

## SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

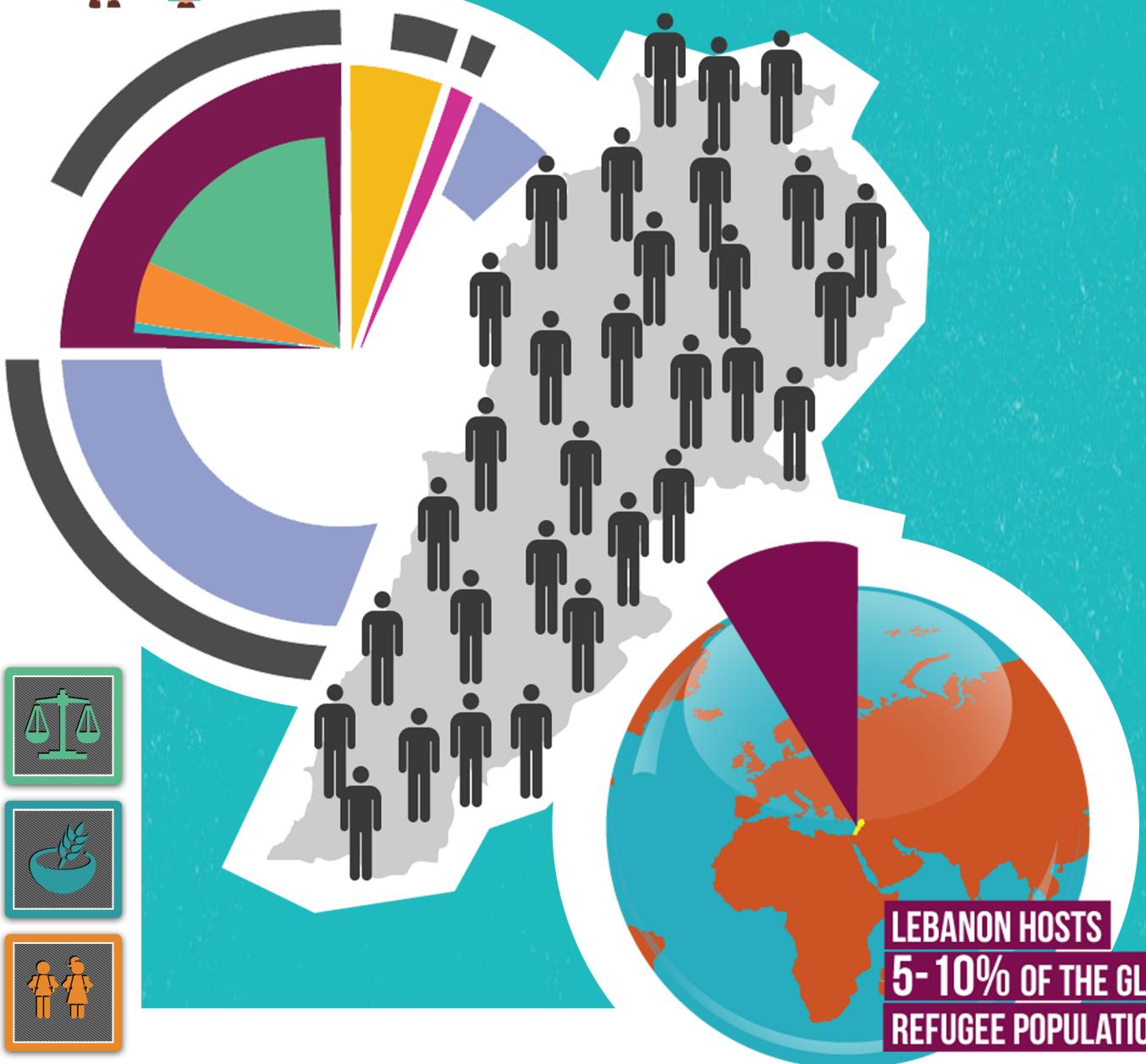
1 IN 4 PEOPLE

IN LEBANON IS A SYRIAN REFUGEE



ALL

#4LEBANON



# MAKING THE CASE FOR STRATEGIC RESETTLEMENT FROM LEBANON

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the start of the crisis in Syria in March 2011, over 5 million people have sought international protection. While one million refugees from Syria have requested asylum in Europe, the vast majority of refugees from Syria are hosted in the neighboring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

Today, Lebanon hosts as many as 1.5 million refugees from Syria, in addition to an estimated 280,000 Palestine Refugees who were already living in Lebanon. This amounts to between 5 and 10 per cent of the total global refugee population<sup>1</sup>. As a result, the number of people living in Lebanon has increased by approximately 27% since 2011. This would be equivalent to the USA hosting twice the population of Canada plus the population of Cuba. Refugees from Syria make up a quarter of the people living in Lebanon, the largest concentration of refugees per capita worldwide.

