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The Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

Looking for a Convivial Habitat

ABSTRACT The Syrian crisis has caused one of the greatest episodes of forced displacement since World War II and some of the densest refugee-hosting situations in modern history. Lebanon has hosted more than 1 million Syrian refugees. This article is based on a large multisectoral survey of Syrian refugees' households in Bekaa, conducted by the Union of Relief and Development Associations (URDA) in the period 2016–17 with a total of 1614 households and 6199 individuals. It assesses the socio-economic and living conditions of this representative sample (i.e., the location of refugees and housing conditions, the legal status of refugees, family expenditure, shelter, displacement, education, work, health, child health including child marriage). Among many vulnerabilities experienced by Syrian refugees, we identify three salient domains of precariousness, which are education, health, and early marriage. A particular analysis covers the differential analysis between camp dwellers versus urban ones, and the conviviality of the former compared with the latter. KEYWORDS Syrian refugees, Bekaa, Lebanon, conviviality, urban settings

INTRODUCTION

In April 2011, the Syrian refugee crisis erupted with direct dire consequences for the Syrian population within Syria as well as the neighboring host countries of Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt, leading to the largest exodus of refugees in modern history. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the total number of registered Syrian refugees across the neighboring host countries in 2019 amounted to 6,615,249, constituting the largest group among worldwide refugees.[1]

1. See https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=3JLm/.

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Around 5.5 million Syrians took refuge in three neighboring countries: Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan. In order to understand the wider context of this situation, *Syria: The Making and Unmaking of a Refuge State* (2018), an outstanding book by Dawn Chatty, explains how the legacy of the Ottoman millet (ethno-religious communities) resulted in territorial dispersal of those who belong to a network of similar coreligionists. So in this region, minorities such as Greek Orthodox, Jews, and Catholics saw themselves tied to their own religious hierarchy, but not necessarily to a specific territory. They lived as individuals or as ethno-religious communities side by side with others. This co-habitation produced a local conviviality, a cosmopolitanism, which made receiving other people, refugees from other armed conflicts, natural. To Chatty's historical reminder, one should add the conceptualization of Mohamad Abed Al-Jabri and his notion of "Magnanimity" (*morooa'*), which is a mix of hospitality and generosity as a major constituent of the Arab ethical system (al-Jabiri 2001). The present article explores how much history matters and how much conviviality and cosmopolitism remain in the region.

This article is based on a cross-sectional survey of Syrian refugee households located in Beqaa, conducted by the Union of Relief and Development Associations (URDA)[2] in 2016–17 with a total of 1614 households and 6199 individuals related to these households (hereafter "the survey"). Concerning sampling, we opted for a census (100 percent) of the most important tented and urban gatherings in the Beqaa region. URDA, a coalition of thirty philanthropic Lebanese organizations, was created as a response to the Syrian refugee crisis providing mainly food, healthcare, informal education, and (sometimes) shelter. Around ninety percent of the face-to-face interviews conducted required one visit, while the remaining interviews required a second visit. In addition, we carried out in-depth interviews with fifteen refugees and social workers in order to better understand some of the findings of this survey, specifically, how these refugees seek a convivial habitat even if the shelters are more (materially) precarious rather than a non-convivial habitat with better shelters. We will provide some methodological details when we discuss their specific cases.

2. URDA is a Lebanese nongovernmental organization (NGO) dedicated to ensuring the human rights of the most vulnerable groups in Lebanon. In June 2012, the Syrian refugee crisis reached its peak in Lebanon. Immediately, thirty humanitarian NGOs felt the need to coordinate their humanitarian efforts under one strong institutional umbrella, thus paving the way for the URDA to be established.

Many recent studies have recommended that the current refugee crises in the world should be examined not only at the nation-state level but also at the micro-level. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh led a research team looking at "Local Community Experiences of and Responses to Displacement from Syria" (Carpi and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2020).[3] Focusing on the Beqaa region will provide an opportunity to look at the local response to the Syrian refugees' presence in this region. This article will provide descriptive data (at the level of both households and individuals) from an in-depth survey that has not yet been published or made available for public use. We will focus on one of the counterintuitive outcomes of this survey, which is mobility from an urban setting to a refugee camp setting, exploring the conviviality hypothesis in the reasoning and the motivation that some refugees have for such a move. However, before examining our own data, we will first set out some demographical data and specify the legal status of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Demography and legal status

According to the UNHCR, Lebanon alone hosted 1,001,051 registered Syrian refugees in 2017, distributed across 231,530 household units. The Beqaa Valley hosts more than a third of this sum, followed by around a quarter in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. Tripoli, in north Lebanon, hosts 253,332 refugees (25.3 percent), and the share for south Lebanon is twelve percent of the Syrian refugee population.[4] The significance of the large influx of Syrians seeking refuge in Lebanon is heightened by the relatively small size of Lebanon, making this country the highest concentration per capita of refugees in the world. However, one should remember that historically Lebanon absorbed a large amount of Syrian manpower for manual work, especially in construction and agriculture. Seventy percent of these migrant workers live below the poverty line compared with forty percent of the Lebanese population (Schlein 2019). Lebanon is also a land of refuge for Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), Palestinian refugees under the wing of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), as well as approximately 16,000 refugees from Iraq, Sudan, and Ethiopia (Janmyr 2018).

