refugee-hosting countries. At the country level, response efforts are led by UNHCR Country Representatives, working in close collaboration with the host Government and humanitarian partners. National-level inter-agency task forces provide further technical oversight and guidance to sector working groups on cross-cutting issues and quality control. Inter-sector working groups established in five countries coordinate the work of 35 sector working groups.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Loescher et al, *The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: The politics and practice of refugee protection into the twenty-first century* (Routledge Global Institutions. London: New York, 2008): 90.

⁴¹ 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview, 42.

Collaboration between actors is most apparent in assessments and report-making. Collaboration also occurs on small scale projects, when objectives align and funding deficiencies necessitate joint-initiatives. Online coordination of reports and databases between multiple actors is very good, with the UNHCR website hosting all reports of all groups working with Syrian refugees, alongside calendars of events and joint coordination meetings.⁴²

2. The Lebanese Government

The relationship between the Lebanese government and the UNHCR, despite enjoying a theoretically good level of coordination, remains soured by the Lebanese government's early decision not to allow the UNHCR to establish refugee camps for Syrian refugees. It is also significant that Lebanon has not signed the 1951 UNHCR Convention on Refugee rights. Poor early levels of cooperation between the High Commission and UN agencies followed the initial phases of the Syrian conflict in March 2011, with Najib Mikati, the Lebanese Prime Minister at the time, since suggesting that the government had been "living in denial" about the refugee situation.⁴³ It was not until October 2012 that Mikati established an Inter-Ministerial Committee tasked with co-leading the response to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The Committee includes the Ministers of Social Affairs, Education, Health, Interior and Defence in addition to the High Relief Commission (HRC). Alongside the creation of this committee, UN and NGO partners continued to work with the involved Ministries and local authorities to support and assist Syrian refugees.⁴⁴ Operational partners within the

⁴² Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, accessed 12 February 2015 <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

⁴³ Olivia Alabaster, "Mikati seeks \$178 million for Syrian refugees," *The Daily Star*, 4 December 2012, accessed 8 April 2014, [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Dec-04/197098-mikati-seeks-\\$178-mln-for-syrian-refugees.ashx#ixzz2yI2bYrky](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Dec-04/197098-mikati-seeks-$178-mln-for-syrian-refugees.ashx#ixzz2yI2bYrky).

⁴⁴ UNHCR UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees (October 2012): 3.

government include Dar Al Fatwa, High Relief Commission, Human Rights Committee in Parliament, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of the Interior and Municipal Affairs.⁴⁵ This coordination encompasses better transfer of information between the government and UN agencies, and loosening of bureaucratic procedures to better aid a smooth flow of assistance – for instance in 2013 UNHCR secured positive agreements from the Ministry of Social Affairs and hospitals to help with dissemination of information and to reduce procedural barriers of newborn babies being registered with UNHCR⁴⁶.

In reality there is a complex relationship between the Lebanese government and the humanitarian community. The humanitarian community is wary of reported corruption within the government and frustrated by their refusal to allow camps, and the government (some Ministers in particular)⁴⁷ is frustrated at their perceived ‘lack of support’ from the international community. This relationship is, again, confused by mixed perceptions over the longer term versus shorter term remit of the Syrian refugee crisis, with many Ministers in the Lebanese government desiring the international community to improve the hitherto poor infrastructural capacity of the country, particularly in areas of electricity and water supplies. Such a shift in funding priorities would be a move closer towards ‘developmental assistance’ which the UNHCR has traditionally dallied with but never fully resolved.

Beneath the government level, there is greater complexity of relations. IOs and NGOs exist within the decentralized body of government, but they are receiving disparate levels of

⁴⁵ 2014 UNHCR country operations profile – Lebanon, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486676.html>.

⁴⁶ UNHCR Monthly Update: Protection (September 2013):1, accessed 16 December 2014
<file:///C:/Users/Helen/Downloads/ProtectionUNHCRMonthlyUpdate-Sept2013.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Gebran Bassil was quoted in The Daily Star newspaper as saying “The international community has totally and drastically failed to shoulder its responsibilities in that regard [Syrian refugee crisis], while taking interest in other issues such as Ukraine and now Daesh (The Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria).” Quoted in *The Daily Star*, “Bassil: Strife certain if refugee crisis persists,” 4 July 2014, accessed 21 July 2014, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-04/262644-bassil-civil-strife-inevitable-if-refugee-crisis-persists.ashx#sthash.4bzOth6d.dpuf>.

assistance. There are three levels of devolution beneath the government – 8 regional governments (Mohafazat); 26 district jurisdictions (Aqdya); and over 1,000 Municipalities (Baladiyat)⁴⁸ which are arranged into 42 unions of municipalities⁴⁹. According to a Research Report, “International relief agencies already operate in a decentralized mode (Bekaa, Tripoli, Akkar, the South, Beirut, and Mount Lebanon) which is closest in geographic distribution to that of the regional governments (Mohafazat)”⁵⁰. According to my research conducted at the Municipality (Baladiyat) level, there is a very mixed level of decentralization and communication occurring.

3. Municipalities

The Municipalities are the frontline response to refugee and host community needs. They had been under social and economic pressure prior to the refugee crisis, and the additional demands placed on them have posed greater risks to the stability of the country⁵¹. Their concerns are both infrastructural (in particular water and electricity) and those of security, particularly reducing tensions between host and refugee populations. According to a March 2014 Mercy Corps report, out of the 12 surveyed municipalities across Lebanon, 100 percent are registering refugees and providing housing assistance, while 89 percent are facilitating assistance provision, 78 percent have increased their security presence with more staff in their communities, and 78 percent are providing dispute resolution facilities between refugee and host communities. Since municipalities are on the frontline of the crisis, they are aware of

⁴⁸ Policy Brief: Engaging Municipalities in the Response to the Syria Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: Recommendations to inform donor funding, implementing agency practice, and national government policy. *Mercy Corps Lebanon* (March 2014): 4.

⁴⁹ Shibli, Reconfiguring Relief Mechanisms: The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon, *Research Report: Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs* (February 2014): 10.

⁵⁰ Shibli, Reconfiguring Relief Mechanisms, 11.

⁵¹ Policy Brief: Engaging Municipalities in the Response to the Syria Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: Recommendations to inform donor funding, implementing agency practice, and national government policy. *Mercy Corps Lebanon* (March 2014): 4.

community needs, as well as how to best manoeuvre project implementation in such a delicate environment.

According to my own research done for this study, taken from a small snapshot of Akkar district in North Lebanon, the extent to which municipalities coordinate with the Lebanese government, and by extension the international humanitarian community, often seems to be contingent on personal relationship between individual actors and internal politics. According to one Municipality Chief Executive of a small village in Akkar, interviewed in Spring 2014, “If the Chief Executive of the Municipality has good connections and is charismatic and trustworthy he will get more assistance” – he referenced one Municipality CE who had previously worked for NGOs in Afghanistan and was taking advantage of his prior personal connections to get better funding for the refugee crisis.

One of the problems caused by, or precipitating, confusion, is the disparity among some municipalities themselves about what role they feel they should be playing towards the refugees. There is a mixed perception amongst those Municipality Chief Executives interviewed in North Lebanon about how refugees should be treated; and about the role of the municipality in dealing with refugees. Two Municipality Chief Executives both suggested that the main role of their Municipality was ensuring security/stability of both the Syrians and Lebanese populations in their jurisdiction, and to keep the environment clean of waste⁵²; in contrast another Municipal Chief Executive suggested that the only service the municipality can provide is to find jobs for refugees⁵³. The discontent of the Municipal Chief Executive of a large central town in Akkar over the handling of the refugee crisis, and his personal anger at his own perceived powerless in the situation, displays the criss-crossing layers of power

⁵² Appendix Interview 1M and 2M.

⁵³ Appendix Interview 3M.

structures (regarding refugees) at play within any one locality in Lebanon⁵⁴. Overlapping zones of power and uncertainty about which area comes under which municipality's remit is of serious concern. This particular Municipality is under the authority of the Lebanese government, but is trying to deal directly with NGOs in securing refugee assistance, and is circumventing the Government in the process.

There is disparity between how different IOs and NGOs relate to the Municipality in North Lebanon. According to one Municipality CE – “The UNHCR is helping 2-3 local NGOs here [in this municipality] and not other NGOs”. A mixed picture emerges about the extent of NGO interaction with municipalities (in terms ranging from directly channelling money through them, to using their administrative and security capacity), which varies across different Municipalities – overall this points towards a general lack of coherence in NGO policy towards the Municipality. One Municipality described how, from the beginning of the crisis, “This Municipality didn't make the immediate effort to coordinate with NGOs, and NGOs didn't make the effort to coordinate with the Municipality” leading to a sustained lack of collaboration between the two. Another Municipality Chief Executive noted that UNDP and an NGO operated through his Municipality by asking them what assistance they needed and providing them with pick-up trucks and funding for waste disposal. However, this was a singular investment rather than a long-term collaboration between the two. This CE bemoaned the fact that his Municipality was not being used further by NGOs or the UNHCR to provide statistics and databases about his local population to better aid the distribution method⁵⁵; however, other municipalities noted that they were being used in this manner by NGOs⁵⁶. One Municipality Protection Officer described how his office was regularly visited by NGOs to provide information about the most vulnerable families in the locality, to provide

⁵⁴ Appendix Interview 1M.

⁵⁵ Appendix Interview 1M.

⁵⁶ Appendix Interview 2M.

security for aid distribution and to create a survey of every new Syrian family who moved to the locality. However, such uses (even if properly used) were only employed by a few NGOs, not including the UNCHR, and did not extend to any cooperation beyond administrative.

Furthermore there is disparity within the knowledge of Municipalities interviewed in North Lebanon about their perceptions of what assistance is being provided to the refugee population by IOs – one Municipality Chief Executive thought that the UNHCR were paying rent for some host families in his locality, but this was shown to be incorrect. As noted by a March 2014 Mercy Corp report into the role of municipalities, “most municipalities do not understand the donor architecture and humanitarian coordination structures”⁵⁷ This invariably creates confusion between actors.

4. Religious Organizations

Religious Organizations (mostly Islamic with some Christian) are providing substantial amounts of assistance to refugees in Akkar, aimed mainly at ‘filling in the gaps’ of that assistance provided by NGOs. It is not known exactly how many ‘non-governmental’ Arab relief funds are operating. They are funded from sources based all over the world, including the Gulf, America and Europe. They are mainly channelled through Islamic faith-based organizations (FBOs) and coordination meetings among closely knit FBOs are chaired by Sheikhs within their areas of operations⁵⁸. The majority of these faith based-organizations were existent before the refugee crisis, providing welfare support within their locality.

⁵⁷ Policy Brief: Engaging Municipalities in the Response to the Syria Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: Recommendations to inform donor funding, implementing agency practice, and national government policy. *Mercy Corps Lebanon* (March 2014): 12.

⁵⁸ 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview, 42.

In the North of Lebanon, 22 Islamic NGOs are part of the Islamic Coordination Unit (I'tilaf). They use a faith-based approach to the provision of services and have been working in the region since the 1990s.⁵⁹

Islamic Relief US have supported Syrian refugees and host families through emergency supplies, such as winterization effort including food, blankets, heaters, fuel, mattresses, rugs and baby kits to protect against the cold; Ramadan food packages and Udhiyah/Qurbani packages distributed in 2011, 2012, and 2013; food parcels, hygiene products, mattresses blankets, kitchen sets, heaters, candles and mosquito repellants.⁶⁰

Islamic organizations often focus on providing medical assistance to those in need. The union of 35 Islamic Organizations across North Lebanon concentrate on giving medical care – childcare, operations, medical prescriptions – for all those refugees not registered, or not receiving medical assistance from the UNHCR.⁶¹ These have assessed the main gap in refugee assistance to be in the field of medical care and endeavoured to plug this gap through their own initiatives. They are working on a large scale, completing about 11,000 births, 6,000 operations thousands of medical prescriptions/month. Another localised Islamic centre has a medical centre where the medicine is free; sometimes they also help with the 25 percent of fees left from hospital bills, which the UNHCR don't cover.

According to one Sheikh based in the Headquarters of a union of 35 Islamic NGOs they used to give food portions in the beginning, but they shifted their focus to concentrating on medical aid because of being unable to provide food to the numbers of families in need. They also help build campsites and give some money for rent, including participating with the

⁵⁹ Carpi, "The Everyday Experience of Humanitarianism in the Akkar Villages," *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support*, accessed 10 May 2014 (2014): 7.

⁶⁰ Islamic Relief US Syrian Humanitarian Relief: About the Emergency, accessed 20 April 2014,

<http://www.irusa.org/emergencies/syrian-humanitarian-relief/>.

⁶¹ Appendix Interview 1S.

National Saudi Campaign which gives rent and contributes mattresses and blankets if they can.

Another Sheikh, based in a small village in Akkar, is head of a religious institute which gives assistance to refugees through an NGO “The Great Youth Giving Association”; they receive funds from Syrian and Lebanese individuals living abroad in US, Europe and Australia⁶². There is some collaboration between his organization and international NGOs, but not a substantial amount – the UNHCR came to them before distributing aid, but does not collaborate in any other way. Sometimes they collaborate with a Polish NGO which helps with rent payment within the locality.

Both of these Sheikhs are part of organizations which are examples of existent social welfare platforms, who had been working long before the refugee crisis, who have adjusted their assistance in response to perceived gaps left by international NGOs. They are therefore working, indirectly, in tandem with the NGOs, although direct interaction between these actors is minimal. Both Sheikhs interviewed focus on helping those refugees who are not ‘covered’ by the UNHCR – either those who have arrived within the past 3 months or those who have lived in Lebanon for over two years and are not eligible for UNHCR assistance, or those people who are not officially registered as refugees.

5. Third States

Two major sources of funding comprise the backbone of relief funds to refugees in Lebanon: the West and the Arab region. Western support is channelled through humanitarian

⁶² Appendix Interview 2S.

organizations, while the majority of Arab support is channelled through ‘faith-based’ organizations.⁶³

In terms of regional actors, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) is not supporting the Lebanese government due to Hezbollah’s influence in the cabinet. It is not known exactly how many ‘non-governmental’ Arab relief funds are operating – these are mainly channelled through Islamic faith-based organizations (FBOs) and coordination meetings among closely knit FBOs are chaired by Sheikhs within their areas of operations.⁶⁴

Various objectives are implemented through smaller scale NGOs, who also assist with fieldwork assessments. Actors are grouped under key ‘objective’ areas (and are supposed to coordinate with each other within these). Objective areas include food, education, shelter, basic needs, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), public health, and livelihoods. There are also a significant number of religious organizations (mainly Islamic) who provide a substantial amount of relief across Lebanon and position themselves as ‘filling the gaps’ of relief provided by UN agencies and the Lebanese government.

In addition to these actors, third states, the US, Denmark, Norway, UK, France and Saudi Arabia amongst many, are injecting their own forms of assistance, with their own objectives attached to how this assistance should be allocated and implemented.

E Concluding Comments

This chapter has highlighted that numerous formal actors, operating on different scales and across different levels from the international, national and local, are providing assistance to

⁶³ Shibli, Reconfiguring Relief Mechanisms: The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon. *Research Report: Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs* (February 2014): 8.

⁶⁴ Shibli, Reconfiguring Relief Mechanisms, 8.

Syrian refugees in Lebanon. UN agencies cooperate with other International Organizations, the Lebanese government, INGOs and NGOs in vertical and horizontal hierarchies; the Lebanese government has its own system of devolution, coordinating with local municipalities, local NGOs and local faith-based organizations; NGOs coordinate across horizontal platforms, sometimes engaging with municipalities. Coordination has markedly improved since the beginning of the refugee crisis as different actors have become more aware of the methods of operation and agendas of other actors, and this has led to increased partnership on all levels. However confusion about the role of different actors still pervades lower levels of activity, particularly among the refugee population.

CHAPTER III

INFORMAL ASSISTANCE AND EVERYDAY HUMANITARIANISM IN AKKAR

This thesis is concerned with investigating types of ‘informal’ assistance given to Syrian refugees in Akkar province. Throughout my research I have taken the term ‘informal’ to refer to individuals, or spontaneous collections of individuals, who are instigating small-scale assistance through personal means and motives as a direct reaction to the refugee crisis. Informality therefore indicates something reactionary and occurring on a one-to-one and collective basis. My chief objective is to document a snapshot of Lebanese host community interaction with Syrian refugees in various localised settings across North Lebanon. These case studies are not necessarily representative of the broader picture of Lebanese host community support towards Syrian refugees and they are not intended to be extrapolated to a larger scale. They are intended simply to illustrate the reactions of some Lebanese hosts to the refugee crisis at a localised scale in order to form an understanding of one dynamic of the crisis, and to fit this within a broader picture of understanding how the Syrian refugee crisis is being dealt with by various actors at different levels.

The assistance of host communities to Syrian refugees is a complicated, if not controversial subject. It is impossible to quantify exactly how many Lebanese individuals are assisting Syrian refugees, in however large or small a scale; it is also impossible to adequately represent the proportion of those Lebanese who are assisting refugees versus those who are exploiting them. Reports from daily newspapers in Lebanon differ between highlighting the

tensions caused by Syria refugees in local communities⁶⁵ and highlighting local cohesion.⁶⁶ Both stories are true, but they differ in their extent across the country and within highly localised scales. The thesis is focusing on examples of Lebanese host assistance within Akkar province in North Lebanon to understand positive dynamics between refugees and hosts, but such examples of assistance cannot be detached from examples of exploitation.

This chapter aims to provide in depth examples of forms of assistance being offered to Syrian refugees through case studies collected during research in Akkar, North Lebanon. It will provide examples of informal assistance within the context of the broader assistance offered (which has been outlined in Chapter II) and start unpicking the link between the two – how the informal assistance of Lebanese individuals is supported, or perceived, by the public providers of assistance (such as the UNHCR and other INGOs, NGOs and the Lebanese state).

A Assistance of Spontaneous Individuals

Across Lebanon the plight of Syrian refugees has prompted multiple groups to carry out spontaneous relief work, either individually or in collective groups. The demographic of individuals involved in this work has been spread across class, age, religion and nationality with many Lebanese, Syrian, European, Palestinian and other individuals' starting initiatives. The kind of assistance this entails ranges from collections of individuals raising money to give to refugees, either directly or via established NGOs; people donating clothes and other

⁶⁵ Nebehay, "Syrian Refugees, Sectarian Tensions Endanger Lebanon: UN," *The Daily Star* 14 July 2014, accessed 14 July 2014, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jul-14/263824-syrian-refugees-sectarian-tensions-endanger-lebanon-un.ashx>.

⁶⁶ Hodali and Naggar, "Lebanese Mayor Builds 'Center' for Refugees," 5 April 2013, <http://www.dw.de/lebanese-mayor-builds-center-for-refugees/a-16722031>.

items to refugees; and more personal occurrences of assistance such as individuals giving shelter to stranded refugees for a night or more, or offering logistical and emotional support.⁶⁷

These examples of everyday humanitarianism, which are either reactionary or active, display the enactment of moral responsibility and an awareness that ‘official’ assistance for refugees (either from IOs, NGOs or the Lebanese government) is ill-equipped to deal with the totality of the crisis. Everyday assistance recognises the everyday realities of refugees from an ‘individual to individual’ standpoint – either through witnessing refugee trauma on the streets, hearsay or media reports. The effective absorption of the Syrian population into urban everyday realities of host individuals makes them a visible ‘concern’ of everyone. The informal assistance offered by the host individuals reflects their empowerment – ‘we have the **ability** to help and we will therefore fulfil this ability’ – as well as a humanitarian responsibility which transcends the national. This cannot necessarily be termed ‘civic responsibility’, since it encompasses individuals who exist outside of the civil society of any one nation, but may be termed ‘cosmopolitanism’ instead.

Informal assistance encompasses solo relief work by individuals to reactionary NGOs set up to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis. As one example, ‘Hand in Hand’ was a small scale project run on limited resources by two undergraduate Syrian students at the American University of Beirut. It was one of many such small scale initiatives set up by individuals seeking to help the refugees who are such a visible presence on the streets of Beirut. The aims of ‘Hand in Hand’ were initially ambitious and included - helping the refugees on the streets to find houses; finding big flats around Lebanon for reasonable prices where those refugees could live comfortably; trying to help refugees find jobs. Owing to logistical difficulties, the bulk of work that ‘Hand in Hand’ achieved in carrying out was oriented around distribution

⁶⁷ Taken from an interview with a Syrian man living in Beirut who saw a lost Syrian woman getting off the bus on a street in Beirut and offered her assistance, which extended to giving her a bed to stay in for the night, so that she could connect with her contacts in Beirut.

of food baskets within perceived ‘vulnerable’ areas of Beirut, which later expanded to areas in the Bekka and Walid Khalid in North East Lebanon.

