LCPS المركز اللبناني للدراسات
The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies

Hermel City Report

Lebanese Municipalities and Syrian Refugees: Building Capacity and Promoting Agency

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September 2023

beirut urban lab مختبر المدن بيروت
AUB American University of Beirut الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت
المركز السوري لبحوث السياسات SyrianCenter For Policy Research

This publication is an output of a collaborative research project co-led by Sami Atallah, former director at the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS); Mona Harb and Mona Fawaz, research directors at the Beirut Urban Lab (BUL, American University of Beirut); and Rabie Nasr, director at the Syrian Center for Policy Research (SCPR). The project is titled: 'Lebanese Municipalities and Syrian Refugees: Building Capacity and Promoting Agency.' This work was carried out with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of IDRC or its Board of Governors.

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Disclaimer: The primary data collection for this research was held throughout 2017 and 2018. Lebanon is currently facing multiple crises—financial, economic, monetary, political, and social crises—in addition to the Covid-19 pandemic. The implications of these crises on local communities are not reflected in the findings of this report, as data collection and analysis were carried out prior. It is important to note that data collection was carried out when the market exchange rate was equivalent to the Lebanese pound's peg to the US Dollar, i.e. USD 1 was equivalent to LBP 1,507.5. At the time of writing, the LBP 3,900 per USD set by the Central Bank was also valid for certain transactions, while the black market exchange rate surpassed LBP 15,000 per USD.

Executive Summary

In the context of Lebanon being a refugee-hosting country and municipalities placed at the forefront of addressing refugees, this study examines challenges and coping mechanisms pertaining to the unfolding refugee presence faced by local level stakeholders and Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees in Halba, Saida, Zahle, and Hermel. The findings of this report are based on qualitative data collection and analysis. In Hermel, the qualitative data collection includes 23 qualitative interviews[1] conducted between August and November 2017, with local stakeholders, including seven members of the municipality, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), a local non-governmental organization (NGO), and a regional union, in addition to 15 interviews with Syrian refugees and one with a Lebanese resident. Because the Living Condition Survey of Refugees and Host Communities in Lebanon (LCSRHCL)[2] was not carried out in Hermel, this report refers to the findings of the 2019 governorate-level Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon Survey[3] (VASyR) carried out by the Inter-Agency Coordination, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Program (WFP), and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

Population Profile: Refugee Influx Driven by Socio-Economic Networks and Settlement of Syrian Refugees Across the City's Different Zones

In 2019, Baalbek-Hermel governorate counted 451,600 residents in 2019, of whom 185,000 were registered Syrian refugees, 109,000 deprived Lebanese, and 2,860 Palestinian refugees.[4] According to UNHCR, Hermel district hosts 6,774 UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees,[5] however the municipality estimated between 8,000 and 10,000 Syrian refugees residing in the locality in 2017, in addition to around 45,000 residents prior to the Syrian conflict.

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[1] Qualitative interviews were co-designed by Mona Harb and Mona Fawaz, co-directors of the Beirut Urban Lab (BUL), at the American University of Beirut. They also co-coordinated data collection and analysis, which was conducted by a team of researchers affiliated to BUL. For more information on the results of the qualitative data analysis, check:

- Fawaz M., El-Hage C., and Harb M., "Unplanned Links, Unanticipated Outcomes: Urban Refugees in Halba (Lebanon)," Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 40(3): 486-507 (2022).
- Fawaz M., Harb M., El-Hage C., "Spatial Patterns, Gray Spacing and Planning Policy Implications: The Urbanization of Forced Population Displacement in Lebanon" in Al-Harithy H. (ed.) Urban Recovery: Intersecting Displacement with Post-War Reconstruction, London: Routledge (2021).
- Fawaz M., Harb M., and Al-Hage C., "Bring the Planners Back: Displacement-Triggered Patterns of Urbanization and City Responses." LCPS Policy Brief, no.58, May 2021.

[2] The Living Conditions Survey of Refugees and Host Communities in Lebanon (LCSRHCL) is a survey that was co-developed in 2018 by Sami Atallah, former director of LCPS, and Rabie Nasr, co-founder of the Syrian Center for Policy Research (SCPR).

[3] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.' https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/73118.pdf

[4] UNOCHA. 2019. 'Lebanon Baalbek – El Hermel Governorate Profile.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/72398

[5] UNHCR. 2020. 'Syria Refugee Response Lebanon, Bekaa & Baalbek-Hermel Governorate, Distribution of the Registered Syrian Refugees at the Cadastral Level.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/82690

Interviews reported instances whereby Syrian refugees in Hermel were either registered with UNHCR, or in the process of applying or trying to apply for UNHCR registration. However, as reported by some, the distance and mobility restrictions between Hermel and UNHCR's office in Zahle pose a challenge.

As a border area close to Syria, Hermel is acquainted with the presence of Syrians due to persistent socio-economic ties between the two communities. Syrians interviewed reported coming from Qussayr, Quara, Qalamoun, Hama, Damascus, and Aleppo in Syria.

Hermel is characterized by three different types of fabric: Hermel city as a mixed urban center, a high-end urban extension, and a poor area in the Jord. Fieldwork showed that Syrian refugees have settled in urban areas, informal tented settlements (ITSs), and on agricultural land.

Stakeholders: Curfew Imposed on Syrian Refugees and Similar Perceptions on Coordination Efforts

The relevant local stakeholders in Hermel are the municipality and aid providers. The municipality reported that a "disaster unit" was set up in order to address the needs of Syrian refugees, as well as Lebanese who fled the war in Syria and reside in Hermel. However, interviews with the municipality and Syrians in the locality confirmed that the municipality does not collect data on Syrian refugees. The municipality reported the imposition of a curfew from 8:00pm to 6:00am in the locality.

Syrian refugees receive humanitarian assistance provided by aid agencies, such as NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies. They receive this aid within specific sectors under the scope of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan.

With reference to aid provision and municipal coordination with aid actors, interviewees reported similar perspectives. The perception that aid to Hermel has decreased was also shared by INGOs. The municipality reported speculation around decrease in aid, such as prioritization of other areas hosting a higher number of refugees, or due to security or governance-related factors. The municipality and aid providers both reported coordinating when it comes to aid.

Housing: Insecurity and Substandard Conditions Faced by Syrian Refugees

In the absence of formal legal procedures for land ownership, division, registration, or construction permits, property disputes are common in Hermel. Fieldwork on this issue, however, does not show significant disputes with Syrian refugees in the locality.

In Hermel, fieldwork showed that Syrians live in rented apartments or houses, informal tented settlements (ITSs), and agricultural land. This is in line with the VASyR survey findings that also indicate that Syrians in the governorate mostly reside in non-permanent and residential shelters, while 6% reside in non-residential shelter. In the case of ITSs, landowners were reported to coordinate and negotiate with aid providers on aid allocated to the ITS. Syrian refugees residing on agricultural land reported working on the land in exchange for shelter. There is also evidence of housing insecurity in the absence of written rental contracts and eviction threats. Syrian households noted that landlords were flexible when it comes to rent payment, while others were strict.

Housing conditions in Hermel were reported as difficult, as interviews with Syrian refugees reported small and overcrowded shelters, a lack of or shared kitchen and bathroom, as well as damp walls and water leakages. Other conditions reported by the 34% of Syrian households in Baalbek-Hermel by the VASyR survey include roof leakage, rot in walls, unsealed windows or doors, rat or insect infestation, unusable bathing or washing facilities or latrine or toilet, dysfunctional water or sanitation pipes, inadequate electricity installment, damaged rood, walls or columns, or danger of collapse. Poor housing conditions were also reported as a factor leading to housing insecurity, while other factors include rental prices, eviction threats, and overworking in exchange for shelter.

Urban Services: Electricity and Water Cuts

Syrian refugees in Hermel reported connection to the formal electricity grid, in addition to private generators to substitute electricity cuts. According to the municipality, electricity supply in Hermel is lower than other areas in the country. This is also confirmed by the VASyR, as the Baalbek-Hermel governorate has the lowest electricity access compared to other governorates.

Both municipal officials and Syrian household interviewed reported water shortages and regular cuts to the water supply

Internet and telecommunication services were reported as essential during interviews with Syrian refugees. Syrian households reported varying experiences with some having access to Wi-Fi and others not, as well as some using mobile services.

Education: Factors Affecting Syrian Enrollment and Performance

The VASyR finds that enrollment of Syrians in Baalbek-Hermel is lower than other governorates, with 13%, 57%, and 14% enrolled in early childhood education, primary, and secondary education respectively in 2019. In Hermel, the municipality reported around 2,000 Syrian students were enrolled in schools in the first and second shift, however, the enrollment rate in Hermel is undetermined. Fieldwork reported that in some border villages the number of Syrian students enrolled in schools surpasses Lebanese. Education-related challenges include the quality of second shift education, language barriers, particularly relating to the French language. According to fieldwork, enrollment is affected by whether households reside in or close to Hermel's urban center, whether households reside on agricultural land, which would entail that their children also work on the land, and the need to work.

Health: Affordability as a Key Concern for Syrians

Affordability is a key healthcare concern among Syrian refugees in Hermel, since fieldwork reported that healthcare costs, such as hospitalization or medical treatment costs, were not fully covered by aid providers. Therefore, Syrians reported resorting to borrowing money in order to cover such costs.

Employment and Job Opportunities: Informality and Low Labor Earnings

According to the municipality of Hermel, the Baalbek-Hermel governorate is among the least developed in Lebanon, with poor public service provision, state negligence, and an absence of rule of law. The governorate's economy is primarily rural and relies on agricultural production, and the governorate has among the highest share of cultivated

and irrigated land, cereal production, as well as distribution of industrial crop in the country. Against the backdrop of national-level agriculture sector challenges, fieldwork reported the absence of profit guarantees, protection policies, and effective cooperatives. Child labor was also reported in the agriculture sector. Cannabis is also cultivated in the governorate as an illicit crop within the clan-based local dynamics. Moreover, the governorate also hosts a number of industrial firms with the potential of development in certain production lines.

Particular to Hermel is the Assi River, which has fish farms and is a tourist attraction, although tourism was reported to have been affected by the Syrian conflict. The locality is faced with the challenges of being a border town with a permeable border, which has facilitated the movement of construction workers, as well as material, for instance.