The situation for refugees in Lebanon is deteriorating and the majority of refugees from Syria are unable to obtain and maintain valid residence. Lack of valid residence remains one of the key barriers to accessing livelihoods and makes it harder for refugees to access the services and assistance they need. Poverty levels remain high, with over 70% of Syrian refugees living below the poverty line. Abuse and exploitation – such as child labor and non-payment of wages – as well as other negative coping strategies are increasing.

At the same time, Lebanon confronts a range of pre-existing economic, environmental, social and political challenges, which have been magnified by hosting such a large number of refugees from Syria. The 'Supporting Syria and the Region' Conference held in London in February 2016 helped to secure \$6 billion in funding for the response to the Syria Crisis in 2016, as well as commitments from donors to provide more development funding and support job creation in the region. However, the shared responsibility for hosting refugees cannot end at the provision of financial assistance.

As the war continues, voluntary return in safety and dignity is not currently an option. It is also not viable to expect Lebanon to host as many as 1.5 million refugees from Syria indefinitely. Used strategically<sup>2</sup>, increased resettlement for refugees from Syria who are currently living in Lebanon will not only provide durable solutions for those refugees who are resettled, but will also help to improve the conditions of asylum for those refugees remaining in Lebanon and help to alleviate pressures that are increasing hardships for the most vulnerable Lebanese.

As part of a comprehensive approach to the refugee crisis in Lebanon, alongside ongoing humanitarian support, increased development investment and job creation initiatives, and calling for necessary domestic policy changes with respect to refugee residency and access to livelihood opportunities for Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, UN Member States must expand resettlement and humanitarian admissions pathways for Syrian Refugees living in Lebanon so that at least 10% are able to access asylum outside Lebanon in 2017.



<sup>1</sup> The range is attributable to the fact that there is a lack of clarity on the total number of registered and unregistered Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The calculated percentage is based on 21.3m refugees worldwide.

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with UNHCR policies and practice on the Strategic Use of Resettlement

<sup>3</sup> The other durable solutions, as per the 1951 Refugee Convention and outlined in the framework for durable solutions for refugees and persons of concern, are voluntary repatriation (return) to the country of origin and local integration in the country of asylum.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR (2012) Frequently Asked Questions About Resettlement

## WHAT IS RESETTLEMENT?

Resettlement is one of the three durable solutions<sup>3</sup> to the plight of refugees and is an essential element of international protection. Resettlement refers to the selection and transfer of refugees from the country in which they have initially sought protection (the "country of first asylum") to a third country that has agreed to admit them as refugees and provide them with permanent residence status.

Refugees and their families who are resettled to third countries are entitled to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals of that country, in addition to protection against refoulement. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country<sup>4</sup>.

### The Principle of Non-Refoulement:

The principle of Non-Refoulement is the 'most essential component of refugee status and of asylum'  
- Note on Non-Refoulement (Submitted by the High Commissioner)  
EC/SCP/2, August 1977

'No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refoulé") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his (or her) life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion' - Article 33 (1), UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)

## OUT OF 1000 PEOPLE IN LEBANON

466 are Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians living in poverty

250 are Syrian Refugees

2.5 have departed Lebanon through the UNHCR resettlement program for Syrians

Over 40 are out of school Syrian refugee children

As many as 175 are Syrian refugees who lack valid residence permits

- █ Syrian Refugees
- █ Palestine Refugees from Syria
- █ Palestine Refugees in Lebanon
- █ Lebanese

**Refugees may be eligible to be considered for resettlement if they:**



**Require legal or physical protection**



**Have survived torture or serious violence**



**Have urgent or serious long-term health conditions**



**Are a women or girl at risk of abuse or exploitation**



**Are an unaccompanied child or adolescent**



**Face persecution because of their gender or sexual orientation**



**Have been separated from their family**



**Lack a foreseeable alternative durable solution**

Resettlement is a distinct concept. To be eligible for resettlement, refugees must meet one or more of UNHCR's vulnerability criteria, and subsequently be submitted by UNHCR to a UN Member State with a resettlement program<sup>5</sup> for their consideration. Not all refugees who are eligible for resettlement are submitted to Member States, and not all refugees who are submitted to Member States are offered resettlement places.

In addition to resettlement, various alternative pathways have been established by a number of UN Member States to facilitate the international protection and mobility of refugees. Such pathways include, for example, private sponsorship, expanded family reunification, and student and labor mobility schemes specifically targeted at refugees. Alternative pathways are a key component to expanding access to protection, though they do not necessarily entitle the refugee to the same rights as resettlement (such as permanent residence or the opportunity to become a naturalized citizen), and for this reason may not be considered as a "durable solution." Some of these alternative pathways are based on assessment of vulnerability (which may or may not match the UNHCR criteria). It is imperative that alternative pathways which are not based on vulnerability criteria do not replace vulnerability- and protection-based pathways, to ensure those most in need and least able to access protection in their current host country are able to access resettlement and humanitarian admissions.