Other forms of support networks are cultivated through social media. One young American set up a facebook group called “Four Syrian Families”⁶⁸ which intended to help specifically four families through a network of strangers gathered together on facebook. A father of one of the families was a pharmacist, and another was a civil engineer. The intention was to pool collective knowledge and resources to help these refugees find jobs, rent, education, healthcare, clothes and food. The initiative was quite successful - over 200 members were brought together and facebook, and refugees were given food, and taken to the American University Hospital clinic for low cost healthcare. Social media has also been used by other individuals to collate support and organise fundraising sessions for Syrian refugees. The facebook group “I am not a Tourist” established in December 2013, was set up to collect winter clothing and blankets for Syrian refugees in the Bekaa Valley and Akkar. It was a direct response to the freezing weather conditions which blighting refugees across Lebanon, and which the emergency response of the INGOs, NGOs and Lebanese government were not able to fully deal with. AidSyria campaign was established in July 2012 through social media based in Lebanon in order to collate individuals to assist distribution efforts to Syrian refugees – this had accrued over 1,000 volunteers within the first few weeks of being set up.⁶⁹

Solo relief work has been operating everyday for the duration of the refugee crisis and is impossible to effectively document or quantify. Some journalist accounts have conveyed some of this work, such as that of an individual Syrian woman studying in Beirut, who, at the time of the journalist report in July 2012, was buying 100-200 mattresses, as well as diapers, baby milk and clothing each month, which she then distributed to new families arriving in

⁶⁸ Facebook group “Four Syrian Families,” accessed 5 December 2014

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/foursyrianfamilies/>.

⁶⁹ Facebook group “Four Syrian Families.”

north Lebanon. She was also paying the rent on numerous other storage facilities, usually occupied by more than one family.⁷⁰ Other informal solo relief work ranges from lending cars to transport assistance, to taking refugees to medical centres.

These informal initiatives are not without their drawbacks. These often include lack of logistical support, the time pressures on individuals who have full time jobs, loss of motivation or disillusionment with the effectiveness of work carried out.

B Akkar Case Study

In the North of Lebanon it is estimated that at the end of 2013, there were an average of nine refugees living with each host family.⁷¹ Assistance for Syrian refugees takes many different forms. Lebanese individuals host people directly in their homes (either family members, prior acquaintances or complete strangers); Lebanese individuals lend an empty 'home', or outbuilding to be used by a refugee family without charging rent; Lebanese landlords reduce the rent payment, or accept long delays in rent payment; Lebanese individuals lend small amounts of money (20,000 – 50,000LL) to refugees to help them get by in everyday expenses; Lebanese individuals give away furniture, clothes, labour and larger amounts of money to Syrian refugee strangers.

One of the reasons for this assistance, as described by a Lebanese farmer hosting his Syrian relatives, is that “a lot of [Syrian] people knew people [living in Akkar] from before the conflict, through working together – there were a lot of Syrian workers working in construction, tiling, metals etc before the conflict who are now able to use those connections

⁷⁰ Gatten and Alabaster, “Refugee influx prompts solo relief work,” *The Daily Star*, July 2012, accessed 18 June 2014 <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2012/Jul-27/182191-refugee-influx-prompts-solo-relief-work.ashx#ixzz34zRJfS0>.

⁷¹ van Vliet and Hourani, “Regional differences in the conditions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon,” *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support* (2014): 10.

to find work and borrow money”. Akkar is an example of a border region which hosts multiple connections, tribal links, and kinship networks between the Syrian and Lebanese populations, both through inter-marriage and business relationships. The geographic location and multiple criss-crossing ties have led to one of the largest influxes of Syrian refugees to this area of Lebanon – several interviews pointed to the striking numbers of Syrians in Akkar. One refugee described how “we are in Homs [a Syrian city] now”; whilst another described how he had found a “parallel community [to his Syrian home]” in his large town in Akkar.

1. Assistance of Lebanese Host Individuals

The majority of informal assistance being afforded to Syrian refugees has come about through personal exchanges and one-on-one interactions. It is not necessarily the case that Lebanese individuals are only helping Syrian family members or prior acquaintances – many individuals are offering shelter to complete strangers, out of humanitarian sympathy – but these closer affiliations naturally tend to make up a slightly larger proportion of support. For those individuals who are not related, or did not have prior acquaintance, a general pattern is that refugee families may approach Lebanese individuals for assistance, or Lebanese individuals will approach Syrian refugees who are living in a bad or unsustainable situation to offer assistance. This informal assistance being offered is therefore ad hoc. There are no broad trends which can be identified about **who** is providing support – Lebanese individuals, men and women, well off or living just within their means, those with large families or living alone, are all contributing to giving assistance. Outlined below are a series of case studies drawn from research conducted in Akkar.

One Lebanese man, who works and lives mainly in Kuwait, has around 15 Syrians living in his property.⁷² One family lives in his ‘second’ home further up the mountains; and one family lives in the basement of his primary home, which he has converted to make liveable with a toilet and kitchenette out of his own expenses. He is not charging either family any rent. He didn’t know either of them before the crisis. One of the families came with a disabled member and asked his father for help, so he offered them his place in the mountains, and helped with mattresses, blankets, a wheelchair and water mattress for the disabled man. The second family asked him directly for assistance so he offered the basement of his house for them, and lives in the floor above when in Lebanon. He doesn’t want to interfere too much with either family’s lives but would prefer they be given their own autonomy and dignity. He tries to find assistance for them whenever he can, and sometimes sends money over from his work colleagues in Kuwait. He is not getting any help from any organisation (international or local) for this work, and he is motivated purely by humanitarian motives.

One Syrian family of four people are living in the outbuilding of a Lebanese woman without paying rent.⁷³ They have been here for 3 months; they used to live in one of the shops along the road, but couldn’t afford rent and came to the Lebanese lady asking for help. She opened up her outbuilding space for them, which had previously housed cows, provided them with furniture, created a partition for them to create two rooms, and installed electricity out of her own pocket. The family have registered with the UNHCR, but they haven’t received any food assistance yet – they were given medical assistance from the UNHCR for the husband, who suffered a heart attack (\$1,500 for surgery and \$400 for follow up surgery) but have no means to afford food. They borrow money all the time, off their landlady and her neighbours and friends. Their son used to work in Beirut but his residence permit has run out and he is trying to gather funds to pay the \$200 renewal fee. The Lebanese landlady is helped out with

⁷² Appendix interview 1H.

⁷³ Appendix interview 2H.

money a bit by her husband, who lives in Saudi Arabia, and local neighbours, but no NGO or other authority. She is helping the family out of humanistic reasoning (motivated by religion) and expects to be paid back in the future, whenever the family are able to afford it.

One Syrian family (a pregnant woman, her mother in law and five children) are living in an outhouse which used to house lambs, owned by their female Lebanese cousin; they are not paying rent for the shelter and they have lived there for nine months⁷⁴. Their Lebanese host approached a Polish NGO to ask for assistance in renovating the outhouse to make it liveable - she signed a contract with them which stated that they would pay her half the money in advance and then check that the renovations carried out met their agreement before paying the second half. Other than this assistance to renovate the house, the landlady is receiving nothing; she got herself into debt in order to pay to keep her Syrian relatives with her. But the landlady also refuses any personal help she gets herself – if she receives any assistance, she passes it on to the refuge family.

A farmer has his step-brother and his family, and his parents living with him in his home (13 people in total).⁷⁵ His mother is Lebanese, and is married to a Syrian man (her second marriage). He does not charge them rent (“they are my brothers”) and employs some of the men to work in the fields, paying them a small amount for this labour. When they first arrived they received mattresses and boxes from a Danish NGO, but when interviewed they are receiving no aid from anyone – they get all their food from the land and are self-sufficient in this respect. The Syrian family are not actively looking for help because the women don’t want to beg, and the men have been wounded in the war – their farmer host doesn’t want his family to be humiliated by standing hours on end in aid queues, where ‘women often get harassed or molested’. They are therefore subsisting entirely independently of any NGOs.

⁷⁴ Appendix interview 3H.

⁷⁵ Appendix, interview 4H.

A female shopkeeper working in a large town in Akkar, and her two brothers are paying rent for two Syrian families (their cousins), at \$200 per house – they share the financial burden between them.⁷⁶ They also help pay for medical assistance when needed. The first family is 6 members large, and the second family has 8 members. Neither of the Syrian families are working, and all of the senior members of both families are widows whose husbands have died during the conflict. The female shopkeeper's only source of money is from her shop, but her relatives have created a pool of financial resources to help out their Syrian cousins, to share the burden. The shopkeeper wouldn't think to ask for external help, since she's Lebanese and wouldn't qualify for it.

A Lebanese mechanic working in a large town in Akkar has 20-21 Syrian people living with him, without paying rent.⁷⁷ There used to be around 60 but most of them rented their own houses. They are his brother-in-laws (3 families) and have been living with him for around two years. Only one of the men has a job, working as a mechanic (for his mechanic brother-in-law who is hosting him). They're all receiving the 280,000LL food card from the UNHCR, but receiving no other assistance. The Lebanese host himself is receiving no assistance for hosting them.

One old Lebanese man is hosting two Syrian families in his home and no charging rent. He is not related to them and he didn't know them before they asked for help.⁷⁸ He is not receiving any help from any NGO for helping them, but sometimes his children lend him some little money. He is helping them because they are 'poor people' – they don't have anyone else helping them. The senior female of one of the family's is raising children by herself, since her husband is detained. They are receiving no assistance for food or rent. One NGO came and

⁷⁶ Appendix interview 5H.

⁷⁷ Appendix, interview 7H.

⁷⁸ Appendix, interview 8H.

checked the house for windows and doors (at the time of the interview it did not have either) but they did not give any assistance.

One elderly Lebanese shop keeper has 8 people living with him – one family of 6 and another 2 people.⁷⁹ They are his cousins. They sometimes stay at his house, or at the house of his (deceased) parents. They do not pay rent. The men in the family do not have jobs. They used to work in a governmental institution in Syria. They lost everything during the conflict. Other family members help out with providing food, vegetables etc. No organizations are helping them. The people who are staying with him are old (he is old) and not looking for assistance from NGOs. He doesn't want them to go to NGOs because he doesn't think its proper to ask for help like that, so he's helping them himself. They also have relatives from Hama and Aleppo, but they couldn't fit in Halba so this guy rented a house for them in Bireh (a small village close by).

One man and his friend in a large town in Akkar are taking their own initiative and giving blankets to refugees out of their own pockets. The same man brought a \$300 room for one Syrian family to live in out of his own pocket. His motivation is purely altruistic – the act of charity.

One Syrian shepherd was given land and sheep to take care of by a Lebanese landlord who lives on the land. In return for working the land, they were allowed to build tents on the land.⁸⁰ There are six families living here, and every family has between 6-7 members; the shepherd has been living on this land since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, and the other families moved to join him in mid 2013. None of the men in the families have jobs. The families are receiving food vouchers from the UNHCR but no other assistance from NGOs –

⁷⁹ Appendix, interview 9H.

⁸⁰ Appendix interview 8R.

one of the ladies in the group had given birth a few weeks prior to being interviewed and had been forced to sell food vouchers in order to pay for the childbirth.

One Syrian refugee family are hosting another Syrian refugee family, a newly-wed couple who are their in-laws.⁸¹ The original Syrian family have been living in Lebanon for one and a half years and earn money by making mattresses. They have half of their rent paid for by an INGO. The newlyweds arrived in March 2013 been here for 1 month – the husband is looking for a job. The original family partitioned off a section of the building to give the newlyweds some privacy.

One Syrian family are living in a one room apartment, part of a block of flats being let by a Lebanese landlord. They owe the landlord 2 month rent, but he is allowing them to be late. They were given old furniture, an old TV, cushions and other items at a local mosque by Lebanese individuals. The husband of the family has a bad leg and is unable to work. The wife of the family got sick a week prior to the interview – a Lebanese man took her to hospital in his car. She couldn't afford the medication (15,000LL or \$10) so another Lebanese man brought it for her.⁸²

2. Major Trends

Some major trends can be drawn from this research.

Firstly, the actions of the Lebanese host community towards the Syrian refugees cannot be detached from the existing social and political fabric of that community. In the majority of cases, Lebanese hosts are helping Syrian individuals of similar background and religion to themselves. In Quombayat, a Christian village in Akkar where many of the INGOs are based,

⁸¹ Appendix interview 9R.

⁸² Appendix interview 5R.

the occurrence of Lebanese individuals hosting Syrian refugees is negligible. According to Lebanese individuals living here this is a reflection of the presence of INGOs, which decreases the vulnerability of refugees since they are better assisted by the international community. However, there are also less Syrian refugees in this town as a direct result of the fact that they are not being hosted by Lebanese individuals – those that live here are paying rent and treated as a standard business opportunity rather than refugee by their landlords. This is in stark contrast to Muslim towns in the region, where rent payment is accepted late or even decreased by sensitive landlords, and the free hosting of refugees is more common. The assistance to refugees down religious lines is one example of ways in which refugees enter a host community and becomes aligned within the entrenched divisions of that community. This means that, while refugees are categorised and protected as one group, the manner in which they receive aid differs depending on how they interact with the host community – those living in Quombayat may have easier access to international assistance, while those living in Muslim towns with less of an international assistance may be forced to rely more on host hospitality or local religious organizations.

There are various counterposing trends existent within Akkar regarding the provision of humanitarian assistance for refugees. The first is the believed universal entitlement of protection and assistance offered by the UNHCR and other international organisations. There is a desire for these organisations to operate at a level which transcends the politicised everyday reality within the North region, as politics are aligned down religious and sectarian lines. However, secondly, in contrast to this is frustration with the centralized and top-down manner in which relief is planned and implemented to refugees, which invariably creates gaps of assistance through which many vulnerable people fall through. But the third assumption, in direct contradiction, cynically expects that humanitarian assistance will inevitably be influenced by existing socio-political divisions if it were to become less centralised. In this

sense, INGOs and NGOs are in a lose-lose situation since they are maligned for being both too universalising and for playing into existing tensions by assisting certain groups more than others (Syrian refugees rather than vulnerable Lebanese hosts, or certain religious groups more than others).

Above all it should be recognised that the provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees in Akkar is an intensely personal act. Lebanese individuals who are hosting Syrian families don't necessarily expect any assistance for the support they are giving – indeed many would see this as an affront to their personal humanitarian efforts. There is a form of gift economy occurring in Akkar, with many Lebanese individuals offering assistance expecting to be repaid by their Syrian charges in the future – there is a mutual understanding that this will occur. For many Syrian refugees it is a necessary source of pride that they repay whatever assistance they are receiving – one family persuaded their landlord, who had previously been letting them live in an apartment rent-free, to charge some form of rent, as a source of dignity. This shared understanding of repayment could create problems in the future, if assistance is not repaid, or not repaid to the satisfaction of the assistance-giver. Syrian individuals are involuntarily creating a burden of debt which will take many years to repay. Linked to this, the main desire for refugees is to have their own autonomy and dignity to live as individuals – they desire job creation to be able to pay their main cost of rent and not have to depend on assistance from NGOs or individuals. Most Syrian refugees interviewed want to return to Syria as soon as they are able – indeed many Syrians have chosen to return to live with violence, such is their detestation of living as a refugee. This general sentiment is important to bear in mind when discussing the future of refugee assistance, and would seem to alleviate fears of the Lebanese government that creation of camps for Syrian refugees within Lebanon would encourage many to make their stay permanent.

The linkage between individual acts of humanitarianism, expectations of the international humanitarian architecture and individual cynicism about the complex politicized dynamics of the localised community should be more clearly understood. Firstly while individual acts of humanitarianism are carried out without expectation of assistance, there remains the expectation that the international and Lebanese national community will carry out the bulk of assistance. In general, throughout the research, a nuanced awareness pervades Lebanese individuals that given the challenges faced by INGO and NGOs, they are doing a good job. Personal assistance should not be viewed as a forced response to a **lack** of any other assistance (rather as a desire to fulfil a personal moral responsibility) but nor should it be viewed in a detached vacuum of other assistance. As highlighted by a report by MercyCorp, such examples of “the Lebanese’ generosity to strengthen local capacities for peace”⁸³ should be built upon further by the international community as an act of local empowerment.

Secondly, hospitality and insecurity are intertwined concerns regarding the individual response to the refugee crisis, and one cannot think of ‘humanitarianism’ without taking into account the aspect of individual security. This is true for both the Lebanese host population, and the Syrian refugee population. While this research has suggested that assistance is not political in nature (Lebanese hosts are not necessarily assisting refugees for a political agenda) there is a collective understanding that not providing assistance will create greater tension and insecurity. The role of the municipality, as outlined by many chief executives, is to provide security for the local community.

Thirdly, there is a micro-economy forming at highly localised scales, as people sell food coupons or medical aid for rent money or cash for other payments. A collection of young

⁸³ Policy Brief: Engaging Municipalities in the Response to the Syria Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: Recommendations to inform donor funding, implementing agency practice, and national government policy. *Mercy Corps Lebanon* (March 2014): 8, accessed 15 April 2014, <http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Mercy%20Corps%20Lebanon%20Policy%20Brief%20Engaging%20Municipalities%20%28English%29.pdf>.

mothers living in tents on some land outside a large town in Akkar described how they sell the diapers they receive as aid from the UNHCR for money to pay rent (50,000LL (\$33.10) per tent for the land). This family (nineteen people who have been living in three tents for the past eight months) are receiving 280,000LL (\$185.37) worth of food vouchers per month from the UNHCR and scraping together enough money (through selling of diapers) to pay for the land to live on. None of them are working. Their security levels are low and any unexpected cost would be devastating. Another lady described how she ‘repays’ the assistance of neighbours, who helped her build a bathroom and assist with small amounts of money, by giving excess food she receives from the UNHCR food vouchers – “if I get 2kg of rice I will give 1kg away in payment.”⁸⁴ Such juggling of funds and resources is common across all situations. The system of borrowing and lending is also very prevalent at localised scales – people borrow 5,000-15,000LL (\$3.31-\$9.93) from local shopkeepers on a weekly basis. One woman borrows money for milk (for her newborn baby) from the man who employs her young children to clean out barns.⁸⁵ A system of job networking is also evident. (mechanic, teacher). Borrowing also occurs at larger scales, within the Syrian community – one Syrian man reported being \$2,800 in debt to fellow Syrians.

It is apparent that rent payment is the most difficult cost to pay for refugees. “All of the Syrian refugees are unable to pay rent” claimed one Sheikh working for an Islamic Organization.⁸⁶ The cost of rent varies quite significantly between households interviewed, with the lowest reported being \$100 and the highest \$350. The rough average rent price reported is \$200. Families who are able to live rent-free often have no income or savings and are subsisting only on food coupons and free education. For those families who are renting, all of their resources are geared towards paying the monthly rent, by whatever means

⁸⁴ Appendix Interview 2R.

⁸⁵ Appendix Interview 4R.

⁸⁶ Appendix Interview 2S.

possible. This often requires getting into substantial debt, and is an unsustainable situation which is likely to become even worse. Unexpected costs (such as medical needs) can be devastating. One female refugee, living in a one room home with her husband and two children, got sick a week before she was interviewed – she couldn't afford the medication of 15,000LL (\$9.93). A Lebanese man took her to hospital in his car and another Lebanese man brought the medication for her – without this small scale assistance she would have been in a very vulnerable position.⁸⁷

3. Motives for Lebanese Hosts Helping Syrian Refugees

The overwhelming motivation reported through interviews with Lebanese host families were of humanitarian sympathy. This was pervasive regardless of whether the Lebanese were hosting family members or strangers. One lady, hosting her pregnant cousin and young family, stated that she “was not only helping them because they are relatives, but because they are people fleeing the war.”⁸⁸ She also helps poor Lebanese here since “she feels it is her duty to do this”. Another older female host (hosting strangers) explained “It's in her nature to help... she likes to help people” and provided further religious reasons: “If God gives you something, you should give it to someone else.”⁸⁹ One mechanic, who is hosting the family of his brother-in-law, described taking in complete strangers during the 2006 Lebanese war with Israel, when several thousand Lebanese families from the South of Lebanon were displaced to the North – his motivation is also humanitarian.⁹⁰ According to a MercyCorps report, 85 percent of Lebanese interviewed for the report said their actions arose from a common sense

⁸⁷ Appendix Interview 5R.