According to the Central Administration of Statistics and International Labor Organization,[6] the unemployment rate in Hermel in 2019 was 10.2%, lower than the national average (11.4%), while the VASyR reported that the unemployment rate among Syrians in the governorate in 2019 was 49%. The VASyR findings show that agriculture (18%) and construction (17%) as the two main sectors of employment in the governorate. Fieldwork confirmed that these are also the two main sectors of employment for Lebanese as well. Anecdotal accounts reported lack of stability and insecurity in finding job opportunities, as well as the importance of networks in findings employment opportunities. Moreover, informality, long working hours and low wages were reported. Work contracts were reported as absent and Syrians expressed an effort to avoid confrontation in the case of payment default.

Income and Poverty: Syrians Have Low Incomes and Expenditures and Higher Poverty Rates

According to the VASyR, the average monthly income per capita of Syrian refugees at the governorate level was USD 28 in 2019, less than half the national average. Informal credit or debts from shops, friends or hosts, food vouchers, or financial assistance are the main sources of income for Syrians based on the VASyR

The VASyR also reports that Baalbek-Hermel's household expenditure among Syrians in 2019 was USD 73.8, lower than the national average, whereby it was mostly spent on food (45.7%), health (17.7%), and rent (9%), among other expenses. During interviews, Syrian households reported that living expenses in Lebanon are higher than in Syria, and expressed concerns in affording rent, food, transportation, internet, diapers, clothing, and children's medication.

In Baalbek-Hermel, VASyR estimates that 88.9% of Syrian refugees lived on the USD 3.84 poverty line, while Syrian households were indebted for food, rent, healthcare, medication, and debt repayment. The VASyR shows that the governorate has the highest rate of Syrian

[6] Central Administration of Statistics and International Labour Organization. 2019. 'Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/73718

households below the survival and minimum expenditure basket and lowest percentage of household members that work.

Mobility Difficulties Faced by Syrians and General Sense of Lack of Safety

Mobility restrictions were reported by Syrians in Hermel due to the limited transportation available. Within Hermel, reliance on motorcycles was reported, while privately operated vehicles minibuses were resorted to in order to reach Zahle or Beirut. Checkpoints were cited as a restriction that is also related to the Syrians' legal status and a factor that aid providers keep in mind when planning interventions in order to ensure beneficiaries' access. The curfew set by the municipality is another barrier.

Although Syrians interviewed did not report particularly feeling unsafe, the lack of access to human rights and national-level mistreatment could be linked to general safety perceptions. Female Syrian respondents reported instances of harassment.

Social Interactions: Evident Intergroup Interaction and Solidarity within Syrian Networks

Intergroup interactions were reported during interviews, as Syrian refugees' social network include Syrians and Lebanese, including relatives, friends, or neighbors. Lebanese networks provide Syrians with sponsorship, protection, shelter, or employment. Historically, strong social and economic ties are reported to exist between Lebanese and Syrians in Hermel, such as intermarriages. Fieldwork also reported potential tension due to employment competition, during Hezbollah's martyr funerals, or related to humanitarian assistance. Stereotyping of Syrians was also reported during interviews as though Syrian refugees were perceived in a certain way regardless of their background or social class.

As for interaction within the Syrian community, interviews cited a sense of solidarity, as well as the importance of Syrian networks for sharing information and providing moral support. Some Syrian respondents also reported not having a Syrian network.

Conflict Resolution: Low Availability of Mechanisms to Settle Tension

In the case of inter-group tensions, the availability of formal mechanisms to settle inter-communal tension was not reported by Syrian respondents. However, anecdotal accounts pointed to resorting to family members or their Lebanese network to solve conflicts, often in return for something.

Introduction

Lebanon has been hosting Syrian refugees since 2011, and has the highest refugee per capita rate in the world, as refugees make up around 30% of its total population.[7] In September 2020, Lebanon hosted 879,529[8] Syrian refugees registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Lebanese government estimates hosting more than 1.5 million Syrians.[9] In 2021, Syrian displacement entered its eleventh year.

In the absence of an administrative and legal governance framework for refugees in Lebanon, the government's approach shifted from a laissez-faire approach in the early years of the Syrian conflict to adopting restrictive policies in 2014. Early on, the government maintained an open border and announced the policy of dissociation from the Syrian conflict, as well as the policy of non-encampment of Syrian refugees.[10] As the number of UNHCR registered Syrian refugees exceeded one million in 2014, the government adopted restrictive measures towards Syrians that aimed to reduce their number and promote their return.[11] These measures included border restrictions, municipal censuses and policing, employment restrictions and sponsorship. In addition, the government requested that UNHCR stop registering Syrians in 2015, hence those who hadn't registered with UNHCR and those who entered Lebanon after the suspension of registration are not included in the official number of UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees. In 2019, the government implemented a series of additional restrictive policies on Syrian refugees' employment, shelter, and residency. The government's restrictive stance has generally affected refugees' protection space,[12] access to human rights, as well as social services. In light of the government's unwillingness to address the presence of Syrian refugees, refugee governance was left in the hands of the municipalities and security agencies.

This report presents the findings of a joint research conducted from April 2017 to December 2020, which examines local governance and service provision dynamics pertaining to the refugee presence in four selected mid-size cities: Halba, Saida, Zahle and Hermel. In Hermel, the research adopted qualitative tools of inquiry. Twenty-three qualitative interviews were conducted with local stakeholders in Hermel between August and November 2017, including fifteen Syrian households and one with a Lebanese resident, as well as seven with representatives of the municipality, international non-governmental

[7] European Commission. 2019. 'European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations.' https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/lebanon_2019-08-28.pdf

[8] UNHCR. 2020. "Syria Refugee Response Lebanon Syrian Refugees Registered – 30 September 2020." https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/82685

[9] UNHCR. 2019. 'Lebanon Fact Sheet.' https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR-Lebanon-Operational-fact-sheet-January-2019.pdf

[10] Atallah, S. and D. Mahdi. 2017, 'Law and Politics of "Safe Zones" and Forced Return to Syria: Refugee Politics in Lebanon.' The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf

[11] UNHCR. 2015. 'Refugee Response in Lebanon Briefing Documents.' http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/droi/dv/95_finalbriefingkit_/95_finalbriefingkit_en.pdf

[12] Measures introduced by the government in 2015 have impacted Syrian refugees' entry and halted refugees' UNHCR registration in the country. The latter is crucial for return support when the circumstances for safe and dignified returns are met, as well as resettlement. See UNHCR. "Protection." https://www.unhcr.org/lb/protection

organizations (INGOs), a local non-governmental organization (NGO) and a regional union. The interviews were carried out with ethical considerations and the respondents' consent.

The research team was supposed to generate quantitative data for Hermel from the Living Condition Survey of Refugees and Host Communities in Lebanon (LCSRHCL), similar to what was done for the project in 2018 in Saida, Zahle and Halba. However, the team decided not to administer the survey in Hermel after the municipality requested that field surveyors are to be accompanied during their work by people assigned by the municipality. This would have biased the responses, and thus the team opted not to proceed. This report therefore presents the findings compiled from the qualitative interviews exclusively. It is complemented with quantitative data on Hermel extracted from the Inter-Agency Coordination, UNHCR, World Food Program (WFP), and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon Survey (VASyR) on the governorate of Baalbek-Hermel survey of 2019. Research limitations also do not allow for the generalization of findings and drawing of conclusions due to the small sample size of respondents who participated in qualitative interviews.

This city report entails seven sections. The first section presents findings pertaining to the population in Hermel, Syrian refugees' legal status and displacement, as well as the city's population growth and urban structure. The second section provides an overview of local stakeholders and their perceptions of aid and coordination efforts. The third section covers housing and urban services for Lebanese and Syrians in Hermel, which entails housing insecurity, housing conditions, urban services, and the informal provision of services. The fourth section addresses social services, namely Syrian refugees' and Lebanese communities' access to education and healthcare services. The fifth section discusses Lebanese residents' and Syrian refugees' employment and job opportunities. The sixth section examines income and poverty among both communities. The final section addresses access to transportation and mobility, and safety perceptions among Lebanese and Syrians in Hermel, as well as social interactions, intergroup perceptions, and conflict resolution mechanisms. This report has three annexes: the first lists the interviewees who participated in the qualitative data collection, the second presents a map of UNHCR registered Syrian refugees in Hermel as of 30 September 2020, and the third shows a list of UNHCR implementing partners actively providing assistance in the district.

Population Profile

This section presents the profile of Hermel's population, Syrian refugees' legal status and displacement, as well as Hermel's population growth and urban structure.

The governorate of Baalbek-Hermel was founded in 2003 as per Act 522 of 07/03. Its administrative center is Baalbek. Hermel district is one of the two districts within the governorate of Baalbek-Hermel and is connected to the rest of the country through two main roads: the first one to Baalbek and the second one to Dannieh in the North governorate. It is neighbored in the west by Akkar and Minnieh-Dannieh districts, by Baalbek district in the south, and the Syrian Arab Republic in the north-east.

The governorate counted 451,600 residents in 2019, of whom 185,000 registered Syrian refugees, 109,000 deprived Lebanese, and 2,860 Palestinian refugees.[13] As of September 2020, Hermel district hosts around 6,774 UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees.[14]

The area of Hermel city is 136.4 sq.km. The long distances (100-135Km) to Zahle, the Bekaa provincial capital, and to Beirut (145-175Km) contribute significantly to its isolation. The only present mode of shared transportation is the privately owned mini-vans operating only between Beirut and the city of Hermel.

Population

According to the municipality, Hermel's population was around 45,000 prior to the displacement of Syrians and Lebanese from the war in Syria. The municipality estimates that between 8,000 and 10,000 Syrian refugees resided in Hermel in 2017. In addition, around 15,000 Lebanese were reported to have fled the war in Syria and resided in Hermel at the same time, and Lebanese returnees were neither considered as refugees fleeing conflict by the Lebanese government nor were they provided with assistance and support.