### BEYOND RESETTLEMENT: OTHER SAFE & LEGAL ROUTES

Humanitarian Admission is the process by which countries admit groups of people from vulnerable refugee populations in order to provide temporary protection on humanitarian grounds. Based on vulnerability criteria, but unlike resettlement, they do not necessarily result in permanent settlement and as such are considered a temporary rather than durable solution.

Humanitarian Visas are granted to individuals by a country's foreign embassy in refugee hosting countries. The vulnerability criteria used differs between UN Member States. The visa process and conditions also differ by country. Not all humanitarian visas permit refugees to obtain permanent residency, and these visas may be more time-limited than formal asylum or resettlement.

**Family Reunification:** The principle of family unity is set out in both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). The 1951 Refugee Convention recognized the significance of this principle for refugees and recommended that governments take the necessary measures to ensure that the unity of the refugee's family is maintained. In many countries refugees who are granted asylum or have been resettled can apply to be joined by family members who are still either living in their home country or in a country of first asylum. However despite many calls for more favorable criteria to be applied, the rules of refugee family reunion in many UN Member States are so restrictive that many people don't qualify. In many cases refugees find it incredibly difficult to reunite with family members outside a strict definition of a nuclear family (husband, wife and dependent non-adult children) and it can take refugees many years before they are eligible to even apply for family reunification.

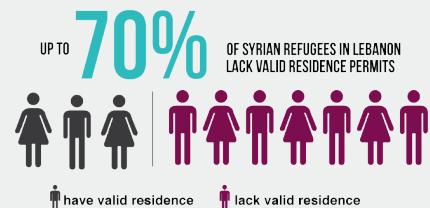
**Other Legal Pathways** are not necessarily based on vulnerability criteria and include academic and labor-based immigration schemes and community or private sponsorship.

<sup>5</sup> Little over 40 countries worldwide offer resettlement programs.

<sup>6</sup> Data analysis of household visits conducted in January 2015

<sup>7</sup> Université Saint-Joseph Institut des Sciences Politiques (2015) Survey on Perceptions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, Full Report (V.1.0)

<sup>8</sup> Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 2016



## WHY MORE RESETTLEMENT IS NEEDED FOR REFUGEES IN LEBANON

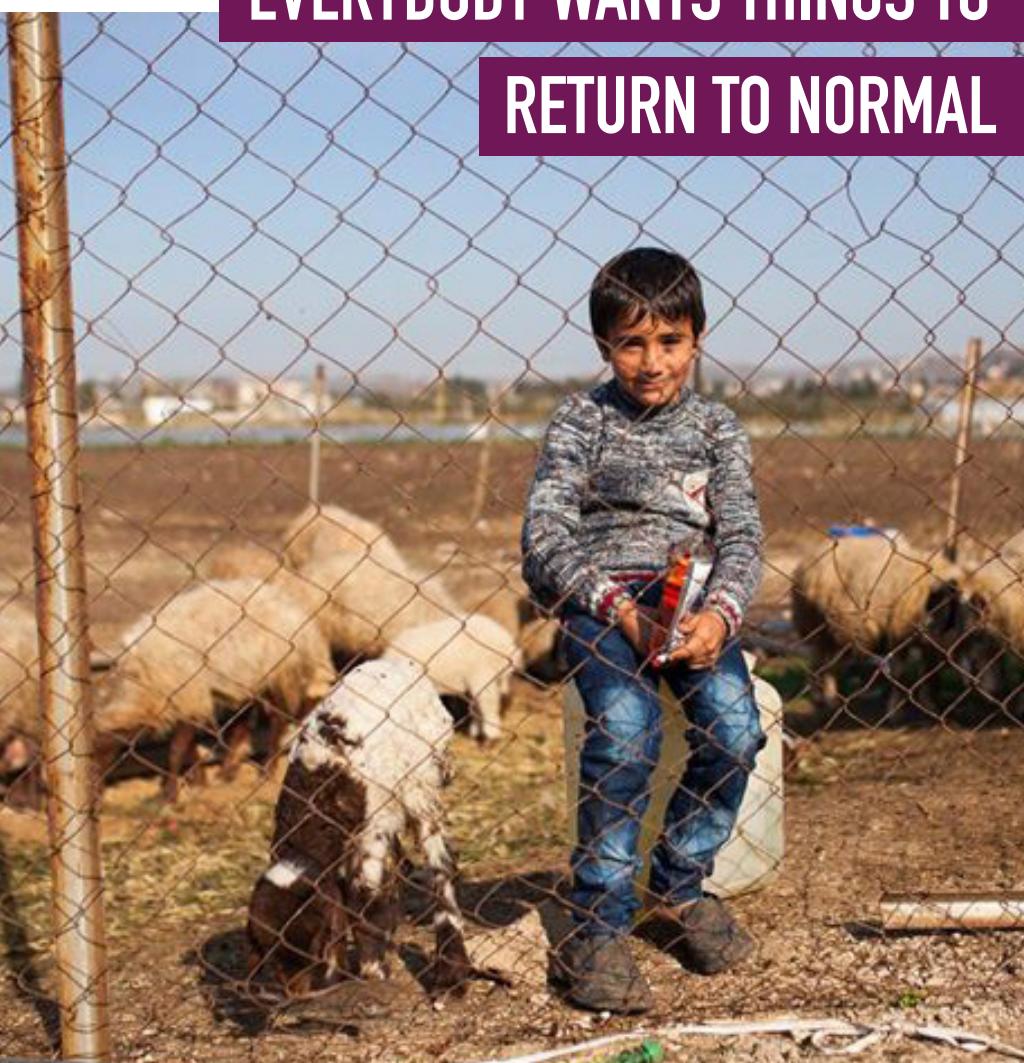
### A DETERIORATING QUALITY OF ASYLUM:

Lebanon is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol related to refugees, and does not officially recognize Syrians as refugees. As a result of the entry and residency regulations for Syrians that the Government of Lebanon put in place in January 2015, the proportion of Syrian refugees in Lebanon lacking valid residence permits increased from around 9% in January 2015<sup>6</sup> to an estimated 70% in August 2015<sup>7</sup>. In the most recent Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR 2016), 80% of households reported that at least one member of their household lacked valid residency<sup>8</sup>, however INGO monitoring indicated that many Syrians able to obtain residency did so through sponsorship, which can incur additional informal fees (up to \$1000) and increase risk of exploitation and abuse.

### Barriers to obtaining & maintaining valid residence

- Syrians must meet costly & difficult requirements to obtain or renew residence permits
- Syrian refugees who are not registered with UNHCR must find a Lebanese sponsor
- It has not been possible since May 2015 for Syrians to register with UNHCR
- All Syrians aged 15 or older must pay \$200 to obtain or renew residence permits (which must be renewed every 6 months)

# NOBODY WANTS TO BE A REFUGEE EVERYBODY WANTS THINGS TO RETURN TO NORMAL



Hussein has names for all his sheep. He can also tell you which ones get sick, which ones have good lambs, and which ones always get in trouble. "In Syria we had many sheep and lots of space for them. Here you have to be careful that the sheep don't run away," Hussein said. The young Syrian lives with his extended family in an informal settlement in Halba, northern Lebanon. The settlement has around 40 families from Idlib, Syria. Although their flock is smaller in Lebanon, the boy and his father say having them has helped regain some sense of normality in their volatile lives and a feeling that they can look after themselves. Everybody wants things to return to normal, which for most includes being able to support their families.

### Barriers to earning sufficient income to meet basic needs:

- Only 27% of Syrian refugees reported working at least 1 day in the previous month
- Average daily wage for Syrians who can find work is just \$15/day
- Abuse & exploitation are increasing, including child labor & non-payment of wages
- A majority of Syrian refugees are vulnerable to arrest if they try to cross checkpoints to find jobs
- Overall economic slowdown means less jobs in construction & agriculture

Refugees who lack valid residence are at a heightened risk of arrest (at checkpoints and during raids), short and long-term detention, and issuance of departure orders, alongside significant limitations on freedom of movement. Limited freedom of movement is one of the root causes of the significant poverty among Syrian refugees because it severely curtails access to livelihoods and makes accessing basic services (like education and healthcare) more difficult. Reports indicate that refugees who lack valid residence are at greater risk of abuse and exploitation. They also face significant difficulties in obtaining civil documentation, such as birth certificates (which may affect the ability of children to claim their Syrian nationality and return when the war ends). Humanitarian assistance provided to refugees from Syria is not nearly enough to meet the minimum cost of living (estimated at \$571 per month for a family of five)<sup>9</sup>. Currently, more than 70% of Syrian Refugees<sup>10</sup> and 89% of Palestine Refugees from Syria are living in poverty<sup>11</sup>, compared to 48% of Syrian refugees in 2014<sup>12</sup>.