⁸⁸ Appendix Interview 3H.

⁸⁹ Appendix Interview 2H.

⁹⁰ Appendix Interview 7H.

of humanity and shared culture and history. Moreover, 42 percent donated to an organisation and 23 percent conducted some form of volunteer work in their community.⁹¹

Each case of assistance is operating through its own dynamic, often through mutual agreement reached between the individuals involved. In many cases this mutual agreement entails reciprocity of some form – many families who are living in the homes or outbuildings of Lebanese individuals insist that they will repay this ‘favour’ in the future, either in kind or in monetary terms. This is most often the case for previously unacquainted individuals, while Syrians who are living with Lebanese relatives may, in the case of some families interviewed, insist on paying their rent in kind if possible. One Syrian family, parents and teenage daughter, who were offered a small apartment to live in and were helped to find a teaching job for the father, refused to live in the apartment for free and insisted on paying rent.

According to Chatty, “notions of hospitality, generosity, and the worthiness of the guest in augmenting individual and family honor are fundamental to the Arab world.”⁹² She suggests that this is bound up with security, protection and respect – not merely altruistic but a sustainable coping strategy entwined into the public consciousness. Thus when Iraqis were faced with the prospect of being forced out of their homes in 2003, when US-led attacks began in the country, many found refuge with those Iraqis who had previously fled Iraq during the Gulf War. These embedded solidarity networks ensured that refugees were largely invisible to humanitarian assistance regimes, since they did not seek formal recognition. In

⁹¹ Policy Brief: Engaging Municipalities in the Response to the Syria Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: Recommendations to inform donor funding, implementing agency practice, and national government policy. *Mercy Corps Lebanon* (March 2014): 9, accessed 15 April 2014, <http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Mercy%20Corps%20Lebanon%20Policy%20Brief%20Engaging%20Municipalities%20%28English%29.pdf>.

⁹² Dawn Chatty, “Guests and Hosts,” *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, 22 April 2013, accessed 27 May 2014, <http://www.aucegypt.edu/gapp/cairoreview/pages/articleDetails.aspx?aid=335>.

Tunisia in 2012, community efforts played a significant part in the safe passage and accommodation of hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the violence in Libya.⁹³

Concurrently the practice of Zakat, described in the Qu'ran as a religious duty and enforced through a compulsory tax on disposable income, embeds the principle of assistance firmly within the Islamic religion. Zakat is different from charity in many other parts of the world, which is considered a 'gift' granted by the donor, since beneficiaries are considered entitled to assistance from zakat. The practice of sadaqah, or "voluntary charity" is also enshrined within Islam; an Islamic principle states that any hungry person has the right to share the food of those who are well-fed. As one Syrian refugee explained, when describing the practice in her adopted village for everyone to cook and eat together – "this is something people did before the refugee crisis, the act of sharing food, it is not necessarily because of the refugees here." This highlights that the act of host community assistance within Akkar cannot be understood within a Western concept of charity, or even of humanitarianism, but rather as an embedded form of religious and social welfare in the Muslim communities, which is continuously practiced rather than being a reaction to the refugee crisis.

However, even if embedded notions of hospitality and humanitarian sympathy are the main motivating factor for hosting refugee families this may prove problematic in the long term – when does the issue stop becoming 'humanitarian'? Where should the line be drawn between a emergency contingency plan (a 'band-aid' to stem as much fallout as possible), and a long term situation? This concern was raised by a Sheikh operating in one village who suggested that "people sympathise now because they are refugees, but maybe in the future when the crisis is less clear cut they may be less welcome". The longest length of time a family had been hosted, out of those interviews which I conducted, was two years – long past an

⁹³ Hoffman, "Local Hosting and Transnational Identity," *Forced Migration Review* no. 39 (June 2012), <http://www.fmreview.org/north-africa/hoffman.html>.

‘emergency’ situation. The average length of time for people to be hosted, at the time of the interviews, was about eight months. Some landlords currently offering rent for free indicated that they would begin to charge for rent in the future, if the situation stays static. Many hosting families have mutually agreed understandings that the Syrian refugees will repay rent once they are able to – a degree of ‘reciprocity’ increases the dignity and pride of the refugee.

CHAPTER IV

INFORMAL ASSISTANCE AND THE FORMAL HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

A Introduction

Host community support forms a substantial proportion of the assistance given to refugee populations in North Lebanon, alongside assistance from the UNHCR and other inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local NGOs. But this chapter will highlight that this support is often ignored or taken for granted as a result of different battles being fought at various levels of interaction, between and within the international, the national and the local.

The chapter will analyse the extent to which the UNHCR and formal actors have been trying to take informal assistance into consideration, including ways in which they have evolved their working pattern throughout the duration of the crisis. The chapter will seek to understand the various relationships between the international, the national and the local in order to contextualize this informal local assistance within this broader framework, and to understand why things are operating as they are at the local level.

At the international level, the UNHCR is engaging in various debates internally and with fellow international organizations about the best way to manage the crisis. The international is also engaging in fraught relations with the national level, in this case the Lebanese state, and directly with the very local level, epitomised by their direct dealings with the host communities. Simultaneously, the national level is also struggling to balance their relationship with the local and the international. And there are various internal tensions

existent within the local level. These layers of interaction, which are all interlinked, and which are influenced by both ideological and practical issues, are interacting in complex ways to make the provision of assistance to Syrian refugees, and host communities, a minefield. This in turn is having direct ramifications for the manner in which aid is distributed, both to refugees and host communities, which often differs in highly localised settings as a result of these various fraught relationships, and the extent to which host community support is recognised and dealt with.

B How Formal Actors are Supporting Host Communities

From the outset of the Syrian refugee crisis, the ‘host’ Lebanese community has been viewed as a vulnerable group. Nevertheless, attitudes towards them have undergone nuanced fluctuations during the course of the past 3 years. They are simultaneously regarded as requiring protection, and as being a fundamental part of the support network to provide ‘community protection’ to the refugee.

In April 2012 UNICEF released a ‘funding’ plan, which detailed ambitions to conduct communication campaigns to address low enrolment of both Syrian and Lebanese children; they also aimed to establish summer camps providing intensive reading and writing courses for Lebanese and Syrian children aged 6-17. These initiatives demonstrate awareness of the needs of Lebanese children from the early stages of the crisis. In October 2012 the UNHCR referred to “support” being given to Lebanese hosting families who had opened their homes to refugees, without specific mention of what this support entailed more exactly.

By 2013, host communities were being specifically targeted for certain forms of assistance. In March 2013 the UNDP launched its ‘Host Communities Program’ which targeted

specifically Lebanese host communities. Within the 2014 RRP6 Plan, local communities and authorities are intended to be supported with activities in areas such as water and sanitation, social cohesion, health, and employment, delivered by humanitarian and development actors.⁹⁴ Further, “social cohesion partners will bring local actors together and support them with the tools to mediate conflicts and respond to rising tensions. National change agents like media, teachers, youth and local leaders will also be called upon to combat the misperceptions fuelling hostilities.”⁹⁵ These intended initiatives demonstrate an awareness of the importance of local actors to support the refugee population, in terms of their capacity as social agents, alongside the necessity to refrain from excluding them.

There are some examples of schemes which begin to blur the ‘vulnerable’ versus ‘empowered’ line. Local NGOs (such as Akkar Network for Development) are carrying out local governance projects with the municipality and women empowerment projects, which aim to build on the capacity of the community – a welcome move towards sustainable and embedded support for host communities. Some NGOs are helping refugees specifically with their rent payment, although these appear to be concentrated within smaller geographical areas, and have an unclear system of distribution. One Polish NGO assisted in the renovation of an outbuilding within a Lebanese host home, to make it liveable for a refugee family, by fitting a bathroom, kitchen, chimney, windows and doors. Significantly this NGO dealt with the landlady of the building, rather than the refugees.

But while there are some references as to how their role of support network might be better bolstered and utilised, these efforts appear ad hoc, and vague in description of how they might be enacted on the ground. One of the strategies advocated to achieve protection for

⁹⁴ 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview, accessed 10 September 2013, 15 <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/docs/Syria-rrp6-full-report.pdf>.

⁹⁵ 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview, accessed 10 September 2013, 35 <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/docs/Syria-rrp6-full-report.pdf>.

refugees and host communities is the expanded use of “trained refugee outreach volunteers across the region.”⁹⁶ RRP6 gives the example of how this might be implemented for child protection, describing how “community-based child protection capacity” will “promote the participation of children and adolescents in their own protection.”⁹⁷ But there is little detail in how this will be coordinated in practice – what is meant by ‘community-based child protection capacity’, how it will promote self-protection, and who it will be coordinated through (the Municipality, Lebanese government or International humanitarian community?). There are few solid examples, or future ideas, of exact initiatives to support existent informal social networks in areas such as money-lending or shelter provision.

Further, there is still an inadequate lapse in attention being paid to the most vulnerable individuals within host communities, who may be similarly vulnerable, or in some cases more vulnerable, to the refugee population. A July 2013 World Vision Report paid particular attention to these individuals. According to their report, there are at least 80,000 known unregistered refugees for example, who are unable to access certain types of support through the UNHCR system. In addition to these there is likely a much higher number of unknown unregistered refugees. Likewise, the most vulnerable members of host communities in Lebanon have also been excluded from accessing humanitarian support under the current system. A major source of tension within host communities appears to be the widely held perception that only a small proportion of Syrians receiving support are ‘real refugees’. Many people reported that Syrians who have been working in Lebanon for many years were now registering as refugees, allowing them to access support whilst continuing to work in Lebanon. For example, according to a World Vision report, one youth in Akkar reported “I

⁹⁶ 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview, accessed 10 September 2013, 33 <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/docs/Syria-rrp6-full-report.pdf>.

⁹⁷ 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview, accessed 10 September 2013, 33 <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/docs/Syria-rrp6-full-report.pdf>.

work in an organisation that supports refugees and we have files of 840 refugees; the true refugees are maximum 100. The others have been here for more than 10 years.”⁹⁸

In reality, it is very difficult to distinguish between ‘real’ refugees and workers in a context such as Lebanon. Many thousands of Syrians have been working in Lebanon for many years, often as transient or seasonal labour. These workers may have brought their families to Lebanon, or are unable to return to their homes in Syria as a result of the fighting. Often these workers are in the greatest competition for low paid labouring roles with newly arrived refugees. Such workers and their families may be in just as much need of assistance as newly arrived refugees.⁹⁹

In the past two years of the crisis, since 2013, there have been specific programs implemented by the UN and partners in Lebanon, which have directly addressed the vulnerability of the host communities alongside the refugee population.

1. Lebanese Host Communities Support Program

The end of 2013 witnessed a development in UN policy towards the refugee crisis, with an increasing amount of focus on ‘development-oriented’ approaches alongside purely emergency humanitarian support.

In March 2013 the UN launched a ‘Lebanese Host Communities Support Program’ through the UNDP in collaboration with the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, which aimed to extend the refugee humanitarian response to host communities and implement initiatives aimed at improving livelihoods, income generation and services in order to promote social

⁹⁸ World Vision Lebanon and World Vision UK Advocacy Report: “Under Pressure. The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon,” July 2013, accessed 29 September 2013, 20 http://9bb63f6dda0f744fa444-9471a7fca5768cc513a2e3c4a260910b.r43.cf3.rackcdn.com/files/5413/7388/0401/Lebanon_report_under_pressure_final_v.pdf.

⁹⁹ World Vision Lebanon and World Vision UK Advocacy Report: “Under Pressure.”

cohesion and prevent conflict.¹⁰⁰ While the UNHCR and UNDP are working together to implement these initiatives, the UNDP is taking the lead, further highlighting the shift in focus from the emergency response orchestrated by the UNHCR to the longer term ‘development’ strategies typically governed by the UNDP. Indeed this cooperation between the UNDP and UNHCR is something new to the UNHCR, highlighting the new challenges posed by the Syrian refugee situation. According to the UNHCR Regional Response Plan 6, increased convergence between the humanitarian and development interventions was intended to occur in 2014, as national planning and coordination arrangements will be established by Governments. In Lebanon this will be oriented towards implementing the Stabilization and Recovery Plan, agreed with the Government,¹⁰¹ which is a UNDP initiative to “contribute to Lebanon’s stability by strengthening the resilience of the most vulnerable host communities and key national institutions linking crisis response to long-term development objectives.”¹⁰² “The preparation of the RRP6 has been coordinated with host Governments across the region whose own contributions to the refugee crisis have been the most substantial. The RRP6 budget features a special provision for Government requirements.”¹⁰³

At a meeting of 22 U.N. agencies in the Jordanian capital of Amman in November 2013, Sima Bahous, assistant secretary-general and chair of the Regional United Nations Development Group, argued “not only for expanding the scope of the collective U.N.

¹⁰⁰ “Launching of the “Lebanese Host Communities Support Programme” *UNDP*, 4 March 2013, accessed 7 April 2014, <http://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/presscenter/articles/2013/03/04/launching-of-the-lebanese-host-communities-support-programme/>.

¹⁰¹ UNHCR Monthly Update: Protection, September 2013, accessed 16 December 2014, 37 <file:///C:/Users/Helen/Downloads/ProtectionUNHCRMonthlyUpdate-Sept2013.pdf>.

¹⁰² UNDP Lebanon Stabilization and Recovery Program, Luca Renda, Country Director UNDP Lebanon, 8 January 2014.

¹⁰³ 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview, accessed 28 March 2014, 10 <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/docs/Syria-rrp6-full-report.pdf>.

response, but for making a conceptual shift in its focus as well.”¹⁰⁴ This conceptual shift envisaged “strengthening the capacity of municipalities, enabling citizens to better engage with local governments, generating employment opportunities, helping countries recover from downward economic trends and improving infrastructure and basic services.”¹⁰⁵ This idea of capacity-building – helping existing institutions, systems and national structures to function better with the long-term aim of sustainability and self-sufficiency – is a recognition that the Syrian refugee crisis will be decades long in its duration and impact.

By December 2013, the UNHCR’s strategic priorities had shifted to “strengthening outreach with refugees and host communities; empowering and promoting self-management in communities; increasing livelihood opportunities as well promoting social cohesion among Lebanese and Syrians through dialogue and community support projects.”¹⁰⁶ By March 2014, this had also included “strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Development Centres.”¹⁰⁷ In the May 2014 Inter-Agency response update, prepared by UNHCR, it described the increased focus on livelihood and community support interventions from INGOs in the form of vocational training, cash for work, and municipal infrastructure projects. “Building on its 16 community support projects implemented in 2013, the NGO ACTED has also developed a number of initiatives focusing on WASH infrastructure, school rehabilitation, and livelihoods support. This includes the construction of reservoirs, the

¹⁰⁴ Venetia Rainey, “UN shifts focus to development, but can it work?” *The Daily Star*, 4 April 2014, accessed 7 April 2014, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Apr-04/252261-un-shifts-focus-to-development-but-can-it-work.ashx#ixzz2yE66Lz7L>.

¹⁰⁵ Venetia Rainey, “UN shifts focus to development, but can it work?”

¹⁰⁶ UNHCR Monthly Update Protection-Community Development, December 2013, accessed 6 January 2014, 2 [file:///C:/Users/Helen/Downloads/Protection-CommunityDevelopmentUNHCRMonthlyUpdate-December%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Helen/Downloads/Protection-CommunityDevelopmentUNHCRMonthlyUpdate-December%20(1).pdf).

¹⁰⁷ UNHCR Monthly Update Community Development, March 2014, accessed 1 April 2014, 2 <file:///C:/Users/Helen/Downloads/5.CommunityDevelopmentUNHCRMonthlyUpdateMarch2014.pdf>.

establishment of cash for work centres, and the installation of bathroom facilities in schools.”¹⁰⁸

2. Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (December 2014)

In December 2014, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are jointly launching a new humanitarian and development appeal, The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), which sought to shift the humanitarian strategy towards longer-term programmes aimed at boosting resilience among host populations (“individuals, families, communities and institutions”¹⁰⁹) and their government institutions.¹¹⁰ As United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, pointed out in an editorial published in January 2015, “the crisis in Syria has exposed the failure of the old approach to humanitarian aid”¹¹¹ and we need “new aid architecture.”¹¹² He suggested that, as part of this new approach, “emergency relief to refugees must be accompanied with far greater support for the communities that host them” alongside greater private-sector involvement in enabling refugees with opportunities to earn a living.¹¹³

The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) is an attempt to try to implement this, by enhancing the focus on livelihoods and creating economic opportunities. As part of the

¹⁰⁸ Inter-Agency Regional Response for Syrian Refugees, 3-9 May 2014, accessed 2 June 2014, 2 <file:///C:/Users/Helen/Downloads/Inter-agencyresponseupdate-3-9May.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ 3RP: Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-16, Strategic Overview, accessed 3 February 2015, <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/the-3rp/strategic-overview/>.

¹¹⁰ UNHCR, “UN and Partners Launch Major Aid Plans for Syria and Region,” 18 December 2014, accessed 3 February 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/54929c676.html>.

¹¹¹ Guterres, “Aid in a World of Crisis,” *Today's Zaman* January 23 2015, accessed 3 February 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/op-ed_aid-in-a-world-of-crisis_370609.html.

¹¹² UNHCR, “UN and partners launch major aid plans for Syrian and region,” 18 December 2014, accessed 3 February 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/54929c676.html>.

¹¹³ Guterres, “Aid in a World of Crisis,” *Today's Zaman*, January 23 2015, accessed 3 February 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/op-ed_aid-in-a-world-of-crisis_370609.html.

program, “an additional 20.6 million people in Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt will benefit from upgrades to local infrastructure and services in areas such as health, education, water and sewage, training and capacity building of service providers, and policy and administrative support to local and national authorities.”¹¹⁴ In Lebanon, this is aimed to directly benefit 336,000 members of local Lebanese communities and indirectly benefit 1.4 million.¹¹⁵ “Harmonized planning figures and reinforced and revised coordination structures across the region are designed to ensure complementarity of support to refugees, IDPs and other vulnerable members of impacted communities across the region.”¹¹⁶

The move towards resilience building is recognition not only of the long-term nature of the Syrian refugee crisis and the inevitable detrimental impacts on the host populations but also that the notion of how best to support refugees needs reconsideration. It seems to indicate, perhaps for the first time, the awareness that the welfare of the refugee and host populations are inextricably combined and that the global humanitarian aid industry cannot solely be relied upon for financial support for refugees, but that local jobs and private-sector involvement within host communities must become more heavily embedded in the refugee welfare regime. The capacity of the host communities has become a priority.

C Understanding Conflicts within the Existing Formal Humanitarian Apparatus

The creation and implementation of new initiatives, such as the Lebanese Host Communities Support Program, and Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, is dependent on cooperation between the international, national and local levels, and their understanding of the roles they

¹¹⁴ UNHCR, “UN and partners launch major aid plans for Syrian and region,” 18 December 2014, accessed 3 February 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/54929c676.html>.

¹¹⁵ 3RP Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-2016, accessed 3 February 2015, <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/the-3rp/lebanon/>.

¹¹⁶ 3RP Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-2016.

are supposed to undertake. In spite of the growing awareness of the need to focus on host communities to assist refugees, various tensions occur between and within different actors across levels of engagement, which may test the effective implementation of macro policies. These tensions may also provide some context and possible explanation for why informal assistance is perceived and dealt with as it currently is and has been.

1. Conflicts within the International Humanitarian Apparatus

Within the international architecture, there are two interactions whose relationship directly impacts the provision of assistance to refugees – firstly the vertical hierarchy between the central headquarters of the international organizations (IOs), often based in New York, and their field offices. Secondly the horizontal network between different IO bodies, in this case particularly between the UNHCR and UNDP.