As of September 2020, the number of UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees in the city of Hermel is 6,580.[15] The difference in the number of Syrian refugees residing in Hermel reported by the municipality in 2017 and UNHCR in 2020 suggests that the municipality is inflating its numbers or that there are Syrian refugees in Hermel not registered with UNHCR.[16] Interviews with Syrian refugees residing in Hermel reported that cases of Syrian households registered with UNHCR, while there are other families who applied to register but were awaiting a response or were awaiting an appointment in order to be register. Interviews also reported difficulties in reaching UNHCR's office which is located in Zahle due to mobility restrictions such as checkpoints or the office being saturated. One Syrian

[13] UNOCHA. 2019. 'Lebanon Baalbek – El Hermel Governorate Profile.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/72398
[14] UNHCR. 2020. 'Syria Refugee Response Lebanon, Bekaa & Baalbek-Hermel Governorate, Distribution of the Registered Syrian Refugees at the Cadastral Level.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/82690
[15] UNHCR. 2020. 'Syria Refugee Response Lebanon, Bekaa & Baalbek-Hermel Governorate, Distribution of the Registered Syrian Refugees at the Cadastral Level.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/82690
[16] In 2015, UNHCR was requested to stop registering Syrians by the Lebanese government. As of May 2015, Syrians stopped being registered. This means that the number above does not account for Syrians who hadn't registered with UNCHR or Syrians who have entered Lebanon afterwards.

family reported being dismissed by UNHCR and only being able to register their children, as the mother is originally a Palestinian refugee from Syria (PRS),[17] although the father is Syrian.

Legal Status of Syrian Refugees

Prior to 2015, Syrian refugees' residency and employment in Lebanon was permitted by the 1993 bilateral agreement for Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination between Lebanon and Syria.[18] As such, Syrians were permitted to enter Lebanon for a renewable period of 6 months as well as work in Lebanon. Among the border restrictions adopted in 2014, Syrians needed to prove they belong to one of the following seven categories to enter the country: (1) "travelling for tourism, work, trade, and ownership or rent of real-estate"; (2) study; (3) transiting via airport or maritime port; (4) Syrians with 'displaced' status based on the Minister of Social Affairs' decision; (5) medical reasons; (6) access to embassies; and (7) have the sponsorship of a Lebanese national.[19] In 2015, alongside halting UNHCR registration, the government adopted restrictive and costly residency regulations, making it difficult for Syrians to attain and sustain legal status. The government waived residency renewal costs for UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees, while Syrians sponsored by Lebanese nationals with residency permits pay hefty fees, and Syrians who are neither registered with UNHCR nor have a sponsor and thus have an illegal status. In addition, Syrian employment is also regulated within the framework of the sponsorship system. Largely criminalized for their work and presence, Syrian refugees are pushed to the category of laborer and are required to pay prohibitive costs for work permits, eventually falling in the trap of the illegal status to which it is estimated that a vast majority of refugees are confined today.[20] Legal residency facilitates mobility, access to services and employment opportunities. Syrian refugees caught at checkpoints without legal residency are detained by security institutions for a certain period and eventually released.[21]

According to the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR), the percentage of individuals aged 15 years and above holding legal residency permits in Baalbek-Hermel dropped from 38% in 2018 to 14% in 2019, which is below the national average (22%).[22] At the national level, Syrians reported various reasons for not being able to obtain legal residency, such as being asked to obtain a Lebanese sponsor despite being

[17] PRS are under the United Nations Refugee and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East's (UNRWA) mandate.
[18] Janmyr, M. 2016. 'Precarity in Exile: The Legal Status of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.' Oxford Refugee Survey Quarterly. https://academic.oup.com/rsq/article/35/4/58/2609281
[19] Dionigi, F. 2016. 'The Syrian Crisis in Lebanon: State Fragility and Social Resilience.' http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/65565/
[20] Fawaz, M., A. Gharbieh, M. Harb, and D. Salame. 2018. 'Refugees as City Makers.' Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs. https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/research_reports/2018-2019/20180910_refugees_as_city_makers.pdf
[21] Human Rights Watch. 2016. '"I Just Wanted to be Treated like a Person," How Lebanon's Residency Rules Facilitate Abuse of Syrian Refugee.' https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/01/12/i-just-wanted-be-treated-person/how-lebanons-residency-rules-facilitate-abuse
[22] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.' https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/73118.pdf

registered at UNHCR, entering Lebanon illegally, and arriving after 2015.[23] This was confirmed during interviews with Syrian refugees in Hermel as some entered Lebanon via the formal border crossing, and others crossed informally.

Interviews with Syrian refugees reported cases of Syrians registered with UNHCR and hence having a legal residency on that bases, and others requiring a sponsor or sponsored by their employer or a Lebanese relative. The lack of documents was reported as an impediment to acquiring legal residency and the sponsors' assistance in that regard, as an interview explained: "I cannot be legally registered because I do not have my official papers. My sponsor managed informally to secure me civil status."

Displacement of Syrian Refugees

Syrian refugees have fled their country escaping conflict and violence, and sought refuge in neighboring countries. In Lebanon, Syrian families chose to settle in different cities across the country depending on their background and individual characteristics. As a border city with close proximity to Homs in Syria, a municipal representative described Hermel as a locality that is used to the presence of Syrians, as well as the easy movement of people and goods across the border with strong social and socio-economic ties between Lebanese and Syrians. During the 2006 war with Israel, Hermel's inhabitants were reported to have sought refuge in Syria. Based on interviews with Syrian households, Syrians reported originally coming from Qussayr, Quara, Qalamoun, Hama, and Damascus, as well as Aleppo, which is more distant.

Interviews with Syrian refugees reported that Syrians chose to settle in Hermel due to social networks, or employment in the area prior to the Syrian war. A Syrian respondent reported selecting Hermel as "I have family in Hermel, Hermel is close to Syria, it is on the Syrian-Lebanese border." Respondents also referred to social networks with other Syrian refugees who led them to Hermel. Another respondent reported: "My husband and I moved to Hermel because we heard that it is the best place for Syrians to live in."

Employment in Hermel prior to the Syrian war was reported as another reason Syrians settled in Hermel with their families. An interviewee reported: "Before the war, my husband used to spend four months in Hermel and four months in Syria, as he first came to Hermel 25 years ago. He is a construction worker and his work was mainly concentrated here; the children and I moved 3 years ago." This was also the case with two other respondents who fled the war and settled in Hermel, either because the head of household was living in Lebanon prior to the war or because relatives faced the same circumstances.

Interviews also reported Syrian refugees settled in Hermel after fleeing Arsal's security incidents. Following clashes and the abduction of Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) soldiers in 2014, the army and Hezbollah launched offensives against Islamic State and Fatah Al Sham Front militants on the outskirts of Arsal in 2017, in order to take back control of Lebanese

[23] Ibid.

territory and free the area of militants.[24] The offensive had implications on Syrian refugees residing in Arsal. One interviewee reported losing her daughter during the clashes: "My daughter was severely injured and kept bleeding until she passed away. We were trapped and we could not go to any hospital." Another interviewee reported "We spent 20 days trapped in Arsal [in the informal tented settlement] without food; conditions were extremely bad. No one looked after us. The camp was completely burnt. We then decided to move to Hermel because our neighbors in the camp advised us to move with them to Hermel." A respondent reported preferring to live in Hermel compared to Arsal, as the respondent did not feel safe in the latter and feared getting killed, as he was held hostage by Islamic State militants for 57 days.

Other respondents reported settling in various cities prior to Hermel, such as Arsal and Ras Baalbek, or even Byblos—a case of a refugee who was previously employed in Byblos and moved to Hermel due to Syrian networks.

Hermel's Population Growth and Urban Structure

Considerable morphological and environmental factors differentiate Hermel's central city and surrounding villages, with localities in the valley markedly different from the ones in the mountains. When walking in the streets and neighborhoods of the dense city of Hermel, the socio-economic disparities and how they are materialized in dwellings are evident. As for services and infrastructure observed during fieldwork, the city entrance is inviting, and some services are available, such as banks, hospitals, restaurants, a public park and a theme park.

Yet, this changes in the Jord and other villages, such as Kwakh, Marjhine, Qasr, Wadi Turkman, and Jwar el-Hashish, where poorer quality of residences and empty lands reserved for illicit crops coexist. The road network there is in a very poor state. This is interrupted by the villas built in new urban extensions such as Mansoura and Chwaghir.

The area is thus characterized by three different types of fabric: a mixed urban center, i.e. Hermel city, as well as high-end urban extensions, and a poor area in the Jord. An INGO representative in Hermel identified several areas where they reside: Syrian refugees have settled in urban areas such as Dawra, in rented houses, as well as in ITSs, mainly in Qasr (4 camps), Hawsh (2 or 3 camps), Bayt el Tashm, and el-Tal, at the caza level. ITSs were also reported to have been established in Bouayda, Bdayta (2 ITSs), Mansoura (3), in addition to another three next to Assi Hospital. Moreover, according to a local NGO representative, around 50 Syrian refugees are reported to live in peripheral areas on agricultural land.

[24] Atallah, S. and D, Mahdi. 2017. 'Law and Politics of "Safe Zones" and Forced Return to Syria: Refugee Politics in Lebanon.' The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. http://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf

Stakeholders and their Perceptions on Aid and Coordination

This section presents an overview of the relevant local stakeholders in Hermel, and their perceptions and coordination efforts. Stakeholders include the municipality, other public institutions, aid providers, and religious actors.

Stakeholders

Municipality

The municipality of Hermel is classified as a large municipality with 21 council members. The municipality was established in 1894, and is the oldest in the caza of Hermel. Based on an interview with a municipal representative, the municipality has four official employees, two municipal police officers, one tax collector, and one treasurer, as well as 70 daily workers. The interview reported that the municipality's revenue sources include central government transfers, municipal taxes, as well as transfers pertaining to cellular phone and landline networks. Salaries, solid waste collection, vehicles maintenance, and fuel accounted for 50% of the municipal budget in 2017, while other municipal expenses included municipal union membership fees and municipal projects. According to the interview, the municipality has implemented developmental projects, such as infrastructure services, socio-cultural activities, and philanthropy services. However, although several development projects and activities were implemented, many have not led to tangible outcomes, for reasons ranging from administrative issues, financial constraints, and corruption to political conflicts. The municipality has several committees, including environmental, agricultural, tourism, education, and culture. The municipality reported facing an additional burden when it comes to solid waste collection—the amount of solid waste collected per day increased from between 15 and 18 tons of waste per day to 27 and 32 tons per day, and the municipality lacks a sorting system.