Refugees in Lebanon must be able to work if they are to survive. However, during household visits conducted between January 2015 and February 2016, only 27% of adult Syrian refugees reported working at least one day in the past month<sup>13</sup>. Those who are able to find work still struggle to meet their basic needs, as the average daily wage for Syrian refugees is just \$12.77 per day<sup>14</sup>. While the legal framework includes provisions for Syrians working in the construction, agriculture or environment sectors<sup>15</sup>, access of Syrians to the labor market is restricted. This can inhibit the ability of refugees to improve their economic situation, and pushes them into potentially abusive or exploitative labor arrangements. For many Syrian refugees, a lack of available jobs is compounded by a lack of residency, which makes them vulnerable to arrest if they try to cross checkpoints to find employment or if they approach authorities to seek redress (e.g., in cases of abuse or exploitation). For Syrian refugees who have valid residency, many have been required to obtain it via a Lebanese sponsor. In many cases, sponsors are also employers, and abuse and exploitation (such as non-payment of wages) are reported to be more frequent where employers are sponsoring residence permits.

Lack of valid residence, combined with limited opportunities for decent work, results in feelings of insecurity and hopelessness, and is leading to an increase in emergency and crisis coping mechanisms such as relying on child labor for additional income, (as adults are unable to access work), child marriage, begging, accepting high risk jobs and withdrawing children from school. Average debt for Syrian refugee households increased from \$674 in 2014<sup>16</sup> to \$857 in 2016<sup>17</sup>. Only 7% of Syrian refugees<sup>18</sup> and 6% of Palestine Refugees from Syria<sup>19</sup> are food secure. 41% of Syrian refugees live in inadequate shelter situations in sub-standard buildings or informal settlements<sup>20</sup>, without sufficient privacy, exposed to outside weather conditions, and/or without access to safe water or sanitation facilities.

<sup>9</sup> Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, the number of PRS living in poverty has largely remained around 90%

<sup>13</sup> Data analysis of household visits conducted by the Livelihoods sector between January 2015 and February 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Decree 197 of the Ministry of Labor, implemented December 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2015

<sup>17</sup> Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2016

<sup>18</sup> Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 2016

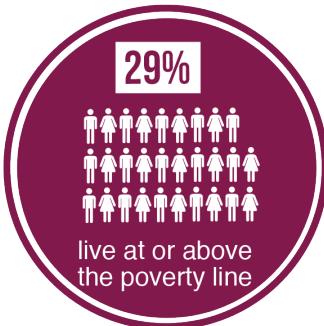
<sup>19</sup> AUB, UNRWA (2015) Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon

<sup>20</sup> Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 2016

## 71% OF SYRIAN REFUGEES ARE LIVING IN POVERTY IN LEBANON

Refugees have grown increasingly vulnerable, with the vast majority living below the poverty line and struggling to afford essentials such as food, rent and healthcare.

The minimum that a Syrian refugee household of 5 people needs to cover its basic needs and live at or just above the poverty line is **\$571** per month. This figure has not been adjusted since 2014 for price increases and does not take residence permit fees, sanitation, and utilities into account, or make provisions for servicing household debt.



**\$571 WAS CALCULATED AND AGREED ON BY THE BASIC ASSISTANCE WORKING GROUP, BASED ON AN ESTIMATED HOUSEHOLD MINIMUM EXPENDITURE BASKET (MEB) OF:**

Food		\$184	Non-food items		\$57
Water		\$48	Transportation		\$27
Health		\$10	Education		\$30
Shelter		\$193	Communication		\$23

POVERTY LINE

**\$571**

EXTREME POVERTY LINE

18% live between the poverty and extreme poverty lines

53% live in extreme poverty

Even if a refugee family receives both food and cash assistance, and is able to earn the average income, there is still a

GAP

\$571  
\$0

To help the most vulnerable refugees address this gap and meet essential needs, the international community and the Government of Lebanon need to ensure predictable humanitarian funding and support, and remove barriers preventing adult refugees from accessing decent work opportunities.

**\$175**

Amount of multipurpose cash assistance received per month by approximately 22% of UNHCR-registered refugee households.

**\$135**

Value of monthly food vouchers for a family of 5 (\$27 per person per month), received by approximately 65% of UNHCR-registered refugees.

**\$177**

Average earned income per month for the 27 % of adult Syrian refugees who worked at least one day in the month preceding the visit during which they were profiled. The average household only has one working member.