IOs are bureaucratic organizations, which may make them more efficient, rational and streamlined operators, but may also negatively impact the way they are able to implement strategies at local levels. “Bureaucracies exercise power in the world through their ability to make impersonal rules. They then use these rules not only to regulate but also to constitute and construct the social world...Bureaucracies can become obsessed with their own rules at the expense of their primary missions in ways that produce inefficient and self-defeating outcomes.”¹¹⁷ The centralised base of the UNHCR may issue mission statements which are “ambiguous and require interpretation, which staff are expected to transform into workable doctrines, procedures, and ways of acting in the world”.¹¹⁸ This directly impacts upon the way messages relayed from centralized bases are transferred into practice on the ground and

¹¹⁷ Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics*, (Oxford University Press. Ithaca and London, 2007): 3.

¹¹⁸ Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics*, (Oxford University Press. Ithaca and London, 2007): 5.

the way localised dynamics are relayed back to centralized bases. This often creates incomplete, delayed or cross-purposed information.

2. Conflict between International and National Actors

Understanding the relationship between the state and the UNHCR is significant for understanding how informal assistance is being dealt with in Lebanon since the UNHCR traditionally operates through the state. However, the working relationship between the UNHCR and the Lebanese state has been strained from the beginning of the refugee crisis owing to the government's refusal to allow the creation of refugee camps in the country. The UNHCR has also found it particularly difficult working with the Lebanese state owing to the lack of government, perceived corruption and nepotism, and competing political interests among various actors.

The history of the UNHCR is a history of states. "States created UNHCR not only for altruistic reasons, but also to promote regional and international stability."¹¹⁹ But the UNHCR was also created at a time when principles of human rights and justice played a significant role in the establishment and shaping of global institutions¹²⁰ - it has therefore faced the challenge of ensuring its own institutional survival while adapting its work to meet the opportunities and constraints posed by the changing context of world politics.¹²¹ In this sense it has been the locus of power within the international political system, and its interaction with new forms of power politics, such as decentralization and civil society will be an important area of investment and expansion.

¹¹⁹ Loescher, Betts and Milner, *The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): The politics and practices of refugee protection into the twenty-first century* (Routledge Global Institutions, 2008): 2.

¹²⁰ Loescher, Betts and Milner, *The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*, 3.

¹²¹ Loescher, Betts and Milner, *The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*.

The relationship between the UNHCR and the state has wider repercussions than refugee law – it stretches laws regarding migration and asylum seekers, peace-keeping and security, and developmental initiatives. These all pose fundamental questions of the extent to which the international community has a license, a right and an ability to impose themselves on the sovereign affairs of states. The direct interaction of the UNHCR with civil society groups both undermines the role of the national state, whilst also being ultimately constrained by it – the UNHCR can only interact with civil society regarding refugees, acting along refugee laws which have been agreed by individual nation states.

In Lebanon, the national government has tried to retain some autonomy over how it manages the Syrian refugee population, specifically who it classifies refugees, as a means to protect itself from the violence and stability from which the refugees are fleeing. In June 2014 the government took the step of giving themselves the power to strip Syrians of their refugee status. It used international law as a means to justify this, citing a section of the UN's 1951 Refugee Convention that says refugee status can be reneged when the individual concerned "voluntarily re-avail[s] himself of the protection of the country of his nationality." The government said it suspected many Syrians to be economic migrants masquerading under the protections of refugee status, and its policy ostensibly intended to isolate the former and better protect the latter.¹²² In January 2015 the government took a further step of introducing a new visa requirement for Syrians entering Lebanon which meant that, while previously Syrians could stay in Lebanon for up to six months automatically, under the new measure, they had to fulfil certain criteria in order to be granted a visa at the border.¹²³

¹²² Patrick Sykes, "Lebanon claims right to strip Syrians of refugee status", 3 June 2014, *Middle East Monitor*, accessed 3 February 2015, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/11863-lebanon-claims-right-to-strip-syrians-of-refugee-status>.

¹²³ BBC News, "Syrians entering Lebanon face new restrictions," 5 January 2015, accessed 3 February 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-30657003>.

These measures indicate the friction existing between the international humanitarian architecture and national interests, highlighting that numerous agendas, often competing, are at play which have wide ramifications for the refugee at the individual and local level.

3. Conflicts between National and Local Actors

Power relations between the centralised and local government structures, and between central government and other local and regional actors, have wide ramifications for the way that host communities are both dealt with and perceived.

The Municipality Officer voices his deep frustration with the lack of recognition afforded to his office by the international response: “The best way of distribution is through the Municipality because the Civil Community appointed them and they know exactly what’s going on.”¹²⁴ From their perspective, the international community has made clear their suspicion of corruption within all levels of Lebanese government. But the argument of the Municipality leader highlights the deep-rooted tension between sovereign power and international humanitarian intervention. The power of the Municipality lies in their intimate grasp of the situation – knowledge of numbers of refugees, location of refugees, individual personalities and needs of refugees – accrued through personal communication. The circumvention of this knowledge by the international community undermines Lebanese authority.

Another example of tension in the relationship between the national and the local is described by the Municipality Officer of one large town in Akkar, of his attempts to claim some semblance of authority. When the Lebanese Ministry of Electricity removed illegal cable lines, which Syrian refugees had been using to operate fans and breathing equipment for the

¹²⁴ Appendix, Interview 1M.

elderly, the Syrian refugees turned to the Municipality to ask for assistance. The Municipality sided with the rights of the refugees, told them to reinstate the illegal cables, and informed the Minister of Electricity that they had taken power into their own hands to directly reject the States' order. This confused chain of command and attempts by individuals to practice authority according to their own moral judgements reveals a blurred picture of power. In this case, the refugees looked to the Municipality as their protector - not the UNHCR, nor the Lebanese state, but a decentralized form of authority. The decision taken by the Municipal Principle was in direct contravention of the State's command. Ranciere recognises this particular issue of rights by highlighting that "the relation of the subject to his or her rights is....complicated and entangled"¹²⁵ and is "enacted through a double negation."¹²⁶ Rights are not only written rights, but they are also rights "of those who make something of that inscription, who decide not only to "use" their rights but also to build such and such a case for the verification of the power of the inscription."¹²⁷ The disjuncture between the public and private is crucial to understanding how rights are determined and distributed in Akkar.

The municipality is an important actor in the refugee-state-international nexus since they, theoretically, represent the state at a localised scale. However, as Carpi points out from her own fieldwork in Akkar, municipalities are never mentioned by the local community, in relation to provision of basic services. In contrast, the actions of the central state are often invoked in everyday accounts. While this may reflect negatively on the municipality – they are not considered an 'empowered' actor by their own community – in reality it saves them from the frustrations of the community which are instead directed towards the structural

¹²⁵ Ranciere, "Who is the Subject of Human Rights," in *The Obscenity of Human Rights: Violence as Symptom*, ed. Zizek (LACAN, 2005), accessed 3 February 2014 <http://www.lacan.com/zizviol.htm> 302.

¹²⁶ Ranciere, "Who is the Subject of Human Rights," 302.

¹²⁷ Ranciere, "Who is the Subject of Human Rights," 303.

weakness of the Lebanese state.¹²⁸ The municipality occupies an interesting place in the Syrian refugee crisis since it is essentially ignored by the local Lebanese community, the Lebanese state and the international humanitarian government, which has hitherto engaged relatively little with it. Their authority is best demonstrated by the subservience of little boys saluting to Municipal Police vehicles as they drive by, indicating (whether in jest or not) an adherence to at least the norms of power. But, despite its in depth knowledge of the local community (Lebanese individuals and refugees) they are not fully recognised by the international humanitarian community, and, significantly, this downgrades them in the everyday reality of the refugee – if they are not able to help the refugee with basic resources, the necessity of the refugee to recognise, and act on, their authority is diminished. This has direct longer-term ramifications for the placement of the municipality within the Lebanese state governance system.

4. Conflicts between International and Local Actors

The UNHCR has traditionally had a relationship with both state and non-state actors, who are usually professional non-governmental organizations, in order to secure the protection and welfare of refugees. But the refugee exists within political and social dynamics outside of these state and non-state organizations, and it is the everyday relationships (both positive and negative) with individual citizens (or non-citizens) which represent the majority of their life experiences as a refugee. In turn, the relationship of the refugee to the civic community, as opposed to the NGO community or the Nation State, alters that community in ways which the state or international community cannot necessarily control or manage, and which may impact on that community in ways which are detrimental to all inhabitants – not only through

¹²⁸ Carpi, “The Everyday Experience of Humanitarianism in the Akkar Villages,” *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support*, 2014, 7.

creating tensions, or exacerbating existing divisions and perceived social injustices, but also through altering the relationship of individuals to their civic, national and international governance.

As outlined in Chapter I, the working environment for international organizations in Lebanon is made more difficult by the complex political and social make-up of the Lebanese 'state,' entrenched tensions between people of different sects, political allegiances and socio-economic backgrounds, and entrenched corruption and patronage within the political hierarchy. This makes it particularly difficult for the UNHCR to reconcile working with the Lebanese state at the centralized level, with adapting to the nuanced political and social environments that exist at local levels.

Thus it is not merely a question of UNHCRs relationship with sovereignty, but also the social norms of a population, or entrenched social injustices which the UNHCR may directly or indirectly encounter, which are critical for the protection and welfare of both the refugee and host population. The refugee issue has forced many to recognize that the basic unit of analysis in international relations, "the state" is no longer wholly adequate as an explanatory or predictive tool. This necessitates taking greater account of those networks and political realities existing outside and within the state structure, such as the host community within which the refugee exist.

The question of whether 'private' everyday humanitarianism practiced by hosting individuals can ever be recognised by the public sphere was raised in a working paper commissioned by the UNHCR itself. It decried the lack of recognition of 'Southern' humanitarian responses, arguing that: "despite the fact that hosting has been a feature of human responses to displacement for many years, it has remained largely invisible to humanitarian theorists. The household, and work or services performed within the 'home,' have traditionally been

conceptualized in Northern thought as constituting the ‘feminine’ private sphere.”¹²⁹ The paper went on to call for greater recognition of ‘private’ humanitarianism as being a vital, and unrecognised, source of assistance.

In many cases the individual feels compelled, by personal morals or religion, to assist refugees because they feel that the refugees are not receiving adequate support from other sources. This either results from a ‘positive’ motivation (the desire to ‘help’), or a more negative response which links humanitarianism with security and recognises the benefit of assisting refugees in order to maintain stability (Derrida has termed this “unwilling hospitality”¹³⁰). In either case, on display here is the individual taking collective responsibility into his or her own hands, through a private, rather than public, manner.

The UNHCR creates an appearance of power amongst its potential beneficiaries, probably unintentionally, through hearsay, ambiguity, ignorance or misreading. This appearance is necessary for the UNHCR,¹³¹ which relies on its symbolic importance to assert its authority amongst the refugee population. It is powerful both as a result of the legal authority invested in it by the international community, and also of the performance of power, which increases its visibility in the consciousness of the refugee. Resentment against the UNHCR is fostered if it appears to favour certain people over others; logistical confusion can occur if it fails to follow up on perceived promises. The Municipality Officer of one large town in Akkar gave an example of the UNHCR indicating that Syrians would get aid for rent without following this up, thus leading to issues between the landlords and tenants. The issue here was not only in the failure to provide rent but in the broken bond of trust which the UNHCR had sought to

¹²⁹ Carpi, “The Everyday Experience of Humanitarianism in the Akkar Villages,” *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support*, 2014, 16.

¹³⁰ Derrida, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford, USA, Stanford University Press, 2000).

¹³¹ As documented in the 2010 Introductory note to the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees – “In view of the increasing recognition of the fundamental significance of the Convention and the Protocol for the protection of refugees and for the establishment of minimum standards for their treatment, it is important that their provisions be known as widely as possible, both by refugees and by all those concerned with refugee problems” UNHCR Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 5.

create. He also described how one Syrian man was confirmed to receive \$900 assistance from the UNHCR, because he had a problem with his leg, but was disqualified for assistance because he didn't collect the payment on the correct day. Such examples illustrate miscommunication or disorganized within the UNHCR, alongside a lack of empathy during aid distribution.

NGOs other than the UNHCR are frequently ignored by refugees when describing (or bemoaning) their lack of assistance. In addition to having a lack of coverage in some towns in Akkar (from the evidence of refugees), smaller scale NGOs have gained a very bad reputation for unfair distribution methods. A significant proportion of refugees complain that "if you are not a young and pretty woman," and don't get "up close and personal" with aid workers, the chances of receiving aid are diminished. Many refugees have stories to tell about "seeing young women in cars with NGO workers and then getting large amounts of assistance." While it is impossible to corroborate these reports, the frequency with which they are mentioned by male and female refugees, and the Municipality Officer, is striking and indicates the power of negative perceptions. They may also be an example of refugees trying to reassert their own agency and self-worth by placing themselves in a position (whether real or imagined) of being able to judge their benefactors, and choose whether or not to accept their assistance. Many refugees avoid trying to get assistance from these sources as a result of their perceptions, thereby reasserting their own agency.

The power of the NGO is exercised not only through its mission statements or international reputation (it's external 'branding'), but in the way individual employees exercise their authority on the ground. This is impossible to monitor or properly control. It highlights that the NGO must not be viewed as a 'black box' of assistance applied through strict adherence to a framework of objectives but rather as a collection of individuals, often working under stressful circumstances, who are prone to exercise their own judgements through constructed

identities. For some NGO workers, the disempowered refugee is an object on which to exert authority or exploit – in this instance, refugees are identified less through need and vulnerability and more through attractiveness and openness to manipulation. Motives for distributing aid are mixed up with personal agendas.

D The Impact of the Conflicts within the Formal Humanitarian Apparatus on Perceptions of Informal Assistance

In the context of humanitarian assistance for refugees in Akkar, the ‘political’, in the sense of institutionalized governance, has been negated, as the international assistance offered by the UNHCR circumvents localised Lebanese government authority. The Municipality Office is used neither to channel funds, nor to provide logistical support. Thus the international humanitarian community, despite its apolitical appearance, imposes its own politics, and the public space within Akkar is devoid of direct Lebanese state political interference. This allows the social – the intra-family resentments, religious divisions and debilitating impositions of identity – free reign to exert itself in the public space. Whilst the Municipal Office claims that one of the two duties left to it is the maintenance of peace and reduction of tensions between the Syrian and Lebanese, this peace is already exercised in part by the individual. One Syrian man explains that it was his landlady and neighbour who saved him when a gang of Lebanese men started swarming and threatening him; and it is individual antagonisms and injustices which often form the foundation for collective strife. The extrapolation of private concerns between individuals to the public sphere makes the administration of assistance highly political. Resentment and squabbles between individuals over employment; or cultural stereotypes fostered by individuals about nationality and religion fostered through recent and ongoing events (such as the Lebanese War 1975-1990

and the current Syrian conflict) become transposed from a private to a public concern and impact the way refugees are perceived and the subsequent assistance they receive.

Lebanese friends and relatives remain the key group within the network of humanitarian assistance, who are either ignored or taken for granted by formal distribution of assistance. Without the willingness of Lebanese people to either host family, or provide accommodation with a reduced rent, the number of refugees requiring urgent assistance from the international community may be increased, by a very rough estimate, ten-fold. The motives of the Lebanese people are mixed between personal humanitarianism and moral responsibility, religious motivation, assisting family members or friends, self-interest in collective security or exploitation. The act of hospitality should not be glorified too hastily since it is, itself, a highly political act. Indeed, as pointed out by Carpi, the idea of hospitality is often used by the Lebanese as a “moral tool”¹³² to exert some form of dominance over their guests by exhibiting the ‘dignity’ of Akkar residents. Equally it is hard to disentangle the act of hospitality with wider political sentiment, particularly in the specific context of the complex Syrian civil war – again according to Carpi, “a segment of Syrian refugees see hospitality as an expression of the great empathy of Akkar’s people towards the Syrian cause, which had deep historical roots in the years of Assad’s military presence in the region.”¹³³ These views should not be extrapolated to anything representative. Nevertheless, they highlight that every act of assistance is given as a result of personal motivations. They also demonstrate that the construction of the refugee identity is rooted within individual circumstances and dynamics between individuals.

¹³² Carpi, “The Everyday Experience of Humanitarianism in the Akkar Villages,” *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support*, 2014, 10.

¹³³ Carpi, “The Everyday Experience of Humanitarianism in the Akkar Villages,” 10.

E Concluding Comments

This chapter has highlighted that the resilience and capacity of host communities has become a central tenet of the international humanitarian architecture in dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis. This indicates recognition that not only is the welfare of the host communities intrinsically important for the response to refugee crises, but also that the current international humanitarian architecture is unable to deal with such crises by themselves, neither financially nor practically, and they must embrace more devolved initiatives. However, host communities are often viewed through the thicket of a battlefield by other actors, and this can alter the way in which they are perceived by these other levels. For instance, at the macro international level, understanding of highly localised dynamics which affect the implementation and effectiveness of assistance is often neither communicated nor understood; relations between the international and the national operate through their own politics and agendas; relations between the national and the local are often constrained by embedded flaws which are often exacerbated rather than alleviated by such crises. These different, simultaneous, battles, occurring between and within levels may have the effect of obscuring realities on the ground, or making it difficult to directly respond to those realities on the ground.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: THE ROLE OF HOST COMMUNITIES IN ASSISTING SYRIAN REFUGEES AND WIDER IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNHCR

A The Role of Host Communities in Refugee Assistance

The role of Lebanese host communities in assisting Syrian refugees in Akkar region, North Lebanon, displays a remarkable example of collective individual humanitarianism, which is noteworthy for its extent, its impact on the experience of the refugee, and its potential impact on the future of refugee planning. In attempting to situate the role of the host community within a broader framework of all assistance provided to the Syrian refugee population it is apparent that the nuanced roles of the host, the refugee and the ‘aid-giver’ has much to add to the debate about the future of refugee assistance, particularly in relation to the UNHCR.

The Syrian crisis finds the UNHCR placed at a precarious juncture of its life, in a world struggling to find a balance between sovereign power, international institutions and private actors. This is a world which the UNHCR has hitherto navigated well, placing their core mandate of protection for the refugee above other internal or external power interests.

The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon is noteworthy for several reasons, all of which shed a different angle on the prioritisations and operations of the UNHCR alongside other humanitarian actors. The reasons span the complex identities of Syrian refugee populations; the peculiar history between Syria and Lebanon; the fragile nature of the Lebanese state; the early decision not to house refugees in camps leading to enforced ‘temporary’ integration; and the extraordinary individual assistance displayed by the host population. These

circumstances pose a number of pertinent questions of the UNHCR in the 21st century, including its identification of ‘refugees’ in complex circumstances; its dealing with sovereign bodies; and its evolving methods of aid distribution which, if involving decentralization, may have wider repercussions on the act of humanitarianism. These questions are significant in how they relate to the ‘core mandates’ of the UNHCR, of protection and ‘durable solutions’ for the refugee.

The role of host communities should not be overly glorified – the actions of individuals offering personal humanitarian support represents only one story of multiple responses to the refugee influx, others of which are antagonistic or ambivalent. Nor should it be assumed that the host community response is the ‘optimum’ – if other options for refugee support existed, they would be sought. Host communities are stepping in to fill a void in support, rather than providing an additional service. Nevertheless, the innovative operations of host individuals and the evidence of the extent of individual humanitarian sympathy are important phenomena to emerge from the Syrian refugee influx.

The question of how individual humanitarian sympathy can be more efficiently harnessed is a pressing one for the 21st century, and has great import across all humanitarian fields, particularly in the act of human rights and ‘development’ work. In the refugee debate it has important ramifications both for the mode of assisting refugees (the manner in which aid is distributed) and longer term resolutions to the protracted refugee situation – if integration can be said to be successful, it becomes a more feasible official solution. For the latter point, its success would be contingent on how ‘long’ humanitarian sympathy lasts – whether its life span simply extends to the end of an ‘emergency’ period and wanes when a situation becomes protracted and embedded, or whether it has a more pervasive existence. This has important implications for the potential uptake of ‘integration’ as a permanent solution to the refugee problem as well as for sustainable development discourse. History would indicate that

the former, shorter lifespan is more accurate – memory, particularly inter-generational memory, can be fickle, and tensions between historically disparate groups sharing geographically concentrated resources are globally pervasive today. Once refugees are no longer seen as befitting pity, they largely become an economic drain and threat to the political and social status quo. The question then switches to a national concern.