With regard to Syrian displacement in Hermel, the municipality reported that it had set up a "Disaster Unit" designated for Syrian displacement in Hermel, as well as for Lebanese who fled the Syrian war and returned to Lebanon. The municipality reported that it has not conducted a census of Syrians who have settled in Hermel, as it depended on the registration of rental contracts. This was also confirmed during interviews with Syrian refugees who reported that the municipality does not collect data, does not visit them in their homes, or provide assistance.

The municipality has imposed a curfew from 8:00pm to 6:00am as a result of the Arsal clashes, and Syrian refugees who violate the curfew are arrested for one night. Fieldwork with INGO representatives reported that "curfews are occasionally imposed, especially following some incidents and during some events, such as martyrs' funerals," and that curfews are necessary in some instances in order to avoid potential Syrian-Lebanese clashes in a way that also protects refugees.

Other Public Agencies

With the start of Syrian displacement to Lebanon, fieldwork reported that the role of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) diminished, as the refugee file was handed over to the municipality. As such, coordination with INGOs, NGOs, and other regional MoSA offices in this regard stopped. However, MoSA offers Lebanese vulnerable communities assistance, healthcare, and education assistance, and conducts fieldwork and needs assessments. Moreover, it also occasionally provided Syrian refugees with medication based on donor funding.

Aid Agencies: NGOs, INGOs, and UN Agencies

In the absence of a state-led response to Syrian refugees, the LCRP—jointly led by the UNHCR, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and MoSA—has been responding to humanitarian needs in various sectors, including basic assistance, education, energy, food security and agriculture, health, livelihoods, protection, shelter, social stability, and water. Basic assistance entails cash-based assistance to economically vulnerable families, including both Syrian refugees and Lebanese. The education sector covers access to and the quality of formal and informal education opportunities, as well as the governance of the education system. Energy assistance aims to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy, support the rehabilitation and reinforcement of electricity networks, and improve the capacity of implementing partners. The food security and agriculture sector seeks to improve food availability via in-kind food assistance and sustainable food and agriculture value chains, food access via cash-based food assistance, promote food safety and nutrition practices, and strengthen food security by building the capacity of national public institutions. Health assistance entails improving access to comprehensive primary healthcare and hospitals, as well as improve adolescent and youth health and the control of outbreaks and infectious diseases.

In light of the employment restrictions imposed on Syrian refugees, livelihood interventions include vocational training that is not tied to job opportunities, short-term labor-intensive interventions, and financial and business development support. The protection sector aims to ensure access to refugee protection, and the creation of a safe protective environment, reduction of sexual and gender-based violence, and protection against neglect, violence, abuse, and exploitation. Shelter interventions seek to address immediate protection-related shelter needs of most vulnerable communities, upgrade disadvantaged areas, and improve national institutions' contribution to the housing situation in the country. Social stability's objectives are to strengthen municipalities, national and local institutions' capability in easing resource pressure, fostering dialogue, and addressing sources of tension and conflict, as well as monitoring tensions and conflict sensitivity. Water sector interventions seek to improve access to safe drinking water, sanitation services, and quality of water.[25]

[25] Government of Lebanon and United Nations. 2020. 'Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 (2020 update).' Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 (2020 update) - Lebanon | ReliefWeb

UN agencies and their implementing partners, including international and local NGOs, have been providing assistance to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese communities at the national level. The list of partners active in Hermel district is presented in Annex 3.

Although during the fieldwork period, some INGOs had an office in Hermel, such as Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), other INGOs' central or regional offices were mainly located in Zahle, Baalbek, and Labwe.

Stakeholders' Perceptions and Coordination Efforts

According to a municipal representative, speculation pertaining to the decrease in aid providers in the area could either be due to prioritizing localities with a higher ratio of refugees per resident population, security-related concerns, or the nature of local networks and governance. Moreover, INGOs and NGOs are adopting a strategy to assist refugees and support municipalities simultaneously, while allocating assistance.

Fieldwork with local stakeholders reported that the number of INGOs active in Hermel decreased in 2017. International and national aid providers confirmed that they primarily coordinate with the municipality in terms of the allocation of assistance and implementation of projects. Fieldwork reported that INGOs prefer not to coordinate with religious or political actors directly, in order to avoid being stigmatized, as well as to abide by donor regulations by not coordinating with actors that are blacklisted by donor countries. An INGO representative described the municipality as cooperative and flexible, as it commits to project implementation and guarantees the sustainability of interventions by ensuring maintenance.

Housing and Urban Services

This section covers housing and urban services for Syrians in Hermel. It is divided into three subsections: housing insecurity, housing conditions, and urban services.

Housing Insecurity

Hermel faces landownership issues as large properties are owned by clans, and a single property may have several owners, and formal procedures to legally divide the land or allow owners to build on the land are absent. Hence, landowners depend on inter or intra clan relations, and informal agreements and networks play a key role in construction in the absence of permits. Moreover, construction violations also exist on land owned by the municipality. As such, there are difficulties pertaining to proof of land ownership and formal documentation on the registration of land. The municipality of Hermel has a masterplan that includes zoning and construction regulations, however prior to that, the construction in the locality violated regulations. The absence of security agencies permit illegal construction, according to a municipal representative. Against this backdrop, landownership disputes were not reported as affecting Syrian refugees residing in Hermel specifically.

According to the VASyR, 50% of Syrian households in the Baalbek-Hermel governorate resided in non-permanent shelter in 2019, which is the governorate with the highest percentage of Syrian households living in tents or prefab units.[26] Moreover, 44% of Syrian households reside in residential shelter, the second lowest percentage after the Bekaa (40%), while 6% reside in non-residential shelter, including factories, workshops, farms, active construction sites, shops, agricultural/engine/pump rooms, warehouses, or schools.[27]

According to the municipality, Syrians in Hermel live in rented apartments or houses, ITSs, as well as remote agricultural land. Syrians living in houses rent rooms with other families and share facilities. As for ITSs, fieldwork with INGOs reported the presence of several ITSs in Hermel, namely in Bouaydam Bdayta, Mansoura, and near Assi Hospital. ITSs are organized with the presence of a *shaweesh*, often a male ITS resident, either selected by ITS residents or is self-imposed, and represents the ITS when dealing with external parties, such as the landlord, municipal representatives, NGOs, aid-providers, and potential employers, in addition to resolving conflicts within the camp. Moreover, INGO accounts stated that ITS landowners also play a coordination role with external parties, particularly aid providers, as they provide permission for aid providers to enter the land and at times may negotiate the amount of assistance provided to ITS residents. As for Syrian refugees settled on agricultural land, interviews reported that shelter was provided in exchange for agricultural work.

Based on interviews with Syrian refugees, there were varying rental prices in 2017 that range between LBP 75,000 and LBP 375,000. Syrian refugees residing in an unfinished small room without an installed bathroom or kitchen and those renting out a room or a room in a shared house reported rental fees between LBP150,000 and LBP 250,000. Syrian refugees living in small houses reported paying between LBP 200,000 and LBP 300,000 for rental fees, while others living in a house with two rooms or more reported paying between LBP 150,000 and LBP 375,000. Interviews also reported rent as a primary concern, the inability to afford rent, and difficulties in securing rent on time. In addition, Syrian refugees working in exchange for rent was reported among those residing on agricultural land and in factories, in addition to those living in a house in exchange for rehabilitation work.

How does the rental market work? Research suggests that social networks act as the most powerful determinants in the organization of housing markets.[28] First, they act as conduits of information in markets where they are deployed, but also provide security for transactions. For instance, social networks with Syrians and Lebanese was reported as a means to find housing available for rent, as well as access to housing for free. In some instances, Lebanese also allow refugees to access housing for free in unused space, such as buildings categorized as commercial properties, empty rooms, storage spaces near Lebanese landowners' houses, or shelter in exchange for employment. While this may reduce the burden of shelter cost, as employers would deduct rent directly from employees salaries, it

[26] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'
[27] Ibid.
[28] UN Habitat and UNHCR. 2018. 'Housing Land and Property Issues of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon from Homs City.'

increases dependence on the same people, that is, refugees are more vulnerable vis-à-vis the employer.

Rental agreements in Hermel take place between landlords and tenants directly. Agreements are verbal and interviews reported the absence of written rental contracts. For the municipality, it is mandatory for Syrians to register their rental contract, and reported that the municipality received around two to three contracts on a daily basis in 2017. However, fieldwork with Syrian households reported the absence of rental contracts. The absence of written contracts places Syrian refugees in a precarious situation, with the risk of being evicted at any time. Syrian refugees reported awaiting eviction when the landlord's relatives return from abroad or when one of them gets married. Interviewees reported instances of good relations between Syrian tenants and landlords, as the latter can be flexible with the rent and have not raised it, while other interviewees reported intolerance in delays in the payment of rental fees and attempts to increase the rent.[29]

Housing Conditions

According to the VASyR, 40% of Syrian households at the national level were "living in either shelter conditions below humanitarian standards or in danger of collapse." [30] The highest percentage in Bekaa (40%) and in Baalbek-Hermel (34%) reported conditions including roof leakage, leakage or rot in walls, unsealed windows or doors, rat or insect infestation, unusable bathing or washing facilities or latrine or toilet, dysfunctional water or sanitation pipes, inadequate electricity installment, damaged roof, walls or columns, or danger of collapse.[31] Syrians residing in ITSs also often rely on the provisions of materials such as metal poles and nylon sheets from humanitarian organizations, which generates shelters with very low insulation levels and no privacy.[32]

In interviews, housing conditions for Syrian refugees were reported as difficult. Syrian refugees reported living in small and overcrowded shelters, as well as substandard conditions facing damp walls and water leakages, in addition to shared or the absence of a kitchen and bathroom. Interviews reported cases where a nine-member Syrian household lived in a small room, and the tenants built a toilet and kitchen themselves. Other reported cases included an eleven-member household living in shelter made up of only two rooms, as well as a family building tents and structures surrounding a rented room on agricultural land.