## HOW ARE REFUGEES MEETING ESSENTIAL NEEDS?

**74%**

OF HOUSEHOLDS ARE RESORTING TO EMERGENCY AND CRISIS COPING MECHANISMS



Child labor



Begging



Child marriage



Accepting high-risk jobs

**53%**

OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH AT LEAST 1 WORKING MEMBER USE INFORMAL DEBT AS A MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME

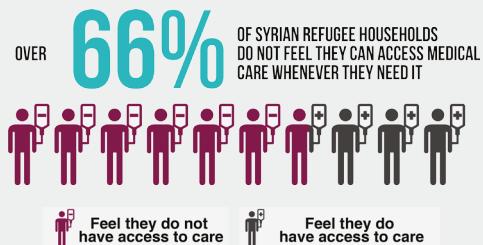
**\$857**

AVERAGE DEBT OF SYRIAN REFUGEE HOUSEHOLDS

**71%**

OF FAMILIES WITH OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN 2015 HAD MONTHLY INCOME OF LESS THAN \$300

## MAKING THE CASE FOR STRATEGIC RESETTLEMENT FROM LEBANON



### Barriers to accessing healthcare include:

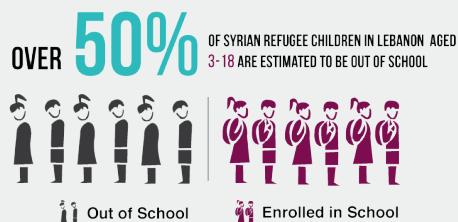
- High costs & limited subsidies for secondary & tertiary care, with virtually no coverage for chronic & catastrophic illnesses
- Physical access restrictions, exacerbated by transportation costs, lack or valid residence & curfews
- Lack of awareness of available subsidized services & assistance options
- Discrimination & denial of services by hospitals and primary healthcare centers
- Overcrowding & lack or required treatments at subsidized facilities

The overall deterioration in the socio-economic status of Syrian refugees also includes access to healthcare. Over 66% of Syrian refugee households do not feel they can access medical care whenever they need it<sup>21</sup>, with cost cited as the primary barrier<sup>22</sup>. Many Syrian refugees are unable to pay the portion of their hospital bills which are not covered by UNHCR (which covers 75-90% of life-saving treatments and pregnancy<sup>23</sup>). Illnesses requiring long-term treatment such as cancer, dialysis and catastrophic or chronic illnesses are not covered by the UNHCR insurance scheme<sup>24</sup> and alternative financial support for refugees with these conditions is very limited.

Some hospitals have adopted extreme practices to try to recover costs, such as requiring deposits, retaining civil documentation, or even refusing to release corpses. The inability of Syrian refugees to cover their hospital bills has severe consequences on their health as well as on hospitals<sup>25</sup>. 17% of Syrian refugees who were unable to access healthcare the last time they needed it reported that they were denied services at Primary Healthcare Centers, while 13% of refugees unable to access specialized care reported that they were denied treatment at hospitals<sup>26</sup>. Some refugees are asked for documents that should not be required to access healthcare, such as a UNHCR registration certificate, while others face ill-treatment and discrimination on the basis of their nationality<sup>27</sup>.

Impacts are also seen in the education sector. Over 50% of Syrian refugee children (more than 235,000) in Lebanon aged 3-18 were estimated to be out of school during the 2015-16 school year<sup>28</sup>, and less than a quarter of adolescent Syrian children were in school. Poverty is forcing an increasing number of families to withdraw their children from school and send children to work (especially once they turn 13)<sup>29</sup>.

While the Government of Lebanon allows and has tried to provide space for Syrian refugees to attend public schools, Syrian children can find it difficult to re-integrate into formal education after long periods out-of-school created over years of displacement. Transportation costs, protection concerns (e.g. traveling after dark or crossing checkpoints, especially for students of 15 year or older who lack valid residence permits), discrimination, bullying and violence, as well as capacity constraints in existing public school facilities, all present further barriers to refugee children attending school.



### Barriers to Education include:

- Poverty forcing families to send children to work
- Skills gaps & other difficulties to re-integrate into education after years out of school
- Unaffordable transportation costs & protection concerns in schools are too far away
- Psycho-social support needs for crisis-affected children
- Insufficient capacity in existing public school facilities
- Drop outs due to bullying & violence

<sup>21</sup> JHU, et al. (2015). Syrian Refugee and Affected Host Population Health Access Survey in Lebanon.

<sup>22</sup> Oxfam (2016) Healthcare: Safe and Dignified Access: Thematic Protection Monitoring Report.

<sup>23</sup> LCRP Health Sector Chapter 2017-2020.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Lebanon Ministry of Public Health (2015) Health Response Strategy: A new Approach in 2016 & Beyond

<sup>26</sup> LCRP Health Sector Chapter 2017-2020.

<sup>27</sup> Oxfam (2016) Healthcare: Safe and Dignified Access; Thematic Protection Monitoring Report.