Host community support is notable since it disrupts notions of hierarchical power structures, and provides a persuasive picture instead of horizontal networks of support and knowledge, which either operates autonomously from, or alongside more ‘formal’ vertical structures. Many Lebanese individuals offering support were offering it as a result of one-to-one interactions, either with family members or individual previously unknown refugees – they are operating independently of the Municipality, the government or any other institutionalised structures. Individual humanitarian initiatives, which are motivated by reciprocity or mutual understanding, highlight the possibility of a humanitarianism which moves away from paternalism or patronage and instead focuses on a more equal power dynamic between giver and receiver. This moves closer to the concept of ‘hospitality’ envisioned by Wilson, as a means the ‘protect the unprotected’ by “conceiving the relationship between state and individual in more fluid, mutually beneficial and mutually obligated ways.”¹³⁴ Wilson argues for a manner of protection which does not place the rights of individuals and the rights of states in opposition to one another, but rather sees them as relational. Her analysis could be extended further by looking at the relation of refugees to individuals within host countries, and her thesis is bolstered by the attitudes of Lebanese host individuals researched within the geographical area of Akkar.

¹³⁴ Wilson, “Protecting the Unprotected – Reconceptualising Refugee Protection through the Notion of Hospitality,” *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* vol. 8, 2010: 100-122.

In many respects, the host community of Akkar displays many of the characteristics described by Marcel Mauss in “The Gift” – “much of our everyday morality is concerned with the question of obligation and spontaneity in the gift.”¹³⁵ The “social cell” which Mauss desires is present in the bonds of exchange and individual humanitarianism displayed in Akkar. This ‘social cell’ “seeks the individual in a curious frame of mind in which the sentiments of its own laws are mingled with other, purer sentiments: charity, social service and solidarity. The theme of the gift, [is] of freedom and obligation in the gift, of generosity and self-interest in giving.”¹³⁶ These notions of reciprocal ‘exchange’, rather than top-down beneficence practiced by the development industry, are beginning to permeate concepts of aid giving – South-South development cooperation, such as that practiced by China and India, rejects hierarchical ‘donor-recipient’ relationships and insists on mutual opportunities¹³⁷. Not enough work has focused on how this form of assistance might be practiced in every-day situations, whether it is something which can be fostered and channelled or whether it will always remain spontaneous and organic by the nature of it operating through individuals.

According to Snyder, strategies of humanitarianism can be divided, broadly, into two dimensions “The first dimension is whether they are apolitical or political. ‘Apolitical’ actions are those that are not intended to alter the governance arrangements that are hypothesized to be the cause of suffering, and political actions are those that are intended to do so”. The second dimension concerns whether the goals of humanitarianism are modest or ambitious – “some try to change the incentives and constraints facing local actors in significant ways; others work largely within the parameters of the existing circumstances”.¹³⁸ For ‘refugee humanitarianism’, or that humanitarianism which seeks to look after the welfare of the

¹³⁵ Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (WW Norton, 1954): 63.

¹³⁶ Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, 66.

¹³⁷ Mawdesley, “The Changing Geographies of Foreign Aid and Development Cooperation: Contributions from gift theory,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37, no 2, (2012): 256-272.

¹³⁸ Snyder, “Realism, Refugees and Strategies of Humanitarianism,” in *Refugees in International Relations*, eds. Betts and Loescher (Oxford University Press, USA, 2010): 39.

refugee, the goal has often been short-term oriented, supposedly neutral (apolitical) and often targeted at one specific group – refugees. Aid is channelled to deal with an ‘aberration’ to the system, with the intention that the system will be returned to ‘normal’ once durable solutions are found for the refugee population – these solutions have traditionally been repatriation or resettlement. By working along these lines refugee humanitarianism has often been detached from the local settings in which refugees are embedded – this is particularly the case if refugees are housed in camps.

The example of host communities spontaneously adding their individual support to collective humanitarianism distorts this previous detachment from incorporating localised settings into refugee humanitarianism. It emphasises the greater sustainability of refugee humanitarianism channelled through existing structures within a host setting. The relational basis for viewing the refugee within a community has implications for the manner in which aid to refugees is distributed. It blurs the boundary between the ‘guest’ and ‘host’, or the ‘disempowered’ and ‘empowered’ and allows for greater flexibility over who ‘deserves’ assistance, which encompasses vulnerable members of the host community alongside the refugee population. In this respect it interrupts fixed notions of humanitarianism –the contemporary discourse of humanitarianism produces two kinds of actors: those who are subjects, who are good, who are expected to prevent human suffering, and who have the tools of emancipation; and those who are objects, whose humanity is to be secured or restored, and who are judged incapable of helping themselves.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Moulin and Nyers, “We Live in a Country of UNHCR”-Refugee Protests and Global Political Society. *International Political Sociology* 1, no. 4 (2007): 356-372.

B Implications of Host Community Assistance for the UNHCR

The response of the Lebanese host community to the Syrian crisis has three important implications for the future of the UNHCR. Firstly it contributes to the debate over the UNHCR core mandate of ‘protection’ by blurring identities of those in need of protection (such as refugees, Syrian migrants and vulnerable members of host communities); secondly it raises distinct possibilities over potential solutions to the protracted refugee problem by increasing the feasibility of a form of integration; thirdly it highlights the need for a shift in the relationship which has traditionally been exclusive between the UNHCR and the sovereign state, and which should be more willing to embrace civil society groups and other individual actors within a state into refugee planning.

The Syrian refugee crisis is the biggest major international refugee crisis in decades and provides a metre against which to analyse the evolving workings of the UNHCR.¹⁴⁰ Of particular note here is the manner in which the UNHCRs core mandate is enacted in coordination with other remits, the situation of the ‘right’ of the refugee in this crisis, and how leading international humanitarian communities have dealt with the decentralized coping mechanisms which are occurring across Lebanon. Traditionally, the UNHCR is not an ‘aid distributor’. They were set up in 1951, with a three year mandate, as an institution intended to deal with a specific phenomenon (the post World War II refugee population) within a specific geographical area at a specific time. They were a ‘protective’ institution with the sole mandate of providing legal protection to the refugee population. Since then, its remit has extended to include more developmental approaches to ‘protecting’ the refugee, incorporating social and material welfare alongside legal protective mechanisms. Today they are placed in a more precarious position owing to the variety of responsibilities they are

¹⁴⁰ Although it should be noted the huge volume of refugees worldwide in 2014 including 2.5 million from Afghanistan, 1.1 million from Somalia and 650,000 from Sudan, according to the UNHCR.

perceived to be in command of. Betts and Loescher suggest that the increasing numbers of refugees in protracted refugee situations and the duration of their exile demonstrate the ongoing relevance of UNHCR's core mandate and the need to reinvigorate its focus on its central responsibilities rather than expanding into new and potentially contradictory areas."¹⁴¹

1. Who to Protect

There is substantial debate about the meaning and extent of 'protection', as outlined in the Refugee Convention and its relationship with various other human right instruments, such as Article 14 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that every person has the right to seek and enjoy asylum.¹⁴² Broadly there are two main approaches to this debate – that taken by scholars and activists, seeking to expand the current Refugee Conventions' focus on persecution, and that taken by policy analysts who argue for a contraction of the existing definition of a refugee, to make protection mechanisms more meaningful in practice.

The, often involuntary, integration of Syrian refugees into Lebanese host communities highlights the dilemmas of the protection debate. On the one hand, the crisis has demonstrated that 'vulnerable populations' are not confined to refugees, and that some members of the host population may often be in a more precarious position as a result of the current distribution of 'protection rights'. On the other hand, the fluid nature of the refugee presence in Akkar, in terms of their cohabitation with Lebanese hosts, highlights the difficulties of implementing current protective mechanisms in day-to-day situations.

¹⁴¹ Loescher, Betts and Milner, *The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): The politics and practices of refugee protection into the twenty-first century* (Routledge Global Institutions, 2008): 123.

¹⁴² Wilson, "Protecting the Unprotected: Reconceptualising refugee protection through the notion of hospitality," *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* 8 (2010): 100-122.

Today the refugee represents the face of humanitarianism. Asylum space meant specifically for refugees is, theoretically, protected, and recognition of their unique trauma is institutionalised. Erika Feller, Director of the Department of International Protection, UNHCR, clearly articulated this much in her 2005 presentation “Refugees are not Migrants,”¹⁴³ in which she argued “as long as categorization is important to the recognition of rights and responsibilities, there should be no confusion between categories.” The key argument here is the apportioning of certain rights to certain categorisation; but while this has obvious benefits, its consequences have been less positive for both the refugee and the migrant.

Categorization is bound up with rights and morality. As Taylor writes in “The Politics of Recognition”, how “a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves.”¹⁴⁴ The refugee occupies a limbo identity which is controlled by others. Not only this, the limbo within which they exist is assumed to be fixed, and the two points between which they occupy (the state and the stateless) are taken to be natural and self-evident. Humanitarianism is also a lens created within this dominant paradigm, and is equally ill-equipped to deal with the apparent ‘aberration’ of the refugee. As a result of this problem, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has asked us to abandon the basic concepts in which we have represented political subjects up until now (man and citizen, the sovereign worker, the worker) and reconstruct our political philosophy beginning with the unique subject of the refugee. “The refugee should be considered for what he is – nothing less

¹⁴³ Feller, “Refugees are not Migrants,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2005): 27-35.

¹⁴⁴ Taylor, *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition*, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992).

than a border concept that radically calls into question the principles of the nation-state and helps clear the field for renewal of categories.”¹⁴⁵

But these insights fail to take into consideration the relatively recent phenomena of the ‘humanitarian subject’ – an individual who is categorised by their need of rescuing, in opposition to their rights as individuals. The refugee falls into this category, whilst the migrant does not. The refugee must be ‘saved’, according to this paradigm, because, in moral terms, he has been forced into a position not of his choosing, and been made vulnerable because of this fact – it therefore becomes the collective moral duty of the international community to rescue him from the unhappy social, economic and political destitution he may have become vulnerable to. This fact is unarguable. But for Arendt the actualization of the ‘right to have rights’ for each individual entails the establishment of republican polities in which the equality of each is guaranteed by the recognition of all; the identity of the refugee proves problematic here. If the refugee is forever *recognised* as the refugee, he is forced into a power-balance in which he loses agency. The refugee is burdened by his identity and is no longer a truly liberal subject.

The position of ‘citizen of the humanitarian community’ does not exist in Kant and Arendt’s discussion of rights and membership. When Kant discusses the right of humanity to impose a reciprocal obligation on each of us to enter into civil society, he was writing before the time in which an individual could be part of a humanitarian society instead of a civic society. In Arendtian language, the right of humanity entitles us to become a member of civil society such that we can then be entitled to juridico-civil rights; but the right of the refugee does not extend to such an inclusion in civic society. The international humanitarian community is intended to exist to mop up those individuals who have been abandoned by their state in a violent manner and provide them with a degree of protection. But in doing so it negates the

¹⁴⁵ Agamben, “We Refugees,” *Symposium*, 2, no 49 (Summer 1995): 114-119.

role of the state to invest the rights of man into an individual. And it is only the state that can divest the refugee of their identity once they return to a sovereign protection.

The refugee is in a trap here. They are the (presumably grateful) recipient of the humanitarian community's protection but they are also stuck in an artificial situation where rights are unequally distributed and the worth of the rights of one individual is prized more highly than another. Being placed under the protection of the humanitarian community has created an imbalance in which they can no longer be recognized as a member of any other juridico-civil community. Their protection is tainted by a 'Midas touch' of humanitarianism. "Unlike earlier versions of human rights to sought to hasten to advance of social equality, today's commitment to human rights often seeks to postpone large-scale redistribution," suggests Meister. Humanitarianism seeks to exercise justice, but bestows heavy burdens on its subjects by the very fact of turning everything to gold. The migrant worker faces the opposite concern; he has been abandoned by the humanitarian community and is not a 'humanitarian subject'. He more closely fits the traits of the individual who Arendt and Kant are trying to discern the rights of. But precisely because he does not have the 'support' of the humanitarian community, to the same extent as the refugee, he also finds himself in a trap. Neither bestowed with a moral 'right' to benevolence, but yet often still rejected from membership of juridico-civil communities, he exists in a limbo state of ambiguous rights.

2. Durable Solutions to the Refugee Problem

The 'temporary integration' of the Syrian population into the Lebanese communities was an involuntary consequence of the Lebanese government's decision not to enforce refugee camps. It was not necessarily an a priori desired solution, and nor is it desirable to either the Lebanese or Syrian populations. But camps are also rejected by the majority of the Lebanese

population who, while recognizing their greater facilitation of aid distribution, fear their repercussions.

There is an ongoing debate about the merits between durable solutions to refugee problems – traditionally assumed to be resettlement in a third country, local integration, or voluntary repatriation.¹⁴⁶ Presently voluntary repatriation is regarded to be the most desirable option, and the most desired by refugees, although disagreement exists about how this might be feasibly achieved – in many of the regions from which refugees originate, the nation state was never a coherent historical or political proposition, and state institutions remain relatively weak. In both developed and developing host countries, the preference is for temporary protection and restrictions on refugees, including encampment, until repatriation takes place.¹⁴⁷ Bradley produces interesting work about the relationship between repatriation, political membership and sovereign power.¹⁴⁸ This demonstrates blurred lines between host countries, countries of origin and the limbo spaces in between; and demonstrates further that little academic work currently focuses on the act of *short-term* integration amongst host communities (which represents the current situation in Lebanon). The issue of solutions refugee displacement during protracted conflict has not been adequately resolved in the UNHCRs life. Betts and Loescher highlight this gap and urge the UNHCR to think “creatively about viable alternatives to repatriation.”¹⁴⁹ They suggest that “rather than resorting to long-term encampment, UNHCR needs to develop ways—such as through an integrated development approach that benefits both refugees and host populations—so that

¹⁴⁶ Chimni, *International Refugee Law: A Reader* (SAGE India, 2000).

¹⁴⁷ Jacobsen “The Forgotten Solution: Local integration for refugees in developing countries,” *UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research, Working Paper* no. 45 (2001).

¹⁴⁸ Bradley, “Rethinking Refugeehood: Statelessness, repatriation and refugee agency,” *Review of International Studies* (2013): 1-23.

¹⁴⁹ Loescher, Betts and Milner, *The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): The politics and practices of refugee protection into the twenty-first century*, (Routledge Global Institutions, 2008): 125.

self-sufficiency projects or permanent local integration can be made viable and attractive to host states.”¹⁵⁰

Refugees are de facto integrated when they: are not in physical danger; are not confined to camps or settlements and have the right to return to their home country; are able to sustain livelihoods through access to land or employment, and can support themselves and their families; have access to education or vocational training, health facilities and housing; are socially networked into the host community (intermarriage is common) and there is little distinction between refugees’ and hosts’ standard of living.¹⁵¹ Some Syrian individuals in Lebanon can be considered integrated according to these criteria – this is largely, but not wholly class dependent. Those Syrians with good social networks and financial security may have found it easier to enter into mid to high-wage jobs and live a similar lifestyle to that enjoyed in Syria, but lower-skilled individuals have also been able to slip into the Lebanese job-market and subsist on lower wages. The problems of job-saturation associated with the refugee influx are not concerns unique to the refugee population but to the Lebanese host population – solutions must encompass both groups.

C Lessons from the Role of Host Communities in Assisting Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

1. Private Enterprise

The coordination of business and humanitarianism is a burgeoning trajectory of ‘development’ thinking. The private sector has much to offer aid distribution, particularly with regards to refugee populations, both in assistance and in leveraging private service

¹⁵⁰ Loescher, Betts and Milner, *The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): The politics and practices of refugee protection into the twenty-first century* (Routledge Global Institutions, 2008): 125.

¹⁵¹ Jacobsen, “The Forgotten Solution: Local integration for refugees in developing countries,” *UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research, Working Paper* no. 45 (2001).

providers to contribute to the host country economy.¹⁵² Zyck has written an Overseas Development Institute policy report about the extent to which private enterprise is already highly embedded in the refugee response - “without private enterprise, the response to the Syrian refugee crisis in places like Jordan would be a shadow of its current size and complexity”¹⁵³ – and yet how this field is neither recognized nor utilized further by aid officials or policy advocates. He describes how “one foreign aid official, when asked if the role of the private sector had arisen during an international event on assistance to Syrian refugees, noted: 'we were talking about humanitarian aid...it had nothing to do with business or the private sector'.”¹⁵⁴

As Zyck goes on to argue, “the lack of consideration and engagement with the private sector beyond traditional buyer-supplier relationships is hindering aid efforts and reducing aid effectiveness in some instances”. He describes miscommunication over mobile money transfer system scheme as being emblematic of the disjuncture between aid agencies and private businesses which, if remedied, would be mutually beneficial. “One NGO discussed how it could work to develop a mobile money transfer system despite the far greater capacity of large telecommunications firms in the region which had already dedicated technological expertise to developing such platforms – and, crucially, political clout to ensure the appropriate regulatory framework was in place. In another instance, a humanitarian organisation paid mobile phone companies to provide free SIM cards and text message plans to refugees, unaware that these companies had long been doing essentially the same – in

¹⁵² Zyck and Armstrong, “Humanitarian Crisis, Emergency Preparedness and Response: The role of business and the private sector,” September 2013, *Overseas Development Institute* (2014).

¹⁵³ Zyck and Armstrong, “Humanitarian Crisis, Emergency Preparedness and Response.”

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Zyck “The Humanitarian Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis Must Not Ignore the Private Sector,” 11 November 2013, accessed 18 February 2014, <http://www.odi.org.uk/opinion/7979-private-sector-humanitarian-syria-aid>.

order to gain customers – free of charge. That is, the aid companies offered to pay for something which was already in businesses’ financial interest to do for free.”¹⁵⁵

Many of the technological, engineering and logistical hurdles that aid agencies face can be addressed – whether on a commercial or charitable basis – by private firms. One example of humanitarian-private sector collaboration is in the use of ATMs. “UNHCR joined with Cairo Amman Bank to introduce ATM cards to transfer cash to Syrian refugees to defray costs associated with, most notably, rental housing. The ATMs use iris scans to identify customers rather than traditional cards and PIN codes, thus allowing refugees to access their money in a secure way without having to keep track of a card and number. While it is a commercial arrangement for which the aid community pays the bank, transferring money in this cost-effective manner helps to control implementation costs, which would be far higher if aid workers had to provide new pre-paid debit cards on a regular basis.”¹⁵⁶

Further, refugees are beginning to be recognized for their entrepreneurial resources rather than their drain on a host economy. In Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya, refugee-run businesses, of which there are 5,000 according to a UN High Commissioner for Refugees spokesperson, bring in an annual revenue of 2 billion shillings (\$25 million)¹⁵⁷. In Kampala, capital of Uganda, a report finds the majority of refugees surveyed were making a living in the private sector, largely through self-employment¹⁵⁸. This report concluded that refugees must be situated in the markets in which their economic activities take place in order to comprehend the nature of the livelihoods; that employment and livelihood opportunities can be generated from various actors in the private sector; and that refugees make multiple

¹⁵⁵ Zyck, “The Humanitarian Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis Must Not Ignore the Private Sector.”

¹⁵⁶ Zyck, “The Humanitarian Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis Must Not Ignore the Private Sector.”

¹⁵⁷ Farah, “Entrepreneurship in the World’s Largest Refugee Camp”, March 2013, accessed 18 April 2014, <http://www.pennsid.org/2013/03/entrepreneurship-in-the-worlds-largest-refugee-camp/>.

¹⁵⁸ Omata, “Refugee Livelihoods and the Private Sector: Ugandan case study,” *Working Paper Series* No 86, (November 2012): 12-13.

contributions to the host economy¹⁵⁹. However, the report also concludes that the private sector should not degrade the importance of humanitarian intervention.

2. Decentralization

The Issam Fares Institute, affiliated with the American University of Beirut, published a report which called for the reconfiguring of current refugee relief mechanisms through greater decentralization, specific to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. The report suggested enabling decentralized local authorities to lead the process Crisis Management Teams (CMTs), part of regional government (Mohafazat) councils, which will be responsible for collaborating with national and international agencies, planning and monitoring relief projects. The paper also recommends engaging refugees in municipal public works along ecological lines, as a means to highlight self-reliance among the refugees' communities and to alleviate rising tensions among refugees and the host communities.