Housing conditions are also reported as a driver of housing insecurity and have led to Syrian households changing their shelter several times, either moving between living in ITSs, on agricultural land, shared houses, and rented rooms, or moving from different rented shelters in the city, including rooms, houses, and spaces originally meant for commercial use or inside factories. The reasons that drove Syrian households to changing shelter include increasing rental prices and the inability to cover rent, lack of access to

[29] Based on five interviews with Syrian refugees in Hermel, between 25 August and 16 September 2017.
[30] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'
[31] Ibid.
[32] UN Habitat and UNHCR. 2014. 'Housing Land and Property Issues in Lebanon: Implications of the Syrian Refugee Crisis.' https://data2.unhcr.org/ar/documents/download/41590

bathrooms and kitchen, getting evicted, overcrowded shelter, as well as overworking in exchange for shelter.

One respondent explained: "We moved houses 9 times in Hermel. We first spent 20 days in a rose plantation at Hermel's peripheries and after the season was over, we moved because … the owner no longer needs our services. We … [then] moved to a house where we used to pay LBP 150,000 per month… honestly it was too expensive for a house without a kitchen and a bathroom. We then moved to another house located in Hermel's urban center [where] four other families were sharing the house with us, each has a room. Each family was paying LBP 150,000 per month as rental fees. We agreed with the owner that we are not going to pay electricity bills, but he broke the agreement and forced us to pay the bill at the end of the month and each family paid LBP 80,000. I then decided to move to another house where we spent four months—we were paying LBP 200,000. Someone then offered us a room for free because he is the relative of my son's friend. We moved to it and spent 3 months, but again, there was no kitchen nor a bathroom, because the room was originally a storage room in a villa. We then moved to a house from which we were evicted after one year. We [finally] moved to this house two years ago."

Urban Services

The provision of urban services in Hermel maneuvers through formal and informal service providers. Electricity and water are provided by relevant public institutions, namely the EdL and the BWE, as well as via private generators and water tankers, informally. Moreover, the municipality collects solid waste. The municipality reported that Hermel's infrastructural capacity has been affected by the increase in population due to Syrian displacement, specifically for water, electricity, and solid waste.

Similar to national-level, electricity-related challenges, Hermel faces electricity cuts, however disruptions in electricity supply is unequal across regions, with the country's periphery facing higher shortages.[33] The municipality confirmed this by stating "supply hours are increased across all cities, except in this region, although fees collection reached the 90% in the city [excluding the peripheries]."

According to the VASyR, 88% of Syrian households in Baalbek-Hermel report access to electricity, the lowest percentage compared to other governorates, and lower than the 96% national average.[34] Syrian households in Baalbek-Hermel rely on the electricity grid (81%), diesel generator (59%), and other (5%) sources of electricity, respectively providing ten, seven, and five hours of electricity per day in 2019.[35] Fieldwork confirmed that Syrians living in Hermel rely on formal electricity networks and private generators to access electricity. Some households reported not having electricity bills, while others reported that it is included in the rent, or paid separately. This is also in line with VASyR findings that state 29% of Syrian households in Baalbek-Hermel report bills collected by EdL, 28%

[33] Garrote Sanchez, D. 2018. 'Perpetuating regional inequalities in Lebanon's infrastructure: The role of public investment.'
[34] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'
[35] Ibid.

report that it is collected by the landlord, 23% report electricity bills as part of the rent, 17% report no bills collected, and 3% report other means of bill collection in 2019.[36]

The municipality reports that 21,000 meters of water pipes were installed in 2011, however an additional 15,000 meters were needed, due to the increase in population and expansion of residential area. A municipal representative explained "water has always been abundant in Hermel, but again today, we have a water crisis, because there are new districts that are not connected to the water network." Interviews with Syrian respondents confirmed living in houses that were not connected to the water network for short periods of time. Moreover, interviews with Syrian refugees did not report additional bills relating to water supply.

Solid waste collection is the municipality's responsibility, while the treatment of solid waste is the government's responsibility.[37] As for solid waste collection, the municipality carries it out on a regular basis. The municipality of Hermel collects between 27 and 32 tons of solid waste per day, however the municipality does not have a sorting system, and sought assistance from INGOs and NGOs, in order to improve its capacity to deal with solid waste collection.

Internet and telecommunication services were also reported as essential to Syrian refugees. Interviews reported Syrian households having mobile phones, some with access to wifi, whether individually or shared with neighbors or Lebanese landlords, and others without access to the internet.

Social services

This section covers Syrian refugees' access to education and healthcare. The arrival of a large number of Syrian refugees has added pressure on the provision of public services in the municipality of Hermel, namely education and healthcare. At the national level, Syrian refugees have been permitted to access public schools, hospitals, and primary health care centers, however challenges pertaining to access and quality of services persist.

Education

Based on the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's (MEHE) memorandum in 2012, Lebanese public schools early on enrolled school-aged Syrians without requiring documentation and legal status.[38] The three-year "Reaching All Children with Education (RACE)" strategy to improve access to and quality of education opportunities for Syrian refugees was announced in 2014, and was extended via the RACE II strategy in 2017 until

[36] Ibid.
[37] Yazigi, S., R. Khoury, R. Zbeidy, R. Haidar, J. Stephan, F. Doumani, C. Atallah, A. Clutchier, P. Varese, R. Ghanem, J. Eid, N. Antoun, and N. Medawar. 2014. 'Strategic Sustainable Regional Development Plan (SSRDP) for Akkar.' Council for Development and Reconstruction. http://www.cdr-adelnord.org/6/0/9/7/8/5/Akkar_SSRDP_20141214_rev07_Web_for_review_2.pdf
[38] Ministry of Education and Higher Education. 2014. 'Reaching All Children with Education.' https://www.mehe.gov.lb/ar/Projects/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85/RACEfinalEnglish2.pdf

2021.[39] The education opportunities include formal education, as well as non-formal programs that are certified by MEHE, and aim to bridge out-of-school children to formal education or remain as standalone programs. Informal education opportunities were reported to be provided by INGOs to school-aged Syrian refugees not enrolled in the formal education system. However, this section covers formal education.

According to the Center for Educational Research and Development, the Baalbek-Hermel governorate included a total of 247 schools in the academic year 2018-2019, 110 public schools with 26,984 students, 51 free private schools with 23,651 students, 85 paid private schools with 28,271 students, and 1 United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school with 892 students.[40] The number of non-Lebanese students enrolled in public schools in Baalbek-Hermel that provide the second shift are 10,136 in primary education (cycle 1), 4,512 in intermediate education (cycle 2), and 917 in secondary education (cycle 3).[41]

According to the VASyR, 13% of Syrian households in Baalbek-Hermel participated in an early childhood education program (children aged 3-5 years), while 57% of 6-14 year old Syrians attended primary school, and 14% of 15 to 17 year olds attended secondary school in 2019.[42] Baalbek-Hermel has the lowest percentage of school-aged Syrians attending secondary school, and the second lowest percentage of school-aged Syrian refugees enrolled in primary school after Bekaa at 55%.[43] Across governorates, school-aged Syrians (3-17 years old) reported not attending school due to not being of school age (13%), transportation costs (10%), education material costs (8%), school not enrolling them (6%), being enrolled in non-formal education (5%), work (5%), and marriage (4%).[44] Baalbek-Hermel also has the lowest percentage of youth (15-24 years of age) enrolled in formal education at 7%, compared to the national average of 11%.

The municipality reported that around 2,000 Syrian students are enrolled in schools in Hermel, with public schools enrolling Syrians in the second shift. Fieldwork reports that there are five schools enrolling Syrian refugees at the district level, and that in some border villages the number of Syrian students surpasses the number of Lebanese. For instance, a refugee explained: "In one school, there are 110 Syrian students out of 550 students attending morning shifts, at another school, 80% of its students are Syrian, whereas at another school all students are Syrian."

Fieldwork reported school-aged Syrians enrolled in the first shift and performing well academically, as well as school-aged Syrians enrolled in the second shift with questionable quality. In addition, interviewees reported language barriers as a challenge for Syrian students as the language of instruction was French: As a Syrian respondent explained, "My

[39] Ministry of Education and Higher Education. NA. 'Reaching All Children With Education – Lebanon.' http://racepmulebanon.com/index.php/features-mainmenu-47/race2-article
[40] CERD. 2019. 'النشرة الإحصائية للعام الدراسي 2018 - 2019.' http://www.crdp.org/files/201908300826465.pdf
[41] Ibid.
[42] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

daughter went to school for two years here, but she was not able to understand French at all and decided to quit."

According to anecdotal accounts, several factors were reported to determine school enrollment and attendance in Hermel, such as whether refugees reside in the urban center or within close proximity, whether refugees live in urban settings or in agricultural land, and the parent's perspective of the importance of education. An INGO representative explained: "The majority of those who are living in or at proximity of urban centers go to school, but those who live far do not. Add to this the environment in which they live, which significantly affects this [enrollment], because those who live in agricultural areas such as Mashari' el Quaa do not go to school and work in agriculture instead. Parents also play a crucial role, because they are the ones who decide whether their children should be attending schools or not." This is confirmed by Syrian refugees who reported not being enrolled in school and carrying out agricultural work instead.

Research shows that agricultural work constitutes around 60% of child laborers in Lebanon, with strong prevalence in the districts of Akkar, Hermel, and Baalbek, which is considered to be diven by poverty.[45] In the Bekaa, research shows that children working in agriculture are predominantly Syrian.[46] Farming tasks for children between 12 and 17 years include preparing land, transplanting, weeding, fertilizing, driving machines, harvesting, peeling, sorting, transportation and sales.[47] Reasons for hiring children include helping the household, cheaper labor, lack of labor supply, lack of complaints, and lack of need for skilled labor, among other reasons.[48]

Anecdotal evidence shows that lack of comfort due to the need to work as reasons for dropping out of school. One Syrian parent referred to sectarian clashes explaining: "They [his children] did not accept to attend schools here, because they did not feel comfortable, they did not like the school that they were attending, and I could not afford registering them in another one. There were so many sectarian clashes, not only among students, but also between students and teachers." Child labor is also evident in the urban center, as one respondent explained that his daughter dropped out of school after reaching the 5th grade, in order to work in a one-dollar shop from 8:00am to 7:00pm for LBP 150,000 per month.