3. See https://refugeehosts.org/.
4. See https://www.unhcr.org/sy/end-of-year-reports-a-year-in-review/.

Internationally, the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (the 1951 Refugee Convention) are considered the two primary legal instruments that ensure the protection of refugees around the world. In the Middle East, only a few states have acceded to these instruments, with no existence of a regional refugee regime in Africa or Latin America. Unlike many other states in the Middle East region, Lebanon actively engaged in the establishment of the international refugee regime since it was one of the twenty states in the committee that was formed by the United Nations General Assembly to lay the basis for the International Refugee Organization (IRO). In Lebanon, the provisions for asylum, as found in its 1962 Law Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Exit from the Country, are in reality redundant (Janmyr 2018; Stevens 2014).

Due to four arguments, however, Lebanon continues to resist the ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its Protocol. Lebanon has an ambiguous approach to the Syrian refugee influx, which is exacerbated by the current political deadlock, thirty years of Syrian military presence, and the country's long-term Palestinian refugee presence (Janmyr 2016). Lebanon argues that there is a politically expedient uncertainty as to the obligations that come with the Convention, including a belief that the Convention requires permanent settlement of refugees on its territory allowing the permanent settlement or local integration of refugees, including Palestinians. This would pose a threat to sectarian and social cohesion in the country, considering that Lebanon is home to eighteen different sects (Janmyr 2018). Although Article 34 of the Convention states that "the contracting states shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees," there is nothing in the Convention that obliges states to permanently host refugees, and Lebanon would be free to decide upon an eventual reservation to Article 34.

The responsibility shift for refugees to third parties such as the UNHCR has made Lebanon less inclined to become a party of the Convention because of the obvious advantages for the country. The UNHCR has long experience in the handling of all non-Palestinian refugees. While it acts as a "Surrogate State," and carries the heaviest burden of addressing the positive liberties of refugees through registration, status determination, education, healthcare, livelihood assistance, and nutrition. The involvement of a third party often portrays the refugee presence as temporary. On the other hand, host states in this case can simply protect refugees by restraining the impact of restrictive

immigration policies of neglect. As we will see in the survey, Lebanon has a very ambiguous policy concerning the recognition of the status of Syrian refugees. Lebanon frequently argues that the economic cost of refugee recognition has been hampered by a lack of financial resources, knowing that it has long been one of the governments with the highest levels of debt in the world. Yet, many scholars, journalists, and politicians forget that refugees bring with them economic advantages (David et al. 2018). Over and above the economic aspects, Yassin and Khodor outline *101 Facts & Figures on the Syrian Refugee Crisis* (2019) in an age of post-truth where the media cry an "imaginary wolf" in the backyard.

This reminder of the legal and societal contexts in Lebanon is important as they critically impact the socio-economic situation of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as we will see below from the outcomes of Beqaa survey.

FAMILY SURVEY

We will focus on some relevant aspects of the URDA survey, namely the location of refugees and housing conditions, legal status, family expenditure and needs, satisfaction in shelter, and displacement.

Location of refugees and housing conditions

The stronghold of URDA operations is clearly in Beqaa, where it provides for 1580 households representing eighty-three percent of all served households in the area. Around half of them are located in 'Aarsal (fifty-five percent), followed by Bar Elias (thirty-three percent) and Taanayel (nine percent).

Three-quarters of the households interviewed live in tents (primarily in 'Aarsal and Bar Elias), while eleven percent live in caravans (primarily in Bar Elias and Kamed Al-louz in Beqaa) and fewer than fifteen percent live in concrete rooms (primarily in 'Aarsal and Al-Karoun). These concrete rooms are often in substandard shelters (garages, worksites, unfinished buildings, etc.) and apartments. Even though they are located in informal tented settlements, the locations are heavily urban or semi-urban areas. Lebanon has been classified as a highly urbanized country since more than eighty-seven percent of its population lives in urban areas (Boustani et al. 2016). A Syrian refugee in 'Aarsal has just started demolishing her own tent as a result of the 2021 decision taken by the Lebanese authorities concerning the removal of all the stone walls inside tents. This Lebanese town on the border with Syria

does not have adequate shelters to withstand the harsh winter months, according to a Human Rights Watch report.[5]

Around fourteen percent of households monthly pay rent for their residence with costs ranging from US$10 for a caravan to US$500 for an apartment. The total average cost amounts to US$83. The average amount of sponsored rent ranges from US$60 to US$330.

Around sixty percent of the households interviewed had moved from previous locations in Lebanon, with two-thirds of those households having lived in concrete apartments or rooms and, the remaining one-third having lived mainly in tents. More than half of them (fifty-five percent) pay rental costs of an average US$171, and the remaining third was granted a residency at no cost. Thus, only eight percent of the surveyed households received full rent-costs sponsorship (of an average US$60, reaching US$330), and two percent were given partial rent–costs sponsorship averaging US$112. There are four household members on average in a household.