The report suggests that the Regional governments (Mohafazat) should be harnessed more to implement response plans to seven key areas – information management and coordination, WASH, Child Protection and Gender based Violence, Distribution of Food and Non-food items, Education, Health and Supporting Host Communities. They suggest that the Council of Mohafaza Team (CMT) will chair coordination meetings with donors and relief agencies, and will allocate defined tasks to its supportive units to implement relief projects in partnership with the municipalities that host refugees.¹⁶⁰ They suggest a transfer of knowledge between the UN and the CMT, which will become embedded and sustained by integrating individual unit managers into the institutional framework of the Regional Councils and eventually take a

¹⁵⁹ Omata, "Refugee Livelihoods and the Private Sector: Ugandan case study," *Working Paper Series* No 86, (November 2012,): 24-25.

¹⁶⁰ Shibli, "Reconfiguring Relief Mechanisms: The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon." *Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs* (February 2014): 12.

lead in planning, implementing and monitoring developmental projects. Implicit in this report is the necessity for a more nuanced understanding of host communities – in their capacity to channel refugee assistance through and their ability to make empowered decisions about their own fate regarding the future of refugees within their country.

3. ‘Informal networks’ of Host Communities

Beggs et al. draw attention to the development of the social support of network analysis, which has demonstrated that people operating outside the professional and bureaucratic arenas are beneficial in times of crises. They highlight that support researchers have begun to move away from sociologies that decontextualise the individual by emphasizing the constraining and enabling aspects of the social structures that are produced and reproduced by individuals in their everyday lives. They emphasize multiple types of support offered, for different motivations (emotional aid, instrumental aid),¹⁶¹ and conclude that situational contingencies, such as local community context, receipt of formal support, and personal networks, must be considered simultaneously when analysing the role of individuals in the support process. In a separate discussion relating to aid dispersal, Barder notes the need for a “collaborative” market for aid, to include, amongst other things, unbundling funding from aid management to create more explicit markets; better information gathered from the intended beneficiaries of aid; and decentralized decision-making about aid spending¹⁶². This analysis has much to offer studies of refugee support networks, particularly notions of burden sharing among host populations within one state, and between NGOs, the state and the host community. However, it draws attention to the current lack of empirical or theoretical work

¹⁶¹ Beggs, Haines and Hurlbert, “Situational Contingencies Surrounding the Receipt of Informal Support,” *Social Forces* 75, no. 1 (1996): 203.

¹⁶² Barder, “Beyond Planning: Markets and networks for better aid,” *Center for Global Development Working Paper* 185, (2009): 2.

concerned with dissecting the existence of, or potential for, informal assistance for refugees at localised scales.

There is scarce literature regarding the role, or potential future capacity of host communities in accommodating and dealing with refugees, although there is a large body of work in ‘disaster management’ literature regarding ‘informal’ humanitarian actors. Kelley points out that an increasing number of industrialised states are expressing an interest in comprehensive strategies to strengthen protection capacities of host countries (such as building asylum systems, providing support for migration management, and targeting development assistance for refugees and local communities)¹⁶³. She highlights a number of international agreements intended to strengthen these capacities – such as the special fund created by the EU in 2004 for ‘Co-operation with Third Countries in the area of migration’, which was designed to finance projects to strengthen capacity of hosting countries to protect refugees. Working from a similar perspective, Betts discusses the ‘public goods theory’ in relation to sharing the burden of refugees between states. He praises the value of public goods theory in assessing burden-sharing since it allows consideration of both cost distribution and benefit distribution and therefore permits an assessment of the type of incentives that are required to induce provision.¹⁶⁴

D Conclusion: The Impact of Host Community Assistance

The role played by the host communities in providing assistance (in the form of rent, money-lending, and subsidies) is acknowledged in some NGO reports, but there is a disconnect between acknowledging its existence and understanding the implications of its presence.

¹⁶³ Kelley, “International Refugee Protection Challenges and Opportunities,” *International Journal of Refugee Law* 19, no 3 (2007): 401-439.

¹⁶⁴ Betts, “Public Goods Theory and the Provision of Refugee Protection: The Role of the Joint-Product Model in Burden-Sharing Theory,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 16, no. 3 (2003): 274-296.

In their October 2012 Monthly Overview, UNHCR described how “a number of NGOs, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and the local community have been providing basic assistance such as food, tents and mattresses to families in the Masharie El Qaa area between the Syrian and Lebanese border.”¹⁶⁵ In the same month they also noted that “support continues to Lebanese hosting families who have graciously opened their homes to refugees”. At this time, as the report described “close to 50% of refugee families live in host homes, adding to the urgency in finding alternative shelter solutions given that many local Lebanese have been hosting since the onset of the conflict and are now feeling fatigued.”¹⁶⁶ However there were no exact details provided for what the ‘support’ referenced here by the UNHCR entailed.

Many examples in policy reports of support offered by host communities are piece-meal, making it difficult to form a picture of what proportion this support actually makes up. World Vision gave a case study of ‘host assistance’ in their July 2013 report “Under Pressure.” They introduced Samer, a Lebanese pharmacist who has set up a medical aid organisation in his village, Saadneyil, to deal with Syrian refugees.¹⁶⁷ According to his interview in the report, he deals with over 400 patients per week and gives patients a voucher that entitles them to a 20 per cent discount on prescriptions at his pharmacy. However, there is little indication of the proportion of assistance offered to refugees by host communities, or acknowledgement that these host community initiatives are vitally important within the landscape of assistance offered by all actors.

¹⁶⁵ UNHCR Monthly Update Overview, October 2012, accessed 9 September 2013, 3
<http://www.unhcr.org/509784ab9.html>.

¹⁶⁶ UNHCR Monthly Update Overview, October 2012, accessed 9 September 2013, 6
<http://www.unhcr.org/509784ab9.html>.

¹⁶⁷ World Vision Lebanon and World Vision UK Advocacy Report, “Under Pressure. The impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on host communities in Lebanon,” July 2013, accessed 8 September 2013, 6
http://9bb63f6dda0f744fa444-9471a7fca5768cc513a2e3c4a260910b.r43.cf3.rackcdn.com/files/5413/7388/0401/Lebanon_report_under_pressure_final_v.pdf.

Overall in Lebanon, from policy reports it can be gathered that host communities are perceived as key to the welfare of refugees – both in the sense that they provide a strong and stable community to provide hospitality, and in the informal acts of assistance they provide. But it is unclear the extent to which international and national actors are using the host community as a means to assist the refugee population.

Some of the initial measures used by NGOs were cash payments to local families and the refurbishment and improvement of housing to enable them to host newcomers.¹⁶⁸ This is still occurring on very small scales across scattered localities, as witnessed during research. However, this is not a uniform policy and occurs in localised pockets, often lasting the duration of a particular NGOs contract (which typically last 6 months). Aside from this assistance, some local NGOs (often existent prior to the Syrian refugee crisis) aim to ‘empower’ the local community through women empowerment and local development schemes.

All of the informal assistance recorded in Akkar for the purpose of this research has been conducted on a one-to-one basis, by Lebanese individuals. This assistance is not taken into consideration by international NGOs – either as a means through which assistance might be distributed, or as an acknowledgement that the position of the Lebanese community is complex. While the Lebanese host community are recognised as a vulnerable group, at risk of the same uncertainties as resource depletion and unemployment as the Syrian refugee population, their role as empowered individuals, providing invaluable assistance to their Syrian neighbours, is not explored. The potential for social capital of the Lebanese community (in terms of their capacity to assist in small individual ways which collectively

¹⁶⁸ Carpi, “The Everyday Experience of Humanitarianism in the Akkar Villages,” *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support* (2014): 8.

add up to a substantial contribution) is largely acknowledged but ignored by all ‘official’ actors.

The UNHCR is, theoretically, aware of the potentialities offered by individual and grassroots networks of support. According to a report commissioned by them, as part of the UNHCR Working Paper series, ‘Southern’ humanitarian networks (the term used to refer to those forms of humanitarianism not recognised by Westernised doctrine) should be recognised and incorporated into humanitarian discourse. The paper suggests that “although commentators have recognised the increasing contribution of NGOs and civil society movements from the global South in the humanitarian sphere, the humanitarian responses initiated by Southern civil society networks and displaced populations themselves have also largely remained unexplored.¹⁶⁹ But in practice there appears to be a disconnect between the UNHCR’s theoretical musings and policies on the ground. As reported by Zakharia and Knox in May 2014, according to interviews conducted across Lebanon, “the UN-driven centralized and top-down relief planning and implementation results in persistent gaps with slow and intermittent service delivery.”¹⁷⁰ In Akkar, while there is decentralization of roles within the INGO and NGO network, and some collaboration with local religious organizations, there is little or no collaboration with municipalities or other local civic structures.

This attitude is not exclusive to the UNHCR and NGOs, with the views of many actors towards host community support ranging from dismissing it or stressing it as unsustainable and holding the potential for future instability. Some members of the Lebanese government have focused on tensions between host communities and refugees as a pretext for requesting more international financial aid. This attitude can clearly be seen in remarks made by Former

¹⁶⁹ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Pacitto, “Writing the ‘Other’ Into Humanitarian Discourse: Framing theory and practice in South-South responses to forced displacement,” *UNHCR Working Paper* no 257 (2013): 5.

¹⁷⁰ Zakharia and Knox “The International Aid Community and Local Actors: Experiences and testimonies from the ground,” *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon* (2014).

Telecoms Minister Nicolas Sehnaoui and current Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil.¹⁷¹ And this attitude is also prevalent further down the political hierarchy - often municipalities themselves do not attach importance to the role of host communities in the overall assistance effort. This became apparent when one municipal Chief Executive expressed surprise and some degree of annoyance that all research questions were oriented around host families – “there are so many people affected by this crisis, why are you only focusing on the host families?” The same municipality chief executive expressed the belief that Lebanese hosts were only hosting family members, a statement which was undermined by multiple cases of individuals assisting strangers during the research.

The Syrian refugee crisis is not the first example of host community support providing invaluable emergency assistance to refugee populations. As outlined in the 2013 UNHCR Working Paper, many mass displacements of populations were aided by informal support during the uprisings across the Arab region during 2011. Civil society responses in Tunisia to displacements in Libya were particularly marked “community efforts played a significant part in the safe passage and accommodation of hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the violence in Libya.”¹⁷² After the UAE established the first refugee camp in Tunisia, 13 km from the Libyan border, members of the local community worked as volunteers in the camp setting, some Libyan refugees were hosted by Tunisian families, and one person in each town

¹⁷¹ Former Telecoms Minister Nicolas Sehnaoui, has said that the issue of Syrian refugees is a matter of “preserving our being,” and Gebran Bassil voiced similar thought with his words: “It is not only about social, economic, political, security or national [concerns] for Lebanon; it concerns [the country’s] existence, its entity and its components.” *The Daily Star*, “Arab Foreign Ministers Stress Lebanon’s Right to Defend Itself,” 10 March 2014, accessed 12 February 2015, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-10/249782-arab-foreign-ministers-stress-lebanons-right-to-defend-itself.ashx>.

¹⁷² Hoffman, “Local Hosting and Transnational Identity,” *Forced Migration Review* 39 (June 2012), <http://www.fmreview.org/north-africa/hoffman.html>.

was allocated to collect keys for empty housing, with communities collectively cleaning and refurbishing these homes to provide shelter for Libyan refugees.”¹⁷³

The 1999 Kosovar refugee crisis, which saw nearly half a million Kosovars fleeing the border to escape Serbian ethnic cleansing, helped to transform civil society in Albania and foster longer-term links between the Albanians and Kosovars. It was the actions of the Albanian population towards the refugees in offering housing, food, education and counselling services to 70 per cent of them, which generated a level of trust between the two populations and, crucially, civil society and local governments. This gave Albanians a sense of empowerment that had continued post-crisis. In the case of Kosovar refugees, Albanian NGOs played a critical role in identifying host families and helping link them to UNHCR programs. Collective shelters were set up by local authorities to provide food, sanitation, health and other services. The Ministry led planning for a longer-range nationwide refugee education program that was to be implemented by local authorities. These collaborations between local governments, civil society and NGOs fostered trust and communication among different segments of society and directly increased social cohesion and local capacity..

These three suggestions – greater investment in private enterprise, decentralization and ‘informal networks’ of support - can be applied both to methods of channelling assistance, and to broader arguments about the future of the UNHCR. Implicit in all three topics is greater devolution. This is an argument which has been made by Betts and Loescher in their projection about the future direction of the UNHCR. They formulate that the particular challenges which face the organization in the 21st century – migration, security, development and peacebuilding – are too broad for the UNHCR to be expected to address well. Rather, they argue for a “UNHCR that plays a facilitative and catalytic role in mobilizing other actors

¹⁷³ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Pacitto “Writing the ‘Other’ Into Humanitarian Discourse: Framing theory and practice in South-South responses to forced displacement,” *UNHCR Working Paper* no 257 (2013): 15.

to fulfill their responsibilities with respect to refugees. In order to fulfill its core mandate, the Office may need to do more by doing less, and become more focused and strategic in the advocacy, coordination and facilitation role that it plays.”¹⁷⁴ UNHCR depends heavily on its moral and expert authority to justify its interventions in global affairs¹⁷⁵ and this may therefore become jeopardised by spreading its remit too wide.

Such a move may run the risk of fostering disjointed operations among multiple actors, aligned along different agendas (as is largely the case in Lebanon today) in the implementation of assistance to refugees. Greater focus needs to be placed on the ways sustainable assistance can be offered to both refugees and host communities. The very act of doing this may have a significant impact on the way durable solutions to protracted refugee problems are formulated as integration is turned into an economically viable option. Taking host communities as a starting point, as both the most fundamental dynamic of the refugee existence within a state, and the most vulnerable point at which the refugee presence will be felt, is a crucial step for the international community to recognise. This will require a reworking of the international-state-individual triage which has been at the heart of humanitarian and refugee efforts for the past half century.

The key question to emerge from the role of host communities in Lebanon is whether the framing of the Lebanese host community in terms of ‘vulnerability’ is damaging to building on existing local capacity; and whether the current combination of the localised, national and international responses to the crisis will inspire long-term capacity building at the local level. UNHCR’s traditional policy of working with refugees in camps has hitherto framed the host community in strict black and white terms without necessarily recognising and building on their internal assistance mechanisms. While building on the assistance offered by the host

¹⁷⁴ Betts and Loescher, *Refugees in International Relations* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2010): 123.

¹⁷⁵ Barnett et al, *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics* (Cornell University Press, 2008): 110.

community may be problematic owing to its ad hoc nature, the potential it has for future community cohesion and civic engagement could now be further strengthened. The perspective of the host community should shift towards a more nuanced view of their potential capacity, alongside their vulnerability, in order to achieve this.

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IX APPENDICES

INTERVIEWS WITH MUNICIPALITY CHIEF EXECUTIVES

1M Municipality Officer of large town

What help is being provided for Syrian refugees in your municipality?

There is some small help being provided for refugees from UN and other countries and from the Ministry Interior – a little bit of food for refugees

What are relations between the Lebanese and Syrian populations like in this area?

This is a border region, so relationships between the Syrian and Lebanese go back a long way owing to lots of inter marriages. They are ‘one big family’ in this district. Lots of connections

What is the view of the Syrian refugee influx from the perspective of the municipality?

How have you been impacted and what assistance are you getting?

As a municipality we are already under pressure. There is not much infrastructure. The EU, UN, Saudi Arabia are coming in without a proper method for implementation. They are not directing any aid through the municipality. NGOS are not cooperating with the municipality. The Municipal Principle (himself) know the locations of most refugee families, but my knowledge is not being sought

What is the municipality doing?

Mostly dealing with issues of cleanliness, water and security (ensuring there are few conflicts between Lebanese and Syrians)

As a municipality we have two crucial tasks – for security and stability. Concerning both the Lebanese and Syrian refugees. Refugees are staying here and doing nothing. The Municipality

is controlling them (in terms of security). No one is suggesting the Municipality be given extra funds for police men, security etc

We cannot provide more hospitals, schools etc since it has a very low budget. Even the government hasn't asked this municipality if we need any help.

The municipality has a public library and theatre. We suggested Syrian children use it (to read etc.) but no one comes. They've used the theatre a few times through an Islamic Orphanage Association

The municipality has a municipality medical centre with beds, first aid, ER etc. None of the NGOs have tried to open a medical centre

Alexa Storm came [December 2013]– 3,000 families were in tents. We couldn't do anything. No one tried to help

On an individual level I am helping individuals, but not as the 'Municipality' – I have 2 families living with me. One fell and hurt his head. I sent him to 3-4 hospitals. None would treat the man without payment

How many hosting families do you estimate there are in Akkar region?

6,000 – 7,000 hosting families in Akkar

Is there any help being given to hosting families?

There is some – DRC is helping refugees. UNHCR is paying the rent of some host families. But it is very chaotic – there is no method for distributing aid, and it is mainly random luck who is assisted (1 in 10 families get help)

What is your view of the extent of hosting which is happening here?

There are 170 committees in Halba, but none of them want to help. Host families who are helping are helping mainly their family members

Local organizations might rent whole building to refugees but they sometimes give them to ex-soldiers. They pick people with specific political lines, because they have their own agendas

There's so many people in need of help – Lebanese hosting Syrians, Lebanese who had been in Syria and have come back

What is your view of the assistance being given by NGOs?

I don't believe in NGOs or Human Rights here. Sometimes they choose the most attractive women to give assistance to – “if the refugee is not a nice young lady she won't be given assistance”. I am frustrated by NGOs

It's obvious that after 3 years revolution in Syria the NGOs, UNHCR etc don't have the proper methods to distribute aid. The method for distributing and handling aid is still not there

There is no proper method for statistics of how many/where refugees are based. If aid comes to [this town] someone will come from another area and say he is from [this town] and take the aid. This person may be counted multiple times. There are around 6,000 refugees here but this number fluctuates depending on here people's relatives live. They move with their relatives

“The best way of distribution is through the Municipality. Because the Civil Community appointed them and they know exactly what's going on”

[Two large international NGOs] both had a good method for aid distribution – they came and asked the municipality how to help. We gave them certain objectives – a truck to clean the streets. They gave me \$110,000 to deal with this

An example of another problem with the UNHCR – they gave permission that Syrians would get aid for rent and then didn't give it – this led to issues with the landlords and rentees

There is an issue with resources too - 20-30 food boxes are distributed for 2,000 people

There is a misuse of resources –NGOs brought heaters, blankets etc in July. One [Middle East Organization] brought ready-meals during Ramadan and distributed \$800,000 worth of food. The people didn't eat it, they threw it out. The Municipality had to pay \$40,000 to clean it up

There was a school in this area owned by the Ministry of Education. The municipality took it over a few years ago and gave it to an international NGO to use. They hired Lebanese and Syrian teachers for job creation and taught Syrian and Lebanese students. They used it for a year but then had to close it owing to lack of funds. It is now permanently closed

Example of inflexible NGOs – one Syrian man he got \$900 assistance because he had a problem with his leg. But because he didn't go to the UNHCR on the correct day to collect it he was disqualified for assistance

What is your view of the Lebanese government?

There are water shortages. Even the Ministry of Water are taking monthly fees but not providing any services

One example of the Lebanese government not taking a nuanced view of the refugee situation - the Ministry of education removed illegal cable lines which were operating fans and

breathing equipment for elderly people. The refugees tried to get it back but no one helped them. They came to the municipality to ask for help and I said to them to put them back and rang the Minister of Electricity personally to tell him what I was doing

2M Municipality Police Officer of a small village

What issues are you facing?

There is a lot of money and aid here, but because of mismanagement some families are getting a lot of help and some are getting very little

1 guy had a 2 month old baby – the UNHCR stopped aid and told him he had to register the baby at the hospital if he was to get milk for it

What are the major areas of assistance required?

What people really need is rent money – one international NGO is paying for this a bit here. Rent prices have increased from \$100 to \$400. Shops being used to house refugees - they cost \$300

What are the municipality doing?

- i) It is the first place the NGOs go when they are looking for people to assist – they ask for certain kinds of people
- ii) Assist with securing distribution (NB didn't make this clear to begin with) – eg a Qatari ngo had aid and they assisted with distribution
- iii) Surveys – every new family who arrives is supposed to register with them for their records and for NGO help

Why is it still so badly mismanaged?

The municipality are not managing distribution, only providing 'security' for it....; NGOs come to the municipality and ask how many families are registered with them. If the municipality say 300, the NGOs will provide 100 boxes of assistance and then there is chaos over who gets what; The system is not computerized and this results in human error

The UNHCR are NOT going through the municipality

[Many of the Lebanese men gathered around during this interview complain about Syrian refugees 'getting everything' and 'working for cheap']

Who is providing the money for construction [there is a lot of construction happening in this area]?