Although school enrollment is covered by aid providers, Syrian refugees reported that securing additional education-related expenses as a challenge. An interviewee elaborated: "The expenses I am mostly concerned about are our daily ones, in addition to school ones. I need to buy bags and stationery, because the UNHCR does not cover such fees. The UNHCR distributes the required books two months after the start of schools; I cannot wait for them. I also pay transportation fees (bus shuttles)."

[45] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UNICEF. 2019. 'Child Labour in Agriculture: The Demand Side.' https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/70470.pdf
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

Health

Hermel district hosts two private hospitals, namely Al Batoul Hospital and Ibn Sina Hospital, and one public hospital, the Hermel Governmental Hospital.[49] An account reported that the Batoul Hospital serves Syrian refugees via assistance provided by Hezbollah.[50] Within the LCRP response, Syrian refugees are provided with hospital care and primary healthcare. When asked about the procedure of acquiring healthcare assistance, a respondent explained: "At the hospital, there is an office at the reception in charge of following up on Syrian refugees' cases. The employee is also very impolite, she always kicks people out of the office and asks them to wait until she calls the UNHCR to get its approval to cover the fees or not. The UNHCR office is in Zahle, we cannot reach it whenever needed; Syrians have to schedule an appointment ahead of time."

According to the VASyR, 64% of Syrian households in Baalbek-Hermel required primary healthcare in 2019, out of which 96% received the required assistance, while 22% required hospital care, out of which 76% were able to receive it.[51] Across governorates, fees associated with treatment or a visit to the doctor are the most prevalent reasons for Syrians not receiving primary healthcare or hospital care.[52] Interviews reported that healthcare assistance does not cover all of the Syrian refugees' medical treatments, and that Syrian refugees struggled in covering their expenses, whether it is the difference in hospitalization fees or treatment costs. Interviewees also reported borrowing money as a negative coping mechanism in order to be able to cover the remaining hospitalization or treatment fees. A Syrian respondent reported speculation around increased costs for Syrians and explained: "Healthcare services fees are another main concern, as no one [aid providers] covers doctor's consultation and medicines. Hospitals fees are a dilemma, because the same surgery in the same hospital costs the Syrian much more than it costs the Lebanese. This is because the hospital administration considers that the UNHCR covers 75%, and attempts to increase its profit by increasing the surgery cost. The remaining 25% becomes a burden on refugees who cannot ensure the remaining sum. To be honest, there are few doctors who offer free consultations [individual initiative]."

Fieldwork reported that the UNHCR's healthcare assistance does not cover all health cases. For instance, a cancer patient commutes to Beirut for treatment and receives assistance from a local NGO. Another respondent requiring surgery reported that "the UNHCR does not cover it because there is no specialized doctor in the government hospital." Additionally, a patient suffering from an internal hemorrhage reported requesting assistance from UNHCR, INGOs, and Hezbollah without receiving assistance. She noted: "I

[49] Ministry of Public Health. NA. 'Health Facility Locator.' https://www.moph.gov.lb/HealthFacilities/index/3/188/1?facility_type=1&district=&name=
[50] Hezbollah is a prominent political party in Hermel and is also active in providing assistance to vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees.
[51] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'
[52] Ibid.

begged them to pay the hospital fees but in vain… I could not walk nor move… I even asked Hezbollah to let me cross to Syria just to do the surgery, they did not accept." Seeking treatment in Syria was reported as cheaper, as a local stakeholder reported: "The role of NGOs and INGOs is tremendous and satisfactory, but they are not dealing with severe healthcare cases such as cancer and diabetes. When such cases visit us here and ask for help, we often advise them to go to Syria, and that is what they end up doing—healthcare services are very cheap in Syria."

Social networks also play a role when it comes to healthcare assistance. Some respondents reported borrowing money from their Syrian network to cover hospitalization costs, while others mentioned meeting Syrians at the dispensaries and hospitals. In addition, a Syrian respondent reported having met a Lebanese physician who she consults in case of healthcare inquiries.

Employment and Job Opportunities

This section covers employment and job opportunities pertaining to Syrian refugees in Hermel.

Based on an interview with a municipal representative, the Baalbek-Hermel governorate is among the least developed regions and faces limited access to and poorer quality of public services including education, health, and infrastructural services. Moreover, similar to other peripheral regions, Baalbek-Hermel is also known for being neglected by the state and the absence of rule of law. The municipal representative revealed that networks in the area are organized based on clans and tribes, and the government lacks the political will to instate the rule of law in the region. Hermel is infamous for its unexploited resources and potential, as well as for its poor development. The National Physical Master Plan for the Lebanese Territory (SDATL) acknowledges the importance of Hermel in the Bekaa and lists it as a relay city that is supposed to boost the socio-economic development in the region.[53]

Baalbek-Hermel's economy is mostly rural and heavily reliant on agricultural production.[54] The governorate has the highest share of cultivated land (25%) and irrigated land (28%), the highest distribution of industrial crops and the second highest share of cereals production.[55] The governorate also has the highest distribution of livestock, such as sheep and goats, as well as the highest distribution of aquaculture farms.[56] Hermel's Assi River consists of fish farms as well as a tourist attraction that is considered as a main income for around 165 families in Hermel, employing Lebanese as well as Syrian workers.[57] In terms of industry, the governorate hosts 32 industrial firms constituting food and beverage (9), leather and leather products (6), chemical industries (3), machinery and electrical equipment (3), furniture and wood processing (3), meal products (2), packing and storage houses for fruits and vegetables (2), water treatment facilities (2) and others (2).[58] Research shows that the governorate has the potential to develop production relating to field crop, intensive cultivation, integrated value chain in bakery and confectionary products, goat dairy production, fish farming, and agro-food production within the dairy cluster with linkages to animal farming.[59]

The agriculture sector is facing challenges at the national level. For instance, an interview reported "pear and apple crops are not being harvested because the harvest cost is higher

[53] Government of Lebanon. 2005. 'Schéma directeur d'aménagement du territoire libanais.' Council for Development and Reconstruction. http://www.cdr.gov.lb/study/SDATL/sdatlf.htm
[54] UN OCHA. 2016. 'Bekaa and Baalbek/Hermel governorate Profile.' https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/10052016_Bekaa%20and%20Baalbek-Hermel%20Profile.pdf
[55] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2010. 'Agriculture in Lebanon Facts and Figures: The Core Module of the Census of Agriculture 2010 Main Results.' https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CensusofAgriculture2010-LebanonMainresults.pdf; IDAL. 2017. 'Investment Opportunities in Baalbeck El Hermel.' https://investinlebanon.gov.lb/Content/uploads/SideBlock/171115022947083~Baalbeck%20el%20Hermel%20Presentation.pdf
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] IDAL. 2017. 'Investment Opportunities in Baalbeck El Hermel.'
[59] Ibid.

than the estimated income from selling it, profit is not guaranteed." Although agriculture is a prominent sector in the Bekaa region, Hermel municipality reports that it is not competitive compared to Syrian and Jordanian agricultural production, because there is an absence in policies protecting agriculture production and in effective cooperatives. The municipality notes that the establishment of a conservation factory has the potential of generating employment opportunities in Hermel.

It is important to note the cultivation of cannabis as illicit crops in the governorate, which is a result of the community's marginalization in Hermel. Although cultivation of cannabis crops was forbidden post-civil war in 1992, the region's deprivation and the aggravation of poverty in the area, as well as the lack of investment in alternative crops, led a part of the community to resort to the cultivation of illicit crops under the protection of local tribal dynamics and in light of state absence in the area. This has led to the criminalization and stigmatization of the local community. Syrians were reported to also work in the cultivation of cannabis alongside Lebanese. Moreover, a municipal representative commented: "Clans are taking over territories and are like security zones. Hermel is not an outlaw region, anyone and anything can be stopped if there is a will. There are a huge number of outlaws, drug dealers, and cannabis growers. No one is preventing the government from arresting them and of doing its work, but simply the government does not want to, because it is not in its interest."

Located along the border, Hermel's economy is affected by the border's permeability and it's interconnected with Syrian border towns. For instance, some construction workers employed in Hermel are transported from Aakrabiye, a Syrian border city, as noted by the municipality. Construction materials were also reported to be imported from Syria, as they are cheaper, with the except for electrical equipment, which were reported as more expensive. Moreover, fieldwork raised the issue of goods smuggled from Syria and sold for cheaper than Lebanese goods in Lebanon, as well as reported the issue of Lebanese labelling on Syrian smuggled products. The permeability of the Syrian-Lebanese border, as well as the absence of the Lebanese state's will to control the border, is reported as harming the farmers, the agricultural and agro-industrial sectors, and also the economy in the Bekaa region.

According to fieldwork, the conflict in Syria has also affected the locality's tourism, particularly between 2014 and 2015, according to the municipality, as Hermel was a target of 270 missiles and three suicide bombings, such as the suicide bombing in Al Qaa and the Arsal battles in 2017.

The unemployment rate in the Baalbek-Hermel governorate has been slightly lower than the national average. In 2009, it reached 4% in the governorate compared to 6% nationally.[60] In 2019, the unemployment rate in Hermel district was 10.2% compared to 11.4% at the national level.[61]

[60] Yaacoub, N. and L. Badre. 2011. 'The Labour Market in Lebanon.' Central Administration of Statistics. http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/pdfs/sif/cas_labour_market_in_lebanon_sif1.pdf
[61] Central Administration of Statistics and International Labour Organization. 2019. 'Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/73718

According to the VASyR, the unemployment rate[62] among Syrian refugees in Baalbek Hermel was 49% in 2019, which is the second highest after Bekaa at 62%, and higher than the 31% national average.[63] The governorate has the lowest percentage of respondents employed seven days prior to the survey, at 30% compared to the 59% national average.[64] Only 17% of respondents in Baalbek-Hermel had a regular job, similar to the national average (13%), 12% of respondents reported having more than one job.[65] The labor force participation rate of Syrian refugees in Baalbek-Hermel was 27%, which is the lowest compared to other governorates and lower than the national average (37.5%).[66] Moreover, youth in Baalbek-Hermel have the lowest percentage of economic activity (12%), compared to the 26% national average in 2019.[67] At the national level, 20% of respondents cited having dependent children and 19% cited continuing education as reasons for unemployment.[68]

In 2015, the Ministry of Labor adopted Decision no. 1/197 that limited the sectors Syrians are permitted to work in, which became restricted to agriculture, construction, and environmental services, meaning cleaning services.[69] In Baalbek-Hermel, Syrians were employed in agriculture (18%), construction (17%), professional services (5%), occasional work (5%), manufacturing (3%), and other services (10%) in 2019, based on the VASyR.[70] Given the legal restrictions on work and the limited economic opportunities, agriculture and construction are the two main sectors of employment.