<sup>28</sup> Education Sector Key Messages - [https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Education\\_Sector\\_Key\\_Messages\\_July\\_2016.pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Education_Sector_Key_Messages_July_2016.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Watch (2016) Growing up without an Education, barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon

# NOBODY WANTS TO BE A REFUGEE EVERYBODY DESERVES ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE



Qussame's family left Syria a while after the war had started. "The war severely impacted my 26 year old daughter's mental health, leading to a nervous breakdown. We moved to Lebanon, and for two and a half years now my daughter has been stable thanks to the treatment she's receiving from Lebanese mental health professionals in Zahle. She is now back to her old self. None of us ever wished to be refugees, but we can make it against all odds. My family is testament to that."

### IMPACT ON HOST COMMUNITIES:

Lebanon faces a stagnating economy, rising unemployment (particularly among young adults<sup>30</sup>), and increasing poverty. Approximately 1.5 million Lebanese live under the poverty line<sup>31</sup>. The conflict in Syria has further strained Lebanon's public finances and amplified the country's fiscal deficit<sup>32</sup>. The prices of basic products have increased<sup>33</sup> and the scale of the refugee influx has exacerbated strains on already fragile public services and infrastructure, including health services, water and electricity supply, waste water disposal, and solid waste management.

The presence of the refugees is felt throughout Lebanon, but the impact is disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable Lebanese communities. The majority of Syrian refugees in Lebanon have settled in the poorest Lebanese communities: about 87% of Syrian refugees live in 251 cadastres where 67% percent of the Lebanese population are living on less than \$3.84 a day<sup>34</sup>. Lebanon has also seen a notable rise in unemployment rates since 2011<sup>35</sup> and many vulnerable Lebanese feel like they are in competition with refugees from Syria for livelihoods<sup>36</sup>, despite Lebanon's long history of employing Syrian workers in sectors such as agriculture and construction.

Job shortages are considered by both Lebanese and Syrians as a key driver of division and social tension between refugees and host communities<sup>37</sup>. This is compounded by feelings of exclusion and marginalization, where Syrian refugees feel economically exploited and stigmatized, while vulnerable Lebanese host communities feel excluded from humanitarian aid.

## MAKING THE CASE FOR STRATEGIC RESETTLEMENT FROM LEBANON

### Strategic Resettlement:

"The planned use of resettlement in a manner that maximizes the benefits, directly or indirectly, other than those received by the refugee being resettled. Those benefits may accrue to other refugees, the hosting State, other States or the international protection regime in general"

2003 UNHCR Standing Committee paper  
EC/53/SC/CRP10/Add.1

### LACK OF A DURABLE SOLUTION:

In protracted refugee situations, where return is not possible in the foreseeable future, or where a country hosting refugees has not adopted the necessary policies that ensure refugee protection, resettlement may be the most appropriate way to provide durable solutions and meet the protection needs of refugees<sup>38</sup>.

In the absence of a solution to the conflict in Syria, voluntary return in safety and dignity is not currently an option. Even when the conflict ends, many refugees from Syria may not be able to return in safety. The Government of Lebanon (GoL) has repeatedly stated that local integration of refugees from Syria is not an option. As such, resettlement is the only durable solution currently available to refugees from Syria in Lebanon, and for those who can't return it will be the only durable solution available at all.

Resettlement should not be viewed in isolation and should be integrated into broader protection strategies. The strategic use of resettlement can open avenues for international responsibility sharing and reduce problems impacting the country of first asylum. Used effectively, resettlement can bring about positive results beyond providing a durable solution for those refugees who are resettled. It also may open avenues for refugees in the country of first asylum to enjoy improved conditions of asylum<sup>39</sup>, as well as relieving pressures on refugee hosting countries and communities.

<sup>30</sup> Alef (2016) Trapped in Lebanon - The unemployment rate of young adults in Lebanon is 35%

<sup>31</sup> LCRP 2015-2016

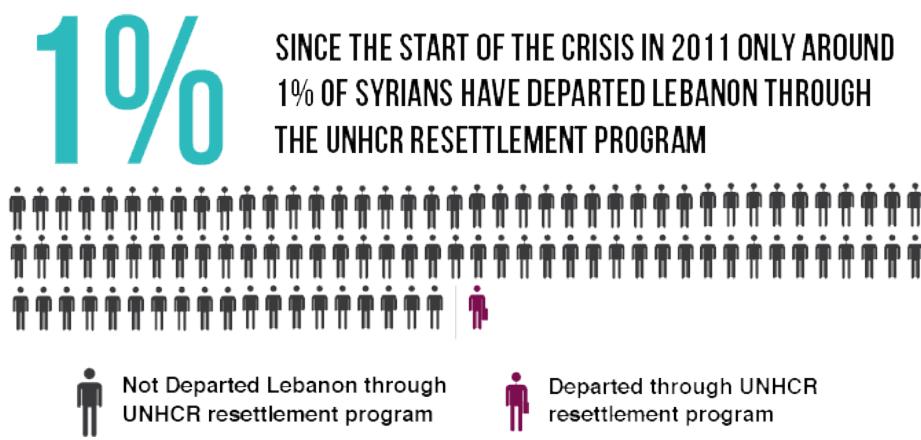
<sup>32</sup> World Bank (2013) Lebanon - Economic and social impact assessment of the Syrian conflict