Normal people who are building homes/need renovation. Landlords build homes to rent out to refugees. There are no big companies operating here

How is the community interacting with refugees?

In general they feel it is a humanitarian issue – there are no issues or complaints. But at the end of the day they are refugees and they do not belong here. They will help them where they can, but they do not belong

How long can this situation last?

It will last a long time... most people who are really affected are the small workers (the poorer Lebanese workers) who are losing job opportunities because of the Syrians

There are problems with electricity and water – Syrians don't pay for it. It cannot be sustained at this level

3M Municipal Officer of medium sized Christian town

What is the situation here regarding Syrian refugees?

This is a border area. There are refugees in all the villages here. The number of refugees here is less than other places because they don't really have many houses to rent [also possibly because this is a Christian area]

All refugees come here because all offices of UN, Save the Children, are located here. But they don't really live here

There are roughly 500 people/130 families [in this town]

Not all of the refugees registered – sometime on paper they're down as a family of 3 when actually they are 17

We don't want overcrowding – this would lead to diseases and sexual harassment. We are trying to limit the numbers of people per house

What assistance are refugees getting here?

Refugees sometimes get aid – hospitalisation , food coupons etc.

There are lots of examples of families who are not receiving aid, with no specific reason.

Some people don't want to be registered with UNHCR – some feel it is a humiliation.

They're afraid they won't be able to go back to Syria if they register as refugees

Is the Municipality receiving any assistance?

The Municipality is always asking for help from UN, government etc but we are getting no help

What have the Municipality been doing to assist the refugees?

The only thing the municipality can really do is find jobs for refugees. That's all – no aid. The kind of jobs are construction, cleaning etc. Jobs that needed to be filled – not jobs that have been created especially for the purpose

The municipality have local organizations that help

The Municipality helps NGOs organize. Someone from the municipality will go with NGOs and go over lists of people and distribute to the most needy individuals

Are the local community assisting Syrian refugees?

I don't think refugees really need help from locals because they are getting assistance from NGOs located here. NGOs have centers here: monasteries, churches, hospitals They get volunteers to help distribute. They help with schooling, food etc.

In some villages some people have relatives who they live with. Some families have members who are both Syrian and Lebanese

Some people do help – giving money, food. For example I have 7 workers who I help out a bit

Local organizations are usually religious humanitarian organizations. People there are volunteers. They follow up individual needs, do training for children etc

What major issues are you facing?

Some poor Lebanese people also need aid, but they are not 'refugees' therefore do not receive them. or instance, in hospitals. Women give birth. Refugees are allowed to do this for free but Lebanese women must pay \$800-1,000

Although it's a welcoming environment, you have to be careful in case Syrian refugees end up staying, which would lead to more and more problems

I'm worried about the new generations who are born in Lebanon – these are the people who might end up staying here. I think we should only take in the amount of people we can deal with

Many conflicts are rising. Firstly over jobs, secondly over prostitution. Married Lebanese men are divorcing their wives to get married to young Syrian refugees

[He suggests that a big pocket of aid is going missing]

INTERVIEWS WITH ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS

1S Sheikh

This interview took place at the HQ for a union of 35 Islamic NGOs in Akkar (work across the whole of North Lebanon) The Union aims to help Syrian refugees with all kinds of aid – medical, social

What assistance do you give here?

Our main focus is on medical care – we cover all operations: birth, injury etc for those who are not registered with the UNHCR. We find ways to deal with medical bills.

For those who are registered with the UNHCR we cover an additional 15% of their medical care.

Our job is to step in to fill the gap of support for these people who are ‘refugees’ but not registered with the UNHCR (ie. not ‘official’ refugees). There is a transition period between being registered and getting aid

We take care of the injured fighters from the Syrian war – recently 70 injured arrived here.

We have accommodation for those who are injured

In the beginning they used to give food portions, but now it is difficult because of the numbers, so now they are concentrating on medical aid

We don’t accommodate refugees here, but we help by building campsites and giving some money for rent. We participate with the National Saudi Campaign to give rent

(The Union and Qatari Red Crescent and International Red Cross helped foot the medical bills)

Do they help only those not registered with the UNHCR?

If they get food aid from the UNHCR, we don't give it to them

How do you operate?

We have a system whereby a group of volunteers are distributed across different areas. We take statistics to create a database here at HQ – we have all the data regarding refugees. Our representatives are in direct contact with the refugees and therefore know who is really in need

How many people are you assisting?

We are working on a huge scale – 11,000 births, 6,000 operations thousands of medical prescriptions/month

What is the biggest issue facing Syrian refugees here?

The biggest issue with refugees is accommodation – we cannot solve this problem, but contribute where they can. Mattresses, blankets and things for the winter

“All of the Syrian refugees are unable to pay rent” due to rises in rent prices and no incomes”

The biggest issue is the issue of responsibility for the refugees – is it the job of the international community, the government? There is confusion

Do you coordinate with other international and local NGOs?

The whole idea of the Islamic Union is to coordinate among NGOs –we have regular meetings with the UNHCR and other NGOs regarding aid distribution. We are on good terms with each other.

How should the Government be helping more?

Government support is needed to help distribute people evenly across all Lebanon.

The Lebanese Government made a big mistake with Syrian refugees in the beginning by not having a proper statistical count at the borders – its impossible to do it now

Because we have representatives in the areas, we know people. We have certain criteria for aid and those who meet it get aid

What is this criteria?

In my view, those who can have a ‘free home’ through being hosted are in a slightly more comfortable position. Criteria –

- i) Must have moved to Lebanon after the crisis
- ii) They must come from a conflict area in Syria
- iii) They must not be a gypsy
- iv) They must not be a Syrian migrant, who was here already

What are the future options?

Stopping refugees coming to Lebanon is an impossible task

I am against creating huge refugee camps (they will become like Palestinian camps); I am against permanent integration since Lebanon’s capacity cannot cope. Instead I desire a ‘long term temporary solution’ instead, but doesn’t want the Syrians to feel at home. My preferred longer term solution is to create pre-fabricated homes for refugees

2S Sheikh

What assistance are you giving Syrian refugees in this area?

This religious station is giving assistance through an NGOs. Our assistance started before the Syrian crisis, depending on donations. We have been given funds by overseas NGOs (US, Syrian and Lebanese people living abroad). There are also a group of mosques in Australia who give funds

We help with mattresses, blankets etc. We have a medical centre here where the medicine is free. Sometimes we help with the 25% of fees left from hospital bills, which the UNHCR don't cover

We have an educational program in the afternoon – which allows the Syrian children to catch up with the Lebanese curriculum they're learning in schools

Do you give assistance to a specific group of people?

We deal with families who have lived here less than 3 months and over 2 years (which is the time frame when UNHCR don't help them). The distribution of aid goes to everyone, unless there is less aid available in which case it goes to the most vulnerable

Other people help by giving clothes etc

Do you collaborate much with other NGOs?

Polish NGOs are responsible for helping rent and sometimes we cooperate with them and also help with rent. The UNHCR came to this office before they started distributing aid, and I go to the UNHCR whenever I travel to other areas in Akkar.

I used to attend coordination meetings

Do you think the UNHCR has a policy towards giving less assistance towards those refugees who are living with Lebanese hosts?

There is no discrimination. The Lebanese hosts are the ones getting rent money from the Polish NGO – they get a visa card and the rent money is paid directly to the hosts

How have Syrians been treated?

It's a very welcoming community BUT infrastructure is an issue. Every 10 days they need to change the transformer; water; sewage. It is ok for the moment, but I don't know how long this will last

What do you think the long term strategy is?

From our side the first thing to do should be to organize where to live – proper living camps to make it easier to distribute aid

ii) Aid should be more effective – supermarkets have an increase demand; there is an increased amount of rent – this has the potential to revitalize the economy

How should the Lebanese be treated?

NGOs should hire a Lebanese from every village to create job opportunities and create an economic boost. UNHCR should have more Lebanese on board. Every single village needs employment with the UNHCR

Is your assistance complementary, or a replacement of NGOs?

NGO was here working before the crisis and before international NGOs arrived – they are helping to plug in the holes were UNHCR and NGOs are not operating

Would integration of the Syrian refugee population create more tensions in the longer term?

It depends on several factors –

- i) If aid is properly distributed (to help the local economy), people might accept them
- ii) People sympathise now because they are refugees, but maybe in the future when the crisis is less clear cut they may be less welcome
- iii) Depends on how the Syrian behave – people are getting married, family ties are being created etc Depends on whether people are violent or not

How can aid be more decentralized in its distribution? Would this be a good thing?

Aid distribution is more or less 90% but the issue is the first three months and the last 2 years.

This needs to be addressed

INTERVIEWS WITH LEBANESE HOSTS

1H Lebanese Host Outside Halba

How many Syrians do you have living with you?

There are around 15 Syrians living with me (one family in my house further up the mountains; and one family in my converted basement).

Are you charging them rent?

I am not charging any rent for them

Did you know them before? How did you come to help them?

I didn't know them before. One of the families came with a disabled guy and asked me for help, so I gave it. They came when I was abroad [he lives in Kuwait] so my father called me and asked if I could help, and so I offered my place in the mountains. I helped them with mattresses, blankets, a wheelchair and water mattress for the disabled man)

The second family asked me directly, I offered the garage/basement of my house for them – I implemented a toilet and kitchenette out of my own expenses. I live in the floor above

Are you getting any assistance from any source?

I am not getting any help

What is your motivation for doing this?

I am doing this purely for humanitarian motives, nothing political. My wife suffered in a very bad car accident (killed?) and I'm motivated to help other people because of her

I live and work in Kuwait: this is why I try to help whenever I can

Do you know if the Syrian families are getting assistance from anywhere?

The two families applied to the UNHCR for money. Sometimes I helps them with the rent.

People in the village and in Kuwait help them out when they can

Do you interact much with the Syrian families?

I doesn't interfere much with their lives

2H Lebanese Landlady helping a Syrian family

An elderly Lebanese landlady has given her outbuilding (which used to be for cows) to a Syrian family to live in. The lady provided furniture, created a partition, and installed electricity out of her own pocket

What is your motivation for helping this Syrian family?

It's in my nature – I like to help people. I have a religious motivation too: “If god gives you something, you should give it to someone else”

I am also helping other people where I can

Are you receiving any assistance yourself?

My brother is an employee and he helps pay for things out of his salary every month

So many people are helping me help the family – they give me money for food to give to them, but they request not to be credited for it (they get more credit from god this way)

I am not getting any assistance (from NGOs) for helping them –my husband is sending me money from Saudi Arabia (where he works)

Are you helping this family as refugees or as people?

I see them as people in need, not as refugees. I would help anyone who needs help

How do you feel the refugees are being treated by the local community in general?

This area has about 700 families here (rough estimate)

Some people are taking advantage of the situation by charging rent

What do you think UNHCR should be doing?

I think they're doing their job and people are being assisted (except this family, who are relatively new in Lebanon –I believe they will be helped in due course.

Do you expect any remuneration for your assistance?

When they get assistance I expect them to pay back my assistance to them

3H Lebanese Host Woman

A Lebanese woman is giving up her outhouse (which used to house lambs) to a Syrian family - a pregnant woman, her mother in law and five children. The family are her cousins. The house of the Lebanese hosts is well furnished with expensive curtains, carpets and a large TV

How long have the Syrian family been living here?

They've been here for about a year (9 months). The two young girls are not going to school

Did the Syrian family come here because they are your relatives?

Yes they came here directly because we are relatives of each other

Are you charging rent?

No, I'm not charging rent yet

Are you receiving any assistance for hosting them?

A Polish NGO did the bathroom, kitchen, chimney, windows, doors etc in the outbuilding.

But I am the one who cleaned it and took off the lamps, turned it into a house etc

I signed a contract with the Polish NGO and am working by that contract – they pay me half the money in advance and then check that the renovations carried out meet their agreement before paying the second half

Some Sheikh gave me some money and I built an extra room for the Syrian family

I am getting nothing myself except aid to renovate the house

Does anyone give you any personal help?

No, I'm fine myself, I don't need help. If any help comes I give it to the refugees

Are you helping the family because they are your relatives?

I'm not only helping them because they are relatives, but because they are people fleeing the war. I also help poor Lebanese here – I feel it is my duty to do this

Do you think of them as refugees?

I think of them as refugees and relatives at the same time – they are forced to be here. They are refugees at the end of the day

They used to be rich – they used to own their own business and have their own home. I used to visit them. Suddenly they lost everything, and I feel I have a duty to help them

Do you know if the Syrian family receiving any assistance?

For the first 2 months the refugees received no help from anyone and I was the one paying for everything – I borrowed money from a contractor in order to do this, and got into debt to him as a result. This man also gave me tiles and rocks to help with the refurbishment

What about the UNHCR?

They receive 45,000LL per month worth of food coupons per family member, but it took them 3 months to get this

What do they think NGOs should be doing better?

I think they should be given cash in hand

We don't have local NGOs here, only the Sheikh who is helping people individually from his own pocket

“I have no men in her life to stand in line and wait for aid”

How do the Syrian family spend their time?

They have relatives in a nearby village who they visit sometimes

4H Farmer hosting his family

A farmer has his Syrian step-brother and his family, and his parents (a Lebanese mother and her Syrian husband) living with him (13 people in total) – his parents live on the level below and he lives on the level above. This man works and live off the land

What assistance have your Syrian relatives been receiving?

When they first arrived they got mattresses and boxes from a Danish NGO. Now they are getting no aid from anyone

One family member was getting aid but it stopped

I also have relatives in Aarsal and they are getting aid there, but in Akkar the situation is very bad

Have the local community been helping the Syrian population?

People here (Lebanese) are sometimes helping with small amounts – 10,000LL, 15,000LL etc. They are maybe giving clothes. But people can't afford to give big amounts

(According to one Syrian relative - my neighbours are very good to me; I am feeling very welcomed by the Lebanese here)

Are your Syrian relatives working?

I get men in the families to work in the fields, and pay them a small amount

One of the Syrian sons has been here for a year and can't find a job

Our only income, and food, is from the land

[The step-brothers were previously employed as construction workers in Syria]

Do you charge them rent?

Of course I do not charge them rent - “they are my brothers”

What is your motivation for helping?

I used to live in Kuwait, and knows what it is to be homeless (which is why I want to do everything I can now to help)

Are the Syrian relatives actively looking for help?

They are not actively looking for help here – the women don’t want to beg and the men have been wounded in the war. I don’t want people to have to stand in line for hours and hours on end – it is degrading, and the women often get harassed or molested

What do you feel the general situation is like here?

It is getting harder and harder for everyone (including Lebanese) to find jobs

Most people are renting places here - they don’t have family help to support them

Where do they get rent from?

Alot of people knew people from before the conflict, through working together – there were alot of Syrian workers working in construction, tiling, metals etc before the conflict who are now able to use those connections to find work, borrow money etc

5H Lebanese Host 5, Shopowner

This lady and her two brothers are paying rent for two families (their cousins), at \$200 per house – they share financial help between them

How are you providing assistance?

Myself and my two brothers are paying rent for two Syrian families (our cousins) at \$200 per house.

I had the cousins living with me for the first few months, but then they moved out

At the beginning we were also helping another family with \$100 for rent

How big are the families you are assisting?

The first family is 6 members large, and the second family is 8 members large

Are any members of the family working?

The Syrian families are not working - all are widows whose husbands died during the conflict

One of the ladies has a son with asthma and one has a son with a broken back (he was working in construction and fell) so neither are able to work

Are they being assisted by any organization?

UNHCR is helping the family with the son with the broken back – paying 15% of medical aid and providing food coupons

Myself and my brothers are also helping with paying for medical assistance

Most of the expenses are paid for by a pool of relatives – everyone helps out where they can

How do you earn your money?

I earn money only from the shop [she is a shopowner]. When I cannot afford to assist my cousins, I get financial assistance from other relatives

Have you sought assistance yourself?

No I haven't asked for external help to pay for rent since I'm Lebanese and wouldn't get it

What is your opinion of the work of the NGOs?

Before it was more chaotic with NGO giving assistance – NGOs weren't coordinated, and often gave assistance on the same day. But now it is more organized – NGOs are spread across days, have more data and statistics available, are arranging appointments etc

Are the Lebanese population helping Syrian refugees?

There are some Lebanese who help – one case of a landlord who had a tenant with 6 months overdue rent, and put in place some arrangements to financially assist them

Informal forms of assistance – individuals giving on a one-to-one basis

6H Lebanese Relative Host family

Two Lebanese sisters live in one floor of an apartment in a large town with their 35 year old Syrian son. Another Lebanese sister (in a wheelchair) and her elderly Syrian husband (75 years old) live in the floor above them – they were living in Syria and have fled because of the conflict.

Do you own the whole apartment?

We [the two sisters] own the whole house, but we're taking \$300 per month rent

It would be very hard for us not to charge rent. We are not financially capable of hosting them for free. We are both widows, and both have 3 children. One of us works in a pharmacy, earning \$400/month, so we have little disposable cash

Are you getting any assistance?

UNHCR used to give us [the sister + husband + son] coupons and money to pay rent, but 6 months ago they stopped everything. The son is trying to find a job here but can't – 'they hate young men who are looking for jobs because they feel they are taking opportunity'

The UNHCR said they could only give to disabled and the elderly, because they can't give to everyone, (this family feels they qualify, as they are one disabled and one old)

One of the interviewees (the sister) went to Quombayat to try and find assistance on her behalf

After 8 months the son got 2 boxes from food from a Islamic organization. But this is the last option he wants to go to, since he has to wait and wait in line, which he finds degrading.

We are desperate to get back to the UNHCR [this seems to be the only source of assistance they consider good enough]. We believe UNHCR is responsible for us and we have a right to assistance

“The UNHCR only helps people who look dirty and poor and give women more aid than men”

How are you paying rent?

I get medical assistance from UNHCR [which she uses to pay rent] and some local NGOs give them assistance every now and then

The son says they are borrowing money from various Lebanese and Syrian people [but was not willing to give a more specific answer]

Relatives are giving us money (Aunt and sisters); sometimes Lebanese sometimes Syrians give them money

Have the municipality provided any assistance?

The son has tried to contact the municipality. They, like other NGOs, promised assistance but have not been able to provide any

7H Lebanese Host: Mechanic Shop Owner

How many people are living with you?

20-21 people are staying with me. There used to be around 60 but they all rented their own houses

They are my brother-in-laws (3 families). They are living with me (ie. not paying rent). I separated rooms for them within the main house

My brother is also hosting relatives – I think he might be charging them rent, but I can't be sure

Another brother is not helping – he is a retired soldier [and therefore not supposed to take any part in political action]

How long have they been living with you?

They've been living with me for around 2 years

How are you able to afford to host them?

My only income is from my workshop

Are any of them employed?

There is only one man with a job – he is working as a mechanic. Sometimes he works with another Lebanese brother, who also works as a mechanic.

What assistance are they receiving?

They're getting the 280,000LL food card from the UNHCR

I know someone who works at a local NGO – sometimes when there is a distribution of aid he tells us about it

They are having no help from the community or NGOs etc

Why are you hosting so many people?

I am used to hosting families from Syria for 1-2 days, when they're passing through Lebanon

Do they participate much in the local community?

They do participate in the social life here but only with Syrians from Homs or family members (because they're living in the same house)

Does you regard them as refugees or as family?

I am a very hospitable person anyway. I used to host non-relatives before. It is a humanitarian issue as much as a family issue. In the 2006 War, refugees from the South were seeking respite in Akkar. I hosted a family I didn't know then

Do you think the international NGOs are doing a good job?

I have previous experience with NGOs. I don't feel they are doing a good job

What would his family do without his help?

It's a hospitable community – if he didn't help them someone else would

8H Old man Host

An old Lebanese man is hosting two families in his home. He is not related to them, he didn't know them before they asked for help

Are you getting any assistance?

I am not getting any help from anyone for helping them

Some NGO came and checked the house for windows and doors [it doesn't have any at the moment], but didn't give anything

Why are you assisting these two Syrian families?

They're poor people – they don't have anyone else helping them. Her husband is detained and she is raising children by herself

Are the Syrian families receiving any assistance?

They are receiving no assistance for food, rent etc. They are registered with the UNHCR but have received nothing [apparently the local municipality, the UNHCR “randomly cancelled aid for people” in this area, such as for small families with only one child who are told they can ‘get by’]

How are the local Lebanese population treating the Syrian families?