Interviews with an INGO and municipal representatives reported that employment in Hermel is mainly in construction and agriculture for both Lebanese and Syrians. An INGO representative elaborated, "Lebanese residents of Akkar and Northern Beqaa share almost the same living conditions as those refugees, who also rely on agriculture as a main resource, in addition to small commerce and light industries or handcrafts. Thus, refugees who have settled in these areas work mainly in agriculture and construction." In order to mitigate tensions resulting for competition for jobs between Syrians and Lebanese, the municipality reports efforts towards ensuring that the presence of Syrian refugees in Hermel does not affect economic conditions and job opportunities of Lebanese by ensuing that Syrian refugees are not employed illegally, i.e. without work permits or in sectors beyond the three permitted sectors. The impact of Syrian labor on agriculture was also reported as positive as it is perceived to increase cheap and competitive labor, as well as attracted the presence of INGO's and livelihoods agricultural interventions. Fieldwork also

[62] Refers to the "number of working-age individuals (15+ years old) who were not employed during the past seven days for at least one hour, who are available to work immediately and within two weeks and actively searching for work."; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'
[63] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] El-Helou, Z., M. Khechen, and D. Mahdi. 2020. 'Addressing Protracted Displacement in Lebanon: A Medium Term Outlook for Syrian Refugees and Lebanese Host Communities.' Durable Solutions Platform and Lebanese Center for Policy Studies.
[70] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'

reported that Syrian refugees were also employed in service sector jobs, such as small coffee shops, and as hairdressers and carpenters.

According to the VASyR, the average income for Syrian male workers was USD 42 and for Syrian female workers was USD 19 in Baalbek-Hermel in 2019[71] compared to USD 75 and USD 41 at the national level, respectively, with an average of 3 working days.[72]

According to fieldwork, daily workers earning between LBP 20,000 and LBP 30,000 per day report the lack of stability and insecurity in findings job opportunities. A respondent explained: "I might work for a month and sit on my couch for three." Networks play a key role in finding work opportunities for daily laborers. A Syrian respondent explained, "Currently, I am working in construction sites (plaster and paint). I know an iron worker who gets me jobs. He often asks people if they need someone for painting. He is Lebanese and does not ask for any commission. I met him when I painted his house. A Syrian man introduced me to him." Fieldwork suggests that refugees typically gather in central public squares for an employer to hire them as day laborers.

In the case of agricultural workers, a Syrian household reported that the whole family is engaged in seasonal agricultural work, including his children who are between 13 and 17 years old, and paid LBP 2,000 per hour in 2017. The respondent reported, "We do not negotiate the fees because we are afraid of losing the job, especially that there are a lot of Syrian workers [in the area]." Agricultural workers may also have more than one job in order to ensure shelter and living expenses. A respondent living on agricultural land explained, "I work in the morning in the factory to cover my expenses, and in the afternoon here in the land, to pay rent." Holding more than one job was also reported by a Syrian employee of a fitness club, who also worked at a doctor's clinic for additional income.

In light of the demand for labor, interviews suggest that daily laborers and Syrian employees are willing to do whatever is demanded of them and based on availability of work. A daily laborer noted: "We are workers, we work in agriculture, construction and everything [available]." One respondent reported being underemployed, as he used to be a teacher in Syria with a university degree, and explained, "I could not find a suitable job that matches my background in Hermel, because Syrians cannot be employed. I worked first in a bakery, then in a shoe store, then in a street espresso stop, then in a decorative gypsum store, and finally with the NGO." In addition, a female respondent listed her prior employment opportunities, including being a waitress at a restaurant and cleaning carpets at people's homes, which she described as "a nightmare for me, because it does not require any education, but rather huge physical effort and endurance."

Given the informal nature of these jobs, respondents also reported working for long hours with low salaries. A female respondent working in a beauty salon reported: "I am not worried about being laid off, because the owner needs me. No one else can do the work I

[71] Based on an interview with a Syrian refugee in Hermel on 17 September 2017.
[72] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'

am doing. I am a hairstylist, a make-up artist, I know how to use laser and slimming machines…who would do all of this?"

Informal work and business relations raise some concerns: A Syrian shepherd reported that he was worried about his partnership with a Lebanese national. He owns half the sheep, with no written agreement or any form of protection in the case of conflict.

In the absence of contracts or written agreements that secure refugee rights, fieldwork reported that Syrian employees avoid any form of confrontation in case of payment default, or do not find anyone willing to help. An interviewee reported: "I was not paid for my work on many occasions. I cannot do anything; I do not want trouble. Yesterday, I asked a person to give me the money he owes me [LBP 300,000], but he refused and said that he wasn't satisfied with my work." Another Syrian daily worker reported: "The only thing I can do is to not work anymore with the person who didn't pay me. I don't have any rights here, all Syrian do not." A Lebanese sponsor added: "I cannot intervene [in such cases], because if I do, we will be in a big trouble due to the region's specificities. Any problem might end up with shooting at the opposing party or being shot. In the last two years, around 32 people have been killed because of such disputes."

Income and Poverty

This section examines income and poverty among Syrian refugees in Hermel.

The average monthly income per capita of Syrian refugees in Baalbek-Hermel is the lowest among all governorates at USD 28, while the national average is USD 61, according to the VASyR.[73] The main source of income for Syrian refugees in Baalbek-Hermel is informal credit or debts from shops, friends or hosts (93%), WFP assistance in the form of e-cards (65%), and ATM cards or cash assistance from humanitarian organizations (45%).[74] Baalbek-Hermel has the highest percentage of households who report receiving cash assistance via card (77%), compared to 45% national average.[75]

Looking at household expenditures, VASyR shows that the average total expenditures per month for Syrian refugees in Baalbek-Hermel is USD 73.8 compared to the USD 104.6 national average.[76] In Baalbek-Hermel, this amount is spent on food (45.7%), health (17.7%), rent (9%), fuel (4.2%), debt repayment (3.7%), telecommunication (3.4%), electricity via private generators (3.3%), gas (3.1%), soap and hygiene (2.8%), transportation (2.2%), water (1.6%), electricity via EdL (1.4%), alcohol (1.4%), education (1.2%), legal assistance (0.4%), clothing (0.3%) and other (0.2%).[77] Fieldwork with Syrian respondents reported that living expenses in Lebanon are perceived as higher than in Syria, with several interviewees stating that living in Lebanon is difficult and expensive. Respondents reported being worried about rent, food, healthcare, transportation, internet access, as well as diapers, clothing, and medication for children.

The most recent poverty study[78] on resident Lebanese was published in 2007 with data from the 2004/05 National Survey of Expenditures. This study established a lower poverty line of USD 2.40 per person per day and an upper poverty line of USD 4.00 per person per day for Lebanon. Updating those lines to account for inflation leads to a USD 3.75 per person per day, i.e. in extreme poverty, and USD 6 per person per day thresholds, i.e. in poverty.[79]

VASyR estimates in the Baalbek-Hermel governorate at 88.9% for a poverty line of USD 3.84, which is higher than the 73.5% national average in 2019. Moreover, only 1.7% of Syrian households in Baalbek-Hermel are not indebted, as 54% are indebted for more than $600, 36.4% owe between $201 and $600, and 7.9% owe less than or equal to $200.[80] The main reasons for borrowing money at the national level were food (75%), rent (51%), and health care (34%). At the national level, reasons driving Syrian refugees to borrow money in 2019 include buying food (75%), paying rent (51%), healthcare fees (34%), buying

[73] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Laithy, H., K. Abou-Ismail, and K. Hamdan. 2008. 'Poverty, Growth and Income Distribution in Lebanon.' United Nations Development Programme. International Poverty Centre.
[79] The lower poverty line (USD 3.75) is very similar to the one proposed by the World Bank in 2013 (USD 3.84) which is also used in the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASYR) Survey.
[80] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'

medicine (33%), and debt repayment (6%), while sources for borrowing money include friends (73%), supermarkets (48%), and landlords (20%). Moreover, Baalbek-Hermel also accounts for the highest rate of Syrian households below the survival and minimum expenditure basket[81] at 78% in 2019, compared to the 23% national average. The governorate also has the lowest percentage of household working members at only 30%.[82]

In addition to resorting to debt as a means of coping with poverty, food insecurity is also evident in the region. According to the VASyR, 2% of Syrian households face poor food consumption and 18% face borderline food consumption in Baalbek-Hermel, which is lower than the national average at 5% and 20%, respectively.[83] Fieldwork revealed that food is a main expense that Syrian refugees are concerned about, including bread, vegetables and meat. A Syrian interviewee explained: "Everything is expensive here. We buy only our basic needs. We cook without meat; honestly, we eat it occasionally. I am mostly concerned about ensuring first the rent, second the doctor consultation fees and medications, and third our daily expenses."

[81] The survival and minimum expenditure basket is $87 per person per month. The survival expenditure basket includes survival needs such as food, water, shelter, non-food items, clothes, communication, transportation and loan refund. The minimum expenditure basket includes minimum food expenditure basket, non-food items, clothes, communication, rent, water, transportation, health, and education.
[82] Ibid.
[83] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.'

Mobility, Safety, and Conflict Resolution

This section is divided into two subsections. The first covers Syrian refugee access to transportation, mobility and safety perceptions in Hermel. The second addresses social interactions, intergroup perceptions and conflict resolution.