These figures provide an insight into why these refugee households sought residence in URDA-administered areas. In asking the interviewees about the two primary reasons for their relocation, three-quarters of the households cited financial reasons, whereas a quarter cited security and safety reasons. Around twenty percent explained that they relocated to these areas because of the provision of URDA services, eighteen percent cited the bad conditions of their previous residences, and finally eleven percent explained that they wanted to be in closer proximity to family members. These findings will be the subject of further discussion below.

Most of the refugees interviewed are originally from Homs (totaling forty-four percent), followed by thirty-four percent from Damascus. Most of these refugees hail from the middle class, attested by the fact that ninety-nine percent had lived in houses or apartments, with ninety-six percent of them citing that their houses or apartments were owned.

Legal status of the sample

The overwhelming majority of refugees are Syrian (ninety-nine percent) with only twelve out of 1600 households being Palestinians from Syria. All but eighteen percent of these households are registered with the UNHCR or

5. See https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/19/lebanon-dire-conditions-syrian-refugees-border-town/.

UNRWA. Furthermore, eighty-three percent of these refugees possess valid papers.

Concerning their residency in Lebanon, the survey of individual refugees shows that fewer than five percent possess a valid residency status. A total of thirty-six percent did have it, but it has since expired. The major reason for non-registration is the illegal entry to Lebanon (forty-three percent), and seventeen percent simply did not go to General Security Authority (GSA) to apply for residency.

When we asked household members why they did not re-register, we received many reasons. The most two important ones were "Not being able to find a sponsor" and "Shortage of money." A few expressed their fear of contacting the GSA. This means that the major source of data about Syrian refugees' status comes only from the UNHCR.

Family expenditure and need

The average expenditure of refugee households is US$245. The top five items are food items, health, shelter, shelter bills (water, gas, electricity), clothing and shoes, followed by other items and services (by order: furniture, home appliances, continual house maintenance, transportation, phone calls and internet), then tobacco, education, and finally entertainment and recreational activities. Lastly, it was found that only fourteen percent of households have a means of transportation, two-thirds of which are motorcycles and one-third are cars. Most of the cars are used for work (mainly transportation) (figure 1).

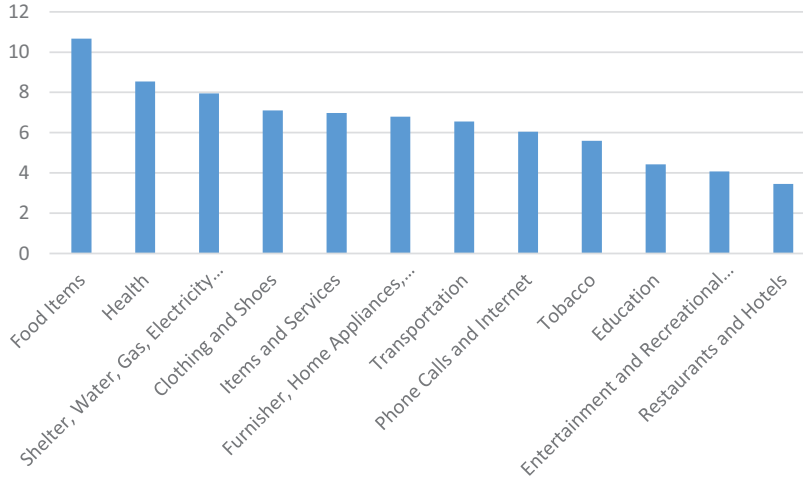

FIGURE 1. Family Expenditure (Scale of 1–12)

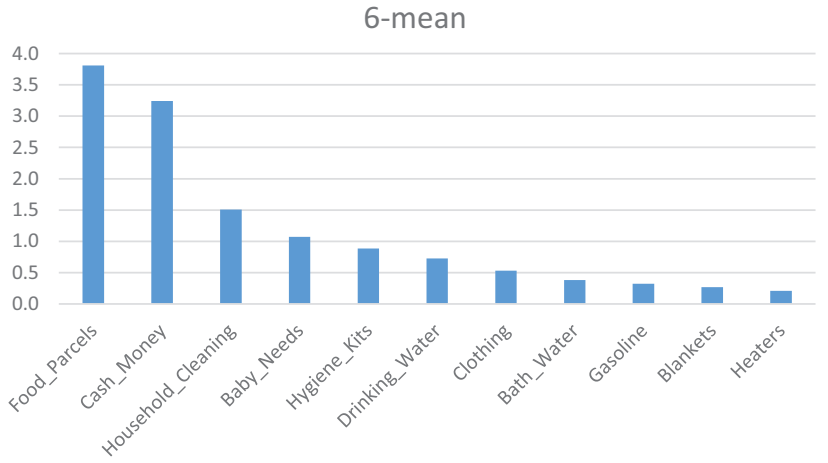

FIGURE 2. Food Needs (Scale of 1–6)

When households were asked about the top five *needs*, for them the order was as follows: food parcels, cash money, baby needs, household cleaning, hygiene kits, bathwater, drinking water, fans, heaters, gasoline, clothing, carpets, mattresses and blankets. The variation related to the type of shelter (tent, caravan, or concrete rooms) is not really important. However, for caravan inhabitants there are relatively more requests for cash money, baby needs, mattresses and blankets than those who live in tents or concrete rooms. Those who live in concrete rooms requested more food parcels and hygiene kits. In any case, this shows to what extent refugees are still living in a precarious way and require basic items for their life (figure 2).