They have good neighbours and interact with them alot. My children work and they help me out with money

Another man is also renting a home to Syrians, who are also waiting for aid

9H Lebanese Host (Restaurant Owner)

How many Syrian people are you hosting?

I have 8 people living with him – one family of 6 and another 2 people. They are his cousins

They sometimes stay at my house, or at the house of my (deceased) parents. They don't pay rent

Are they employed?

The men in the family don't have jobs. They used to work in a governmental institution in Syria. They lost everything during the conflict

Are they being assisted by any NGOs?

No organizations are helping them

The people who are staying with him are old (he is old) and not looking for assistance from NGOs

He doesn't want them to go to NGOs because he doesn't think its proper to ask for help like that, so he's helping them himself. The family are made up of engineers, so they don't want to 'beg' for money

Do they receive assistance from anyone else?

Other family members help out with providing food, vegetables etc

One of the younger members of the family is an engineer and is trying to go to Sweden; another guy is living in Tripoli with his in-laws

How do you afford to host them?

I get all of my money from the shop I own

INTERVIEWS WITH SYRIAN REFUGEES

1R Syrian Family living in a Basement

A Syrian family composed of a man and wife over the age of 65, and their 4 year old grand-daughter. They are living in the basement of a local Lebanese man who has given it to them to use for free while he lives and works in Kuwait. The basement has been partitioned into a few rooms with mdf board – a living space, kitchenette, toilet and sleeping area.

What aid have you been receiving?

We were receiving aid from the Qatari Foundation, but we haven't received anything since Ramadan [in 2013 – 6 months previous to the interview]

Our son and his family used to get aid from UNHCR. This stopped 4 months ago (we think because of a reduction in funding)

Our granddaughter (the daughter of our son, who is 4 years old) has a medical condition – a problem with her digestion. We have registered her with the Danish Refugee Council, but haven't received any medical assistance

How are you supporting yourselves? Does any family member work?

Our son is looking for a job but hasn't found anything – he has a Business degree in Syria and used to own a small company. He is looking for similar work here – he doesn't have any craftsmanship skills

We have a daughter living in [a large nearby town]

We shift between living here and with our daughter in [the large nearby town] – she is paying rent, but she is getting assistance to help pay rent

How have they been treated by the Lebanese?

We're being treated very well. They are good people – our neighbour came to fix the bathroom for us

Do you feel like refugees here?

We don't feel like refugees – the community have made us feel at home. We are very social – sometimes we visit our Lebanese neighbours, sometimes we invite neighbours round to spend time together

Why did they move to [this large town]?

Our daughter moved here over 2 years ago. Her husband owned a restaurant in Syria and now works in a restaurant here. We moved here to be with her

Do all of your family live close by?

We have 7 daughters in total, spread across UAE, Libya, USA. We have 3 sons in Jordan

2R Sister of a local Lebanese Man

A Lebanese women who is the sister of a local man in a large town; she is here with her elderly and ill husband, who is Syrian, her four daughters (one of whom is pregnant by a dead father in Syria) and a baby son.

How did you come to live in this house?

This house was owned by a lady who let us live here for free (we knew her, which is why she let us live here for free). She travelled to Australia and when she left Lebanon she handed the house over to her agent. He then started charging us rent and told us to either leave or pay

Why did he start charging them?

Because the number of Syrians are increasing. People feel like the Syrians are taking jobs

What assistance are you getting?

We are getting help from the UN in the form of a food card – worth 280,000LL. We also get 40,000LL worth of cleaning equipment

We get help with rent from neighbours – about \$100/month – because I am the sister of a local man and people know me

The neighbours built the bathroom for her (they are helping her)

How do you receive assistance?

Every 5th of the month we go to the UNHCR. The UNHCR used to call us but now they don't

Are you happy with the assistance you're receiving?

I'm not really happy because the food I buy is all the same (rice etc)

My husband has a medical issue and we're not getting any medical help for it

What is your opinion of NGOs working here? Do you think the distribution of assistance is fair?

In my opinion, "If you're not pretty you won't get help" (referring to people asking for aid)

Some Syrian families get help from NGOs here even though they have their own houses and cars. They still get help because they 'know' people at NGO

Do you identify as a refugee?

I feel like I'm a refugee and not part of the local community because of the way I've been treated [despite the help of the neighbours]

My son said that other Lebanese children threaten to kill him and he's had many fights with them

Only one of my brothers is helping me and another one helps a bit.

I used to live in this community when I was younger (before she married her Syrian husband). But now I feel like a foreigner because of the way I'm treated. I don't feel like I belong anymore

Are you looking for more assistance?

I'm not actively asking for help, and whoever will help me, I'm happy with anything I can get – I don't like to ask.

When I can I pay back to people who help me – if I get 2kg of rice I will give 1kg away etc

3R Syrian Family in small village

There are a family of 4 Syrian people living in the outbuilding of an old Lebanese woman – a woman, husband, son and daughter. One son has already been killed in Syria, and one daughter is living in Tripoli

How long have you been here?

We've been here for 3 months – we used to live in one of the shops along the road, but couldn't afford rent. We came to this lady [the landlady who is letting them live in her outbuilding] and she said we could stay in this space (which used to be for cows). The lady provided us with furniture, created a partition for them, electricity etc out of her own pocket

What assistance are you receiving?

We went to the UNHCR and registered but didn't get anything. The husband had a heart attack and the UNHCR paid \$1,500 for surgery and \$400 for follow up surgery, but the procedure didn't work

Our son used to work in Beirut but his residence permit is over and he needs to pay \$200 to renew it – he cannot pay it yet, so he's waiting in Akkar to gather funds.

The landlady gives us milk, bread, meat [they are celebrating during the visit because they are having meat for the first time in a long time]. We are borrowing all the time

We are going to the UNHCR every week, but they keep saying 'come back'. We are waiting for food coupons in particular but they are not coming

A French NGO told us they would pay \$1,200 and gave us the coupon 'card', but no money has been transferred onto it yet

The husband's eyes have been affected by the chemical weapons – he cannot see properly (he used to be a truck driver). We moved to Damascus (internal displacement) because our home became too dangerous. We stayed in mosques and parks there, but everywhere we go we have been kicked out. The husband hopes to find work once he gets his eyesight back

An Islamic Organization from Qatar has given us dates (“that’s all”!)

What do you expect to receive from the UNHCR?

We want rent and food. We want to fix the kitchen and bathroom

UNICEF promised us rent (we need \$200 in rent, and UNICEF promised to pay half, but no money has been forthcoming yet)

Did the UNHCR ask them how they live?

Yes – they know the set-up

What are your plans for the immediate future?

We are waiting for our grandchildren to come to Lebanon before we decide what to do, but the grandchildren are trapped. Our son died three hours before he saw his new son

How have you been treated by the local Lebanese community?

The local community has been so good to us. They always come with food or help. They are really good to us BUT it is still not home

The religious community is very helpful – the local Sheikh paid some money for the man's hospital treatment

How has your landlady helped you?

The landlady took off the door from her own kitchen for them and gave us a wooden divider to separate the outbuilding into 2 separate rooms – they told all of this to the UNHCR

Do you identify as a refugee?

We identify as refugees. We do not feel like they are at home – we feel like refugees

The landlady and the refugees are relatives (long distance cousins), but they only discovered this once the family moved in (it wasn't a reason for assistance being given)

How do they spend their time?

We just stay home, we don't go out [they joke that they don't even visit the landlady next door!]

Are any of your family looking for employment?

Our son is waiting for the coupons to get money to renew his visa so he can work and provide money for his family – this is the major priority now

We have a daughter living in Tripoli: the UNHCR is paying her rent but giving her no food coupons. She works as a nurse

Our second daughter had a brain and spinal infection when she was a child – she never went to school

What do you think of the assistance being given to you?

Many Sheikhs are getting money from the Gulf for refugees, but they're stealing money themselves to build their own homes

We would be happier to die here in Akkar than in Beirut (the husband with the heart attack), because at least here it's free to bury a body – in Beirut it costs \$20

4R Syrian Refugee woman

A pregnant Syrian refugee woman is living with her mother in law and five children in the outbuilding of her Lebanese cousin. Her husband is in Syria

How have you been treated?

Everyone here is being very nice to me, treating me like their own family (neighbours etc).

They don't make me feel like I am a refugee

What assistance have you received?

I went to the Polish Agency and showed them how I was living without food, fuel etc so the Polish NGO gave me 200 litres of fuel

Save the Children said that, since I am registered with the UNHCR I cannot get assistance from them

Save the Children and Polish NGO are most active at helping people with rent

[She did not mention that they also receive 45,000LL per month worth of food coupons per family member]

Do you get much assistance from the local community?

Some people help me on a personal level (lend me 10,000 – 5,000 LL at a time)

Do any of your family have jobs?

The children (the eldest is 12) earn a little money by cleaning barns. I went to their employer to borrow money for baby milk yesterday

Why are you not getting milk for the baby from the UNHCR?

I'm not getting milk for the little baby because the baby is not registered with the UNHCR. I haven't registered her yet because I still can't walk very well (post child birth)

Did the UNHCR cover your delivery cost for childbirth?

Yes

In an ideal world what would you be receiving?

I would like to have more cash

5R Syrian Family in large town

A wife and husband and three little girls. They are living in a one room apartment in a block of apartments outside a large town. The husband has a bad leg and the interview was conducted with the wife

What assistance are you receiving?

I [the mother] had my name registered with the UNHCR. I got aid for 1 month, and then it stopped. My husband cannot work owing to his bad leg

Whenever I hear of aid from NGOs I go to see but I rarely get anything. I wait hours and hours in a queue, and sometimes I gets something, sometimes not. Aid is usually given to women

Many NGOs have visited us and promised assistance, but little has happened

How long have you been here?

We have been here for 4 months. We had some small money to start. Then we sold our gold ring. Some of my relatives (also Syrian refugees) can work, and gives us help with bread

How have you been helped by the local community?

I owe the landlord 2 month rent, but he is allowing us to be late

In the mosque local Lebanese people gave us old furniture, an old TV, cushions etc

I got sick a week ago – a Lebanese guy took me to hospital in his car. I couldn't afford the medication (15,000LL). Another Lebanese guy brought it for me

Have you tried to look for work?

Me and my husband are both nurses. But potential employers always ask for certification of my qualifications and I left it behind in Homs

Why did you choose to move to this town?

I first arrived [in this town] with the children. I have a nephew who works in Beirut – I lived with him for 15 days. But he moved to [this town] to find a job, and I moved with him. I preferred [this town] to Beirut, since it was similar to Homs. It feels like people are the same here, I can talk to people, I don't feel like a stranger but I feel like I belong.

Do you enjoy living here?

I would prefer to go back to Homs and live under fire than stay here

Does you define yourself as a refugee?

Yes, definitely. When I go asking for food. People talk to me like I'm a refugee and I hate it. This is why I'd prefer to go back to Homs, to escape this

What do you think the best form of assistance is?

I prefer the UNHCR aid since they give out coupons (with which I can buy anything) –we feel its decent, we can get what they need. Other NGOs have us stand in line and we get sexually harassed and feel threatened because of being refugees

What are your biggest costs?

I have to pay 45,000LL every month for the school bus – this is the most important payment for me. The Syrian school is free – it was founded by a Kuwait NGO. It runs the Syrian curriculum. The only problem is the school bus fee. They asked for it to be cheaper but they won't change it

Do you consider [this town] as ‘one big family’?

People are really nice to them She doesn't feel like a stranger. What bothers her is having to ask for food all the time.

The landlord gets candy for little children. He is [one political persuasion] (and the refugees are [the opposite political persuasion]) but he tells them that they are free to think what they want

6R Syrian refugee family outside large town

A Syrian refugee family of 6 – a mother and father with two sons (aged 17 and 18), a sister and her husband. The father has health issues (stomach/back problems) so cannot work. He used to work as a taxi driver in Syria but they had to leave everything behind. The Husband of the sister is blind so he also cannot work. They are living in a shell of a building outside a large town with no windows or doors

What assistance have you been receiving?

The UNHCR gave us aid for 1 month but then said that because we had two boys they could work and therefore we didn't need assistance. But the boys cannot find proper work. They work by carrying things and earn \$1/trip.

How long have you been here?

We have been here for 8 months. We pay 400,000LL rent [for a shell of a building. No doors, or windows. But they do have water and electricity]

We are living off a poor diet – soup, bread, things from the land

Do you have relatives here?

We have no relatives here. We even borrow to get money for bread

How do the Lebanese treat you?

The Landlord is good to us, but we don't mingle with anyone, even fellow Syrian refugees

The Landlord allows us to pay rent late. The grocer lends us money – we don't really know the grocer but sometimes he lends them money (25,000LL per week). We have a friend in Beirut who we borrow money from

Lebanese people are not actively earning enough money to help. The Landlord himself doesn't have a job

What is your interaction with the municipality?

Some people told us to go to the municipal leader for help [one of the ladies son's is mentally disabled; she had a miscarriage recently owing to cold/malnutrition]

How do you hear about assistance?

We hear about assistance from mouth to mouth. There is no official way of getting information. Our neighbour is registered with the UNHCR, which is how they hear about these things [but they are not]

7R Lebanese woman married to Syrian man

A Lebanese woman who is married to a Syrian – she moved to Syria and then came back here because of the conflict. They are living in a floor of the home of her Lebanese family

What assistance are you receiving?

We are registered with UNHCR and are getting food coupons, but nothing else

Some international NGO promised to fix the house for her, but they haven't come yet (it's been 6 months)

What are your circumstances here?

I am living with my Lebanese family, on a separate floor within their home, and not paying rent. After my brother fixes my own home I will pay rent. My husband is working as a cheap labourer here. But he has not been in employment for a month and therefore is borrowing money

I envisage being here for a long time

Do you identify as a refugee here [despite being Lebanese and having grown up here]?

I feel like a refugee – I had a better life in Syria. People here treat me like a Lebanese woman and a part of the community [which she was], but I still feel like a refugee

This is a small village – everyone knows everyone and I can borrow small amounts of money from shops etc

Do you think the UNHCR should be doing more?

They used to give us a food basket AND coupons, so we used to be able to eat better

I also have to pay for medicine and school – the UNHCR could help here – my children are in private schools and I am paying for them ([here are ‘free’ public schools, but she thinks the private ones are better and therefore is willing and able to pay]

[When children are small we prefer to send them to Lebanese schools (since they haven’t started on the Syrian curriculum system and therefore won’t get confused); but if the child has already begun schooling in Syria, we prefer for them to carry on with the Syrian syllabus]

We hear that the UNHCR has planned until 2018. We hear that there is a new UNHCR project to build one room and one toilet for refugees

There is a local religious NGO operating here – alot of people choose to stay in this village (come from all around to move here) because they feel the aid is better here

Why is the religious organization better than the UNHCR?

It is secure – no one harasses the women or children.

How have the local population treated refugees in general?

People here really sympathise with the Syrian people – they give job opportunities etc

8R Syrian Shepherd (and) Family

What is your situation?

A Lebanese landlord gave me land and sheep to take care of. In return we were given land to built tents on. There are 6 families here – every family has 6-7 people in it.

How long have you been here?

I (the shepherd) have been here since the beginning of the conflict. The other families have been here 7-8 months. They are all relatives. Their husbands are not working (one is disabled)

What assistance are you receiving?

UNHCR haven't given me (the shepherd) anything for 4 months – I was getting food vouchers before that, but now I'm not getting anything. I think this is because I don't have children, only a wife

All the other families are getting food vouchers

The children are going to Lebanese schools for free (they have UNHCR documents)

We are not getting any help from locals/NGOS. We went into the nearest large town but were told we don't qualify for assistance since we're not living there

How have you been treated?

We haven't been treated very well – when the children go to school they are segregated (Lebanese children are told not to speak to Syrian children)

We are not being harassed by their neighbours – but we don't interact with them

The landlord just gave us land, he doesn't help us out with anything else. The landlord's wife sometimes bring clothes and sweets for the children.

What other issues have you faced?

One lady gave birth 20 days ago, off her own expenses (she borrowed the money from other Syrians. They sold their food vouchers to pay for the childbirth)

9R Syrian Family hosting Syrians

What is your situation?

I'm a newlywed and I've been here [a small village in Akkar] for 1 month – my husband is looking for a job and he has just been diagnosed with diabetes. We are living with another Syrian family who have been here for almost 2 years (1 and a half years). They are helping us because they are in-laws.

[In total there is the original family (2 parents and 3 children); the young newly wed couple; and another woman with four children who stays here for a bit, and a but with her family in Tripoli (who are also refugees)]

What does the original Syrian family do here?

The husband in the original family makes mattresses and works here.

Are you getting any assistance?

The Polish NGO pays half of the rent of the house (I don't know how much the rent is)

The original family partitioned off a section of the building for us

UNHCR came to visit us, but deemed that we had enough and didn't need assistance. When the UNHCR came we asked them for extra blankets (it is very cold in the building) but they said no

The Syrian 'host' family get a little help for food from the local community and they have the earnings of the male worker. They all eat together (young newly weds not very independent)

Why did you leave Syria?

We left Syria because my husband could not find a job there so they came here to find a job instead. He works as a an electrician.

Do you interact much with the local community?

No, only my Syrian host family

Do you consider yourself a refugee?

Yes

Do the hosts feel like refugees?

They feel like they are refugees but they are settled here – they would prefer to stay here than go back

Is there much interaction with the municipality?

No

10R Syrian Family in Tents

How long have you been here?

We've been here for 7-8 months. There are 19 people in 3 tents. We are all related

What assistance are you getting?

We are getting the food voucher (worth 280,000LL per month) from the UNHCR. We are getting no help from NGOs

We are getting no help on a personal level. Only from God

One of the husbands has a third degree burn on his leg and his getting no medical help

Are there just women and children here?

2 ladies have husbands with them but they are disabled

Do any of you work?

None of us have any income or any work

How much money do you pay for the land?

We pay 50,000LL/tent for the land

How do they pay?

We get aid in the form of diapers from the UNHCR but we sell them and use the money to pay for rent instead

12R Syrian family (craftsman) renting from Lebanese lady

What is your situation?

We are one family of 7 members. I used to work as a carpenter, but now I don't work (I work freelance, when I can, but I have an injured leg which means I cannot work full time since I cannot stand all day long). I used to make billboard signs and 'makeshift furniture'

Are you receiving any assistance?

We are only getting the food vouchers from UNHCR (worth 280,000LL per month)

Have you approached other NGOs for help?

No, we don't know where they are, no one has told us

I hear about aid being handed out but I don't want to go because I find it humiliating. Once my wife went for aid, but she found it humiliating so she doesn't want to go anymore

Are you getting any help from the local community?

They only help we're getting is from the landlord – she's giving us the house for 200,000LL/month including electricity. We didn't know the landlady before

Why did you choose to come to this part of Lebanon?

I used to come to Lebanon before. We were living in Beirut, but I knew someone in [this town] so we decided to come and live here

How are you received by the local community?

Once a group of guys attacked me because I'm Syrian. They swarmed around me and swore at me. A couple of guys eyeballed him and provoked a fight with me. [He says 50 people swarmed around him]. I was rescued by my landlady and neighbours

The family that attacked me have been causing problems – they are the only family causing problems, everyone else is fine with us

How are you paying rent?

I'm paying rent by making small freelance pieces (the tyre table; shelves etc) These things are enough to pay rent. Sometimes the rent is overdue for 3 months. This is what I'm working for – to ensure he can pay rent. [The tyre table costs \$35]

Do you feel part of the community?

I feel integrated into society – I have friends, people visit me. I'm happy living here

When we first moved we had nothing but our clothes, but we met good people who helped us with a TV, carpets, kitchen equipment etc

We left our country but I feel like I've found a parallel community which I've integrated into

Are your children going to school?

The children are going to school – a school made by the Syrian opposition for Syrian children with the Syrian curriculum. This is for free, the only cost is the transport. All books, tuition fees and salaries for teachers are being paid for by the Syrian opposition

Do you feel the NGOs are doing a good job?

One day I went to buy bread at the bakery and saw bread bag donations from an international NGO. I didn't know who this food was going to help, or how I could access it. I don't know how to connect and where the aid is. I'm afraid that if I complain about receiving too little aid, all of my aid will stop completely

If you are not a pretty young lady you won't get aid – if you don't get 'up close and personal'
you won't get any