<sup>33</sup> Alef (2016) Trapped in Lebanon

<sup>34</sup> Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016, Executive Summary

Increasing resettlement for refugees from Syria in Lebanon would demonstrate to both the Government and people of Lebanon a true commitment to responsibility sharing from the international community and a true recognition of the scale and complexity of the crisis. Such an approach would challenge the overarching political narrative that the international community is seeking to 'contain' refugees in the region, and provide a challenge to the increasingly anti-refugee rhetoric and policies throughout the Western world. By operationalizing a rights-based approach to refugee resettlement, much needed political leverage could also be created to ensure that refugees are able to live in dignity wherever they have accessed asylum. In addition increased resettlement opportunities could also help alleviate pressure on public infrastructure, services and the labor market in the poorest Lebanese communities that are hosting the majority of the refugee population. Resettlement must be part of a comprehensive approach that includes increased development investment and overall job creation in Lebanon, as well as domestic policy changes with respect to refugee residency and access to livelihoods for refugees from Syria who are still living in Lebanon.

The primary barrier for refugees from Syria in Lebanon accessing resettlement is a distinct lack of available resettlement places, and an unwillingness of many countries (with the exception of Canada<sup>40</sup> and Norway<sup>41</sup>) to expand their resettlement and alternative admissions programs. UNHCR estimates that 477,000 Syrian refugees across the region will be in need of resettlement in 2017 (a 16% increase in the projected resettlement needs for Syrian refugees compared with 2016 when 410,000 Syrians were estimated to be in need of resettlement). However since 2011, less than 20,000 Syrian refugees living in Lebanon have been resettled through the UNHCR resettlement program.



#### Barriers to Resettlement from Lebanon:

- Lack of available resettlement places to meet the need
- Embassy & UNHCR capacity constraints to submit & process cases
- European quotas for the number of refugees with serious medical needs who can be accepted
- Refugees who lack UNHCR registration face greater difficulties accessing resettlement
- Refugees who still have family members living in Syria may be deemed ineligible

<sup>35</sup> CARE, DRC, IRC, NRC, Save the Children, WVI (2015) Right to a Future

<sup>36</sup> FAFO (2013) Lebanese attitudes towards Syrian refugees and the Syrian Crisis

<sup>37</sup> NCA (2015) The Syrian crisis and its impact on Lebanon – A conflict analysis

<sup>38</sup> UNHCR (2013) FAQs about Resettlement

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR (2010) Position Paper on the Strategic Use of Resettlement - presented at Annual Tripartite Consultations of Resettlement - Geneva, 6-8 July 2010

<sup>40</sup> Between November 2015 and March 2016, just under 14,000 Syrian refugees from Lebanon were admitted to Canada through resettlement and other humanitarian admission pathways (over half of whom were admitted to Canada through private sponsorship).

<sup>41</sup> Since 2013 Norway has admitted 5185 Syrian refugees through Resettlement and other Humanitarian admissions, far surpassing its 'fair share' – for further details see Oxfam (2016) Where There's a Will, There's a Way: Safe Havens Needed for Refugees from Syria.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of a comprehensive approach to the refugee crisis in Lebanon, alongside ongoing humanitarian support, increased development investment and job creation initiatives, and calling for necessary domestic policy changes with respect to refugee residency and access to livelihood opportunities for Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, UN Member States must:

- Commit to provide a proportionate share of humanitarian admissions and resettlement places to refugees from Syria living in Lebanon. At a minimum this should enable 10% of the refugees from Syria in Lebanon (as many as 150,000) to benefit.
- Address resettlement processing capacity constraints in Lebanon. Embassy and UNHCR capacity constraints that are hindering or delaying resettlement from Lebanon should be addressed in order to remove unnecessary barriers.
- Apply more flexible criteria for resettlement and humanitarian admissions programs to ensure that the most vulnerable refugees are able to benefit from these opportunities. Resettlement countries and UNHCR must address barriers to resettlement for the most vulnerable, including refugees with serious medical conditions. In addition, while alternative pathways, such as student visas or private sponsorship, are essential for expanding international protection outside of neighboring countries, it is imperative that these alternative pathways do not replace options based on vulnerability and protection criteria. Those most in need and least able to access protection in their current host country must be able to access resettlement and humanitarian admissions.
- Expand and expedite family reunification programs. Flexible and expansive family reunification criteria are needed, based on a broad definition of a family unit, to facilitate refugees from Syria who have accessed asylum outside the region to be reunited with their families in a timely manner.