Satisfaction with shelter

Most of the households are satisfied with the shelter they currently occupy (average of three out of five points): they are most satisfied with the natural lighting level (3.2 points), followed by thermal insulation level (three points), privacy level, ventilation level, and noise level. Three-quarters of these shelters include a kitchen, bath, and toilet, and half of them are furnished. Three-quarters have a gas cooker, heater, and television (respectively, seventy-seven percent, seventy-seven percent, and seventy-nine percent) and to a lesser percentage carpets, mats, refrigerators, and fans (respectively, forty-two percent, sixty-one percent, nineteen percent, and forty-two percent). While the majority of shelters have pipes for water (eighty-five percent completely,

enough and almost of enough) and sewage drainage (eighty-nine percent), only around two-thirds have drinking water.

A total of eighty-seven percent considered the electricity availability, an average of ten hours a day, to be satisfactory and/or partially satisfactory. Finally, two-thirds of those households cited that the land which housed their

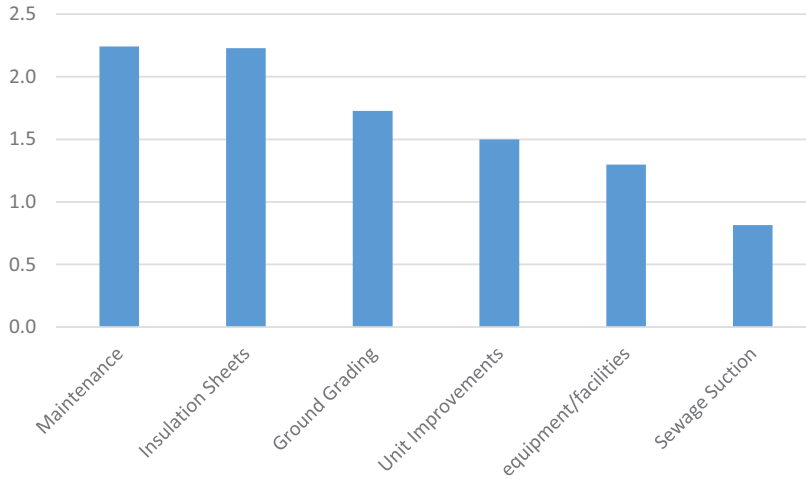

FIGURE 3. Most Urgent Need to Improve the Conditions of the Shelters (Scale of 1–5)

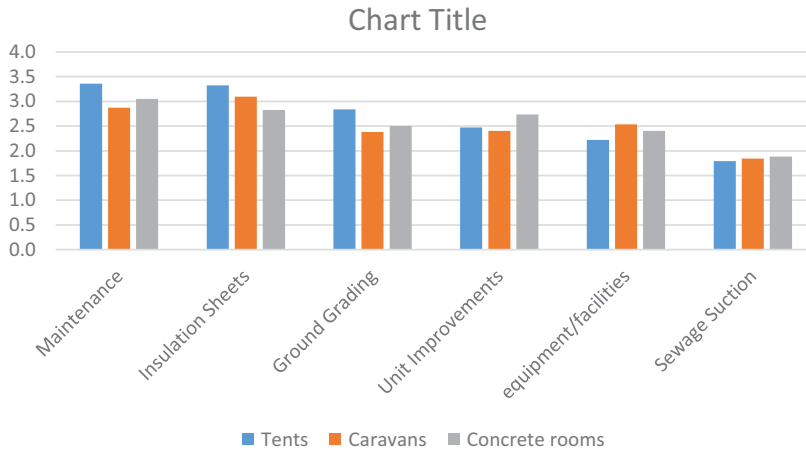

FIGURE 4. Most Urgent Need to Improve the Conditions of the Shelters by Types of Shelter (Scale of 1–5)

shelters was satisfactory and/or partially satisfactory, while the same proportion of households complained about the lack of pest control.

Considering that the shelters are often in bad shape, when households were asked what they deemed to be most urgent to improve the conditions of the shelters, the majority chose in order: maintenance, roof insulation, ground grading, unit improvements, equipment/facilities, and sewage drainage. While the variations between tents, caravans, and concrete structures are minimal, we noticed a high demand for insulation and ground grading, particularly for the tents (figures 3 and 4).

Displacement

The survey shows little mobility within and outside Lebanon, with only five percent of households having at least one of their members traveling inside and to lesser extent outside Lebanon. Two-thirds of cases have one or two members who have moved abroad. The reasons for migration abroad are multiple, but the economic factor is the most important (eighty percent), followed by security reasons (forty-two percent), continuation of education (sixteen percent), and family reunion (fifteen percent). The shelter situation in Lebanon is sufficiently miserable as ninety-five percent of the Syrian refugees cited that they would like to return home if only it were possible and safe, while a third cited a desire to migrate abroad.

So far our analysis of the housing conditions, legal status, family expenditure, needs, and satisfaction with shelters clearly show the highly vulnerable situation of Beqaa Syrian refugees. Yet, the picture will not be complete without going to the level of the household members. This will be dealt with below.

SURVEY OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

The survey of the family members in our household sample shows many aspects of the living conditions of the Syrian refugees. For the purpose of this article, however, we will focus only on three points: social status, education and health, and employment.

Social status: aggravating an early marriage trend

Most of the households are composed of two parents and their children. Yet, we identify six households where friends are living in one household. The population of the household members is quite young, with fifty-four percent

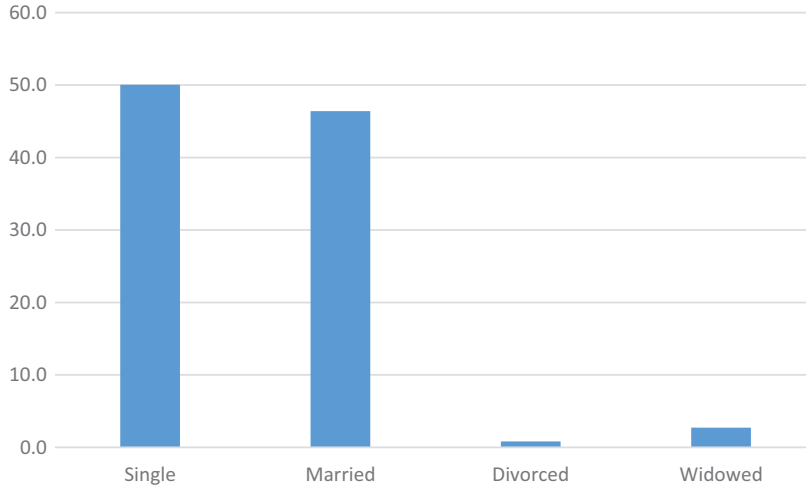

FIGURE 5. Social Status of the Sample's Members (percent)

of the individuals being less than twenty years old. Among those individually surveyed, eighteen percent were born after the onset of the Syrian uprising and aged less than five years. A total of 3.6 percent are aged above sixty. Almost half of the adults (older than fifteen to sixty years) are working. The mean of the year of birth is 1994.66, with a slight difference between males and females (respectively, 1994.93 and 1994.37) (figures 5 and 6).

As see above, around fifty percent of the household members are single, whereas only three percent are divorced or widowed. The percentage of single males is slightly higher than females (51.8 percent versus 48.2 percent). Furthermore, less than three percent of household members live outside of their households.

While forty-six percent are married, we also observe a quite high rate of divorcees at three percent, who are mainly women. We observe a clearly alarming rate of early marriage with twenty-nine percent of household members aged less than eighteen being married (figure 5). This alarming phenomenon was confirmed in some other studies on Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan (El Arab and Sagbakken 2019; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2021). However, the rate identified by the survey is less dramatic than that conducted by UNICEF in 2015–16. According to this survey, 40.5 percent of Syrian refugee women in Lebanon aged between 20 and 24 were married before the age of eighteen. For comparison, this rate is only six

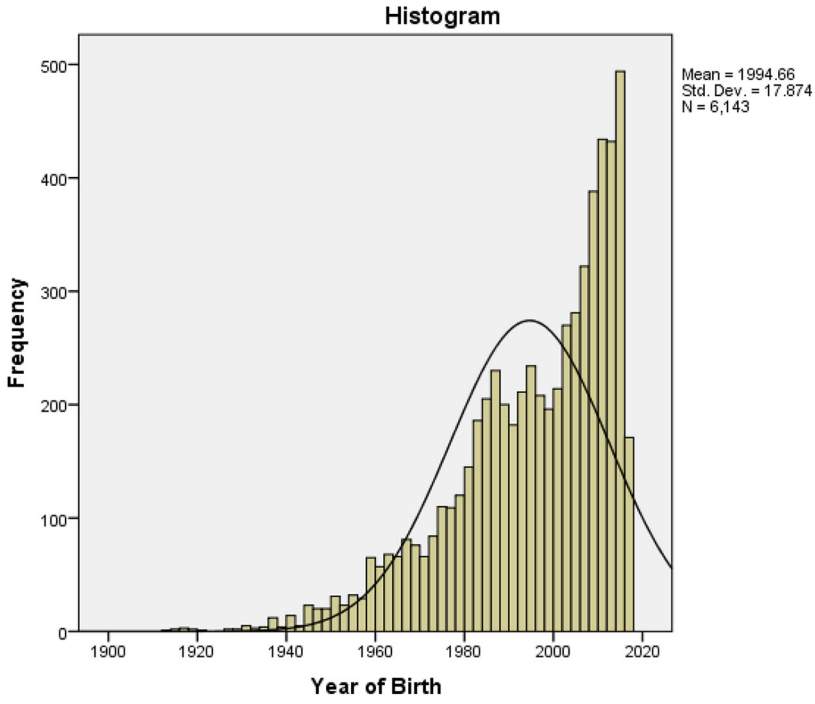

FIGURE 6. Date of Birth of the Sample's Members

percent for Lebanese, twelve percent among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and twenty-five percent among PRS residing in Lebanon.[6]

Precarious education and health

Concerning the level of education among household members aged above six years, twenty percent are illiterate and almost seventy percent have a level less than elementary. Only 2.3 percent have a university-level education. The difference between male and female education levels shows a slightly higher rate for males above high-school level (respectively, 51.0 percent and 53.6 percent versus 49.0 percent and 46.2 percent for vocational/post-high-school level and university level).

For the currently enrolled students, we notice a dramatic dropout from schools among those who are enrolled in the first year versus those enrolled in the second and the following years. It is clear that many Syrian students face

6. See https://www.humanium.org/en/an-alarming-rise-in-child-marriage-among-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon/.

difficulties in moving from the first to the second year. In fact, two-thirds of pupils have dropped out of school, and only twenty-nine percent are continuing their education. The two major reasons for dropping out are a shortage of financial capabilities and the need to work at the expense of continuing their education. Gender-wise, females did not drop out of school because of work, but rather because of marriage commitments. These findings concur with other scholarship (e.g., Shuayb et al. 2014).

The same problem applies to university education. The reasons for the dramatic rate of dropping out can be found in the conditions debilitating access to these institutions. Half of the students go on foot while twelve percent pay for means of transportation. A total of eighty-four percent pay US$30 or less per child monthly to get into schools, which could be a major financial burden for the family.

For those who are enrolled in the schools, ninety-four percent and four percent of them had their tuition fees completely or partially sponsored, respectively, leaving only two percent of those students paying privately for their tuition.

The issue of education is the most critical point, and all the aforementioned data demonstrate tremendous changes in the education levels of Syrians. According to the report from the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the University of California—Davis, there are up to 70,000 displaced Syrian university students in Lebanon, according to researchers' estimates, and at most only 10,000 of them are enrolled in Lebanese universities.[7]

Some other reports are similarly alarming. The IIE estimated that some 450,000 university-age Syrians had become refugees,[8] with about 100,000 who are believed to be qualified to enroll in universities.[9] The lead author of another report on Syrian students and scholars in Lebanon, Keith David Watenpaugh, has highlighted the need to educate Syria's young people and give them a stake in rebuilding their country. In an interview by the University of California—Davis College of Letters and Science with Watenpaugh, he states that "the war will end but the young people who would be integral in rebuilding the country are being left behind." Watenpaugh argues for the necessity of increased research and aid provided for the

7. See http://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2014/06/syrians-lebanon-fewer-universities/.
8. See http://bit.ly/1iAgPyJ/.
9. See http://wenr.wes.org/2016/04/education-in-syria/.

university-age (eighteen to twenty-four years old) subset of the population to help post-conflict countries rebuild successfully (Magaziner 2015).

While seventy percent of the household members declared themselves healthy, twenty-two percent have chronic diseases and around three percent have a disability, and the same percentage need surgery. Most of these sick individuals (ninety-three percent) received their medication from Lebanon and the remainder from Syria. The survey's results on health concur with another survey conducted the same year by the public health research team at the American University of Beirut. Their survey shows in addition that a considerable number of households (43.1 percent) had housing problems and children in these households had higher odds in having three or more health problems compared with children in households without housing problems (Habib et al. 2020).

Rampant unemployment

Prior to the onset of the crisis in Syria, the larger majority of household members possessed blue-collar jobs such as skilled labor and manual work, whereas only twelve percent were employed in white-collar jobs. Household members, previously employed, had an average of 12 years of experience. Contrary to the prevailing stereotypes among the Lebanese population, which assume that the overwhelming majority of refugees have jobs, we found that only ten percent of household members actually had jobs and a third of them worked inside the camps in construction. However, we did observe a phenomenon of child labor of up to three percent of children aged between seven and sixteen. These include jobs in services and sales, skilled agricultural work, forestry, fishery, crafts and trade-related work, and finally elementary occupations. This result concurs with a special survey conducted by Rima Habibi on child labor in the Beqaa Valley (Habib 2019). According to this study, seventy-five percent of children worked in the field of agriculture in occupations considered hazardous, dangerous, and unfit for children. Harsh work conditions were commonly experienced by children, of whom thirty percent reported having been injured at work. Only 18.3 percent of the working children were enrolled in some form of schooling, and the majority of those (fifty-eight percent) attended public schools (Habib 2019, 14). The large majority of these jobs are unstable in that only a quarter of those working are paid on a monthly basis. Furthermore, the majority have only secured part-time work with an average salary of US$145. Needless to say, this is a paltry amount.

In order to observe working trends, the survey had asked the same questions a year earlier (2015). We found a slight increase in working individuals of 10.7 percent. However, we also found that they were able to secure work for only an average of 4.5 months per year with only ten percent of workers being employed fulltime. The primary reason behind such underemployment is that eighty-five percent of the work is season based. Furthermore, we found that half of the labor force worked in the private sector.

DISCUSSION: LOOKING FOR A MORE CONVIVIAL HABITAT

In the light of this survey, the most salient three domains of precariousness in the situation of Syrian refugees are education, health, and early marriage. Yet, one cannot understand these vulnerabilities without putting them in the context of the living conditions of the Syrian refugees in Beqaa. This means that without multidimensional interventions that consider improvements to living conditions, these three domains will worsen. We highlighted these three because they will have a tremendous impact on the future of Syrian refugees. For instance, some studies show devastating consequences for female children subjected to child marriage. El Arab and Sagbakken (2019) identify the drivers of child marriage of refugees in Lebanon (and Jordan) as tradition, honor, economics, fear, and protection-related factors. The legal ambiguous status of Syrian refugees affects many aspects of their living conditions. In addition, most of our sample expresses many challenges related to the hostile environment either by the host community or by state regulations and Lebanese media.

To understand these challenges and how refugees overcome them, as we highlighted in the introduction, we conducted ten in-depth interviews from the survey sample in 2021. We randomly chose from households that moved from the city (Tanayel and ʻAarsal) to camps in Beqaa. In addition, we conducted five interviews with social workers working in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operating there. We noticed from the survey that around sixty percent of the households had moved from previous locations in Lebanon. The declared reasons as to why these refugee households sought residence in URDA-administered areas were mainly for financial reasons whereas a quarter cited security and safety reasons. The in-depth interviews brought many insights to these reasons and show that what was expressed as "financial reasons" was not really about finances, as shall be observed from some of the following narratives of our interviewees.

SH, a male refugee who moved from the city of 'Aarsal to a tented camp:

> before I left my apartment in 'Aarsal, every morning when my two kids went to school, I felt lonely, I tried many times to talk to my neighbors. [. . .] I felt they replied out of pity. [. . .] No interest in interactions. [. . .] My wife felt the same with our neighbors . . . Some would come only to look at our 14 years old daughter, suggesting that some men in the quarter were interested in getting married to her. Unbearable. not to mention how much she was harassed in the street. [In the meantime,] I had visited a friend in a tented settlement, I found him less depressed than me. Through him, my wife and I and our two children found many friends there. [. . .] In addition, I liked the charitable association there. They came providing food and other things to my friend with a smile. I felt conviviality [*mu'alafa*]. I decided to move there, despite knowing the problem of the muddy streets and privacy problems in the camp. I was afraid that my wife would succumb one day to the requests of marriage for my daughter. For her, one less mouth to feed.
>
> (interview on 23 January 2021)

However, two other interviews had a more nuanced discourse about their urban setting, even though they too left for camp. It is interesting that some have relatives in the Bekaa Valley. Chatty (2017) is right to remind us that history matters and that Bekaa was historically part of Syria before the French Mandate, so they have sometimes kinship ties.

Another refugee who also moved to this camp made the same observations and added some comments related to religion: "This association's employees never talked about religion but I do remember once, he came to deliver food and found us praying collectively so he joined us. [. . .] I like when they organize collective iftar [Ramadan breakfast] once a week during Ramadan [. . .] and celebrate the Prophet's birthday with all camp dwellers and their kids [. . .] I felt safer with these people [. . .] this is why I moved to this camp" (interview on 24 January 2021).

I asked a psychologist who works with one of the organizations; she argued that:

> Anxiety and fear of the future for survival in the Lebanese environment are a major psychological problem for Syrian refugees. [. . .] The more collective activities are created in the camp the more anxiety is alleviated. [. . .] Associations are excellent in providing such activities. our therapy is often undertaken by sending a social worker to spend time with critical cases. They are trained to be nice and smiley and the patient. They always

> arrive with a gift such as fruits, sweets (cake or chocolate), toys for the kids. We found the effect of giving gifts miraculous. We learned that in crowded camps people may feel lonely and we need to address this.
>
> (interview on 22 January 2021)

When we asked a female refugee about this last point, she confirmed that social workers often come with gifts and reported that she gives back by offering food or a small, embroidered canvas.

From these extracts (among other examples which there is regrettably no space to include here), it is worth noting that neither kinship nor friendship was as important as neighborliness. More generally, care, love, smiles, and hospitality seemed to be an efficient remedy for the challenging Lebanese environment, something that is often missed in bureaucratized humanitarian agents' behavior. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh has already observed this kind of social solidarity in the way Badawi Palestinian camp-dwellers received many Syrian refugees and PRS since 2012 (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016). In the case of Beqaa-based Syrian refugees, faith-based organizations (FBOs) seem to be instrumental in addressing the conviviality need. Of course, these (often local) associations cannot operate without the major role of the UNHCR or other international and regional "secular" donors, but they understood that they can provide refugees with convivial practices that can convince some to leave their concrete rooms for a tented shelter, but in a convivial setting. There are many studies about the conviviality of the Palestinian refugee camps and how refugees prefer to live in their setting rather than outside the camps (Petti et al. 2013; Knudsen and Hanafi 2011; Hanafi 2010). This attitude changed, however, as soon as the camps became materially very miserable.

CONCLUSIONS

This article reveals the vulnerability of the Syrian refugees' situation in the Beqaa Valley amid the process of (partial) exclusion from refugee status, but also accommodation, integration, and hospitality/hostility. The survey was conducted in 2016–17, that is, before the economic crisis in Lebanon and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore the current situation is much worse currently, in terms not only of the three salient domains we identified (education, health, and early marriage), but also in many other ways. The situation is now a matter of survival. UNHCR—The UN Refugee Agency, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), and UNICEF published the key findings of the 2020 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian

Refugees in Lebanon, arguing that nine out of ten Syrian refugee families in Lebanon are now living in extreme poverty.[10]

In this conclusion we will focus on specific aspects that are not noted in any reports and studies that we have read concerning the Palestinian refugees in Syria. As this article has showed, some of the Syrian refugees preferred to move from an urban setting to a camp setting because it could ensure what Birgit Schäbler and Chafika Ouail called good "neighborliness" (*aljawar*).[11] The camp's conviviality ensures better neighborliness than an urban setting. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, both material and psychological needs are important to different degrees, yet this article argues that this pyramid should be problematized because it is completely egocentric insofar as it considers that the esteem that a person seeks is primarily aimed at satisfying his or her own psychological well-being and that self-actualization only makes sense . . . for oneself (see the criticism of Etzioni 2017). Understanding the needs of the Syrian refugees and their moral struggle to live in a convivial environment, calls for increased collaboration between social and moral philosophy and the social sciences. Marcel Mauss' economy of the gift of giving, receiving, and giving back is particularly important for the population of refugees (Mauss 1925).

Religion, and how it is perceived by some of them, is important because of its potentiality to cultivate social love, but also gift-giving practices works as an anthropological foundation innate within social relationships. This form of exchange is a complex of altruistic and self-interested behavior that was obligated and obligating as much as it was free and voluntary (Gauthier 2020). In this article we are pushing an anti-utilitarian hypothesis, where the desire of human beings to be valued as givers, means that our relationships are not solely based on interest alone, but on pleasure, moral duty, and spontaneity (Caillé 2008). Social science historically focused on the negative side of religion and developed the concept of group-focused enmity. More generally, religion has played some role in helping migrants in their new home or the host society to welcoming migrants. However, religion may be a source of xenophobia or xenosophia. New research in Germany (Streib and Klein 2018) goes beyond the pathogenic model that accounts for outcomes such as xenophobia, Islamophobia, and other forms of (interreligious) prejudice, toward a salutogenic model that entails xenosophia: the wisdom,

10. See https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/nine-out-ten-syrian-refugee-families-lebanon-are-now-living-extreme-poverty-un-study/.

11. For their project in the Orient Institut of Beirut, see https://www.orient-institut.org/events/event-details/neighborliness-in-global-perspective/.

creativity, and inspiration that emerges from the encounter with a stranger and a strange religion. More strikingly, the results clearly demonstrate that the *centrality of religiosity* has positive effects on the welcoming of war refugees, the appreciation of religious diversity, and the view that Islam fits in the Western world (Streib et al. 2018, 372). Forthcoming research also confirms the importance of the role of the German FBOs, particularly Caritas, in the absorption of Syrian refugees there (Mansour and Pappe 2022). Yet, religion as spirituality, institution, and ideology produced contradictory effects within a given time–space frame, and we seek to show here a side that was neglected by the mainstream social sciences. In Europe, Pope Francis, on 24 March 2016, performed an annual Easter season ritual at a shelter in Castelnuovo di Porto (Italy), kneeling in front of Muslim, Hindu, and Christian refugees and washing and kissing their feet.[12] He asked each Christian family to receive refugees. This strong message was highly contested by the right-wing party in Poland whose supporters have a high level of religiosity. This shows the complexity of the religious message: religion and religiosity cannot be understood without connecting them to the other societal factors. They can be a bridge or a barrier to the social integration. There are different types of gifts fostered by religion/humanism from givers in host societies to refugees: free gifts or reciprocal exchanged gifts. Because of this bond between giver and receiver, Mauss (1925) insists that the act of giving creates a social bond with an obligation to reciprocate on the part of the recipient. The better the behavior of refugees and more integrated they are, the more they reciprocate the advanced gift. In other words, religion/humanism may generate compassion among individuals in host societies toward refugees, but social bonds need effort in everyday behavior that refugees need to reciprocate.

Refugees and social worker respondents in the local associations clearly understand the ultimate moral aim as Paul Ricoeur formulates as follows: "The aim of a good life with and for others in just institutions" (Toscano 2005, 12), that is, an ethic of love, hospitality, care, and solicitude with and for others within the framework of institutions that ensure and reinforce social justice. This position does not imply ignoring the historical, social, and cultural preconditions of a good life and assuming that the Aristotelian good life is possible without the appropriate structures that social welfare can provide.

12. See https://qz.com/647532/photos-pope-francis-washes-and-kisses-the-feet-of-muslim-hindu-and-christian-refugees/.

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