Access to Transportation, Mobility Restrictions, and Safety Perceptions

Access to mobility is a challenge among Syrian refugees in Hermel. Interviewees reported Syrian refugees' reliance on motorcycles as a means of transportation within Hermel to take children to school and for work. However, when Syrian refugees have long-distance trips, such as visiting UNHCR in Zahle or Beirut for medical treatment, interviewees reported using privately operated minibuses. One Syrian refugee residing on remote agricultural lands reported: "We do not buy our daily needs from the market because, as you can see, we live in this empty area and we do not have a car. There is someone who comes every day to sell goods to the local people. We buy from him, although the prices are much higher than those of stores, but we have no other options. We just buy our basic needs."

However, crossing long distances was reported as a challenge due to the presence of checkpoints. This is due to difficulties pertaining to accessing and maintaining legal status in Lebanon. Interviews reported the Syrian refugees caught without legal documentation on checkpoints are detained and their motorcycles are confiscated. Crossing checkpoints without legal residency is perceived to be easier for women: "My husband cannot go [to Beirut] because he did not renew his residency card. All of us did not renew the residency card, because we cannot afford the fees, but since he is a man, the risk of being arrested is much higher."

Aid providers and local stakeholders reported checkpoints as a form of restriction on Syrians' mobility within the context of accessibility to services and jobs. An aid provider confirmed this: "Syrian refugees cannot cross from a region to another because of the widespread checkpoints, and this is restricting their mobility in Lebanon and their accessibility to NGOs—refugees outside Hermel cannot reach us." Aid providers also reported that they base the selection of geographic coverage of their interventions, keeping the mobility restrictions in mind. For instance, an INGO representative reported: "Assistance and fieldwork cover only what is considered a capturing area in the different localities. It refers to the areas that are situated at a maximum distance of 5 to 10 kilometers from our clinics or offices, taking into consideration the presence of checkpoints, as these are indicators of the Syrians' mobility and their accessibility to our clinic."

Within Hermel, the municipal curfew stands as another barrier to mobility among Syrian refugees. The municipality reported the enforcement of a curfew from 8:00pm to 6:00am throughout the city. Fieldwork with Syrian refugees confirmed the enforcement of curfews. A respondent explained, "No matter what happens, whether related to refugees or not, a

curfew will be announced. I do not go out after 6:00pm. Agents visit all Syrian households to warn them not to go out during curfews. We think that curfews are to protect us also."

Syrian refugees reported residing in Hermel based on the advice of their families, acquaintances and networks. One respondent noted, "I moved to Hermel because we heard that it is the best place for Syrians to live in." As such, interviewees did not report feeling unsafe, however they did emphasize their lack of rights in Lebanon, which could be interpreted as a lack of stability and safety. One respondent noted, "No one protects us, only God does. Syrian people here are being mistreated and abused. That's all what I can say."

A key barrier to mobility and safety among Syrian women is the harassment they face from Lebanese landlords. Two interviewees reported such instances. The first was a Syrian woman being harassed by a Lebanese landlord, which resulted in the household moving from Byblos to Hermel, where she continued to face harassment: "I suffer from men's harassment here because there are a lot of discourteous Syrian women that are ruining the image of the Syrian woman in general. Men here are stereotyping us, they consider refugees as weak and vulnerable population deprived from their rights." Another interviewee reported: "I was working in an agricultural land in the Jord, but the owner, who belongs to a big clan, was harassing me. My husband informed our landlord, who is also from another big clan, about this issue, and sought his protection. At that time, we were not living here yet, but as I told you, he was working in his house. Our landlord spoke to the landowner and asked him to stop bothering me in a threatening way. The issue was solved because both are Lebanese and both are from powerful clans."

Social Interactions, Intergroup Perceptions, and Conflict Resolution

The Syrian refugee social network is diverse and composed of both Syrians and Lebanese, consisting of relatives, friends and neighbors. The Lebanese portion of the network mainly consists of the property owner where they settled, the employer, neighbors and relatives, in case of intermarriage. In addition to offering shelter in exchange for work, or for free in certain instances, the Lebanese network mainly provides sponsorship, protection, and may help refugees find a shelter and a job. For instance, a Lebanese sponsor reported helping a Syrian household cross the border informally, while a Syrian respondent reported that a Lebanese resident teaches her kids French.

As a border locality, Hermel has historical ties with neighboring Syrian localities. As such, the Syrian and Lebanese communities are reported to have strong social and economic ties, and Hermel is seen as a welcoming locality for Syrians. In fact, few reported any conflict between Lebanese and Syrians in Hermel. However, tensions were reported within the context of job competition, and following funerals for Hezbollah martyrs. Syrian respondents tend to avoid disputes and arguments of any kind with Lebanese residents. The strong ties are perceived to have helped Syrians in establishing themselves in Hermel.

Intermarriages were reported during interviews. A local stakeholder explained: "In general, relations are more than good, to the extent that this has generated social problems. The phenomenon of intermarriage between host communities and refugees is widespread, and

is no longer limited to the low-income class, one can see that even well-known men are getting married to refugees. This is because Syrian women are less demanding. The problem is not the fact that Lebanese men are marrying Syrian women, but rather the fact that these intermarriages are often in form of a second marriage, in a way that ruins the Lebanese family, especially the life of Lebanese wives. You rarely see a single man approaching a Syrian woman. Add to this that all widowers are marrying Syrians."

As for intergroup perceptions, the view that Syrian refugees receive humanitarian assistance, while Lebanese residents do not, was reported by a Lebanese local stakeholder. Moreover, Syrian interviewees complained about Lebanese people stereotyping them. One of the interviewees discussed how the image of Syrians is ruined, to the extent that all Lebanese label all Syrians as migrant workers and daily laborers, regardless of their background and social class. In addition, perceptions of Syrians were reported to be influenced by security incidents as well. A respondent explained: "When the missiles of ISIS targeted Hermel, people here showed hatred to all Syrians, including us. My Lebanese partner stopped them from harassing Syrian refugees. He told them that the missiles are targeting both Lebanese people and Syrian refugees."

Although a number of respondents reported not having a Syrian network, fieldwork revealed a sense of solidarity in the Syrian refugee community, in terms of information sharing and assistance. Interviewees pointed to having Syrian friends and relatives, whose presence is perceived as important for moral support, providing information about shelter and jobs. A respondent explained: "They ensure me safety, they protect me indirectly and unintentionally, just because I know them, and that is enough." Some interviewees also reported requesting financial support.

Other respondents reported having a Syrian network, but not able to support, or be supported by, their network, due to helplessness or the dire living conditions. A respondent noted: "People here are barely living, whether Lebanese or Syrians." One respondent noted a perception of jealousy among Syrians: "Our network is mainly composed of Syrian people. But honestly, Syrians are not treating each other in a nice way because jealousy is taking over their relationships. I can feel that they do not like us because our conditions are much better than theirs. They also circulate rumors. We never sought help or support from our Syrian network."

Moreover, the perception that Syrians living in ITSs were better-off in terms of receiving assistance and Syrian solidarity was expressed by one respondent: "My cousins and relatives who live in Rayyaq have less insecurities and concerns. Camps benefit from much more subsidies. When together, Syrian refugees form a stronger body and protect each other. Also, the UNHCR responds quickly to their requests. Some of them work outside the camp."

The availability of dispute resolution mechanisms for Syrian and Lebanese communities is an essential component for social cohesion. Fieldwork did not show accessibility to formal institutions, such as the General Security Office or courts, when it comes to dispute resolution. Anecdotal evidence shows that Syrian households have resorted to different measures to resolve conflict. A respondent reported taking care of matters through family members. For instance, a respondent explained, "two adolescents (15years) tried to

provoke us, my uncle spoke with their parents who responded positively." Respondents also reported resorting to their Lebanese network as a means to solve conflicts. However, respondents noted that assistance does not come without a cost, by stating "nothing is offered for free, anyone who offers help to Syrians needs something in return," and "whenever you ask someone for protection, support, or any kind of help, you should keep in mind that he wants something in return."

Fieldwork shows that the degree of protection and support some refugees are receiving depends on the power of this Lebanese network, in a way that brings refugees into the clientelist and tribal system. For instance, some of them are connected to big and powerful clans, others are connected to a member of Hezbollah or to a local notable, whereas others did not manage to establish any solid network with local people. Most of these connections result from work or family relations. As such, Syrian refugees have played into the tribal social dynamics of the local community by ensuring their protection. For instance, a Lebanese sponsor mitigated conflict by informing Hezbollah that a Syrian household was under his protection, although he reported that "Hezbollah has forbidden them [the Syrian household] from coming to Hermel."

Syrians reported resorting to their Lebanese networks when they needed assistance as well. For instance, a respondent reported, "Last year my daughter got hit by a car, a Lebanese girl with whom she works [at an INGO] helped us to reach the driver and forced him to cover the hospital fees. Otherwise we could not have done anything." Seeking help from the landlord was reported by a number of interviewees, who either reported already having sought the landlord's help, or reported that they would, in order to resolve a potential conflict. Respondents explained that "the landlord often asks us if someone is annoying us, as he is an officer in Internal Security," and "if our neighbors see any strange person or inspectors coming, they directly come to check what he wants. They do not allow anyone to approach us." In addition, settling issues among Lebanese was reported as a better solution by a respondent who stated, "the issue was solved because both are Lebanese."

As for Lebanese clan members, Syrian refugees reported that clans have certain practices that they adhere to. An interviewee noted: "Only the landowner protects us, because as per his clan's traditions and values, one should protect anyone that resorts to him no matter the cost." This perception resonates among Lebanese as well, as a local stakeholder stated: "Each Lebanese family here is hosting refugees in different forms (working in their agricultural land, factories, construction sites, or renting their houses…) and therefore they protect them."

In addition, the municipality reported intervening and mitigating conflict between Lebanese and Syrians in Hermel, by giving the following example: "Whenever we receive individual complaints, we try to intervene and solve any problem peacefully. For instance, a Syrian man wanted to locate his sewage pit on the lot side that is adjacent to his Lebanese neighbor. We negotiated this and helped him excavate the pit in a different location."

Although respondents mentioned resorting to Lebanese networks to resolve conflict or issues they face, there are instances where the Lebanese resident does not intervene, such as cases of unpaid work or motorcycles confiscated by security agencies. Furthermore, interviewees also reported not having anyone to protect them as well. A respondent

explained: “No one protects me, I protect myself by avoiding trouble. I avoid interacting with Lebanese people, because I am afraid of having problems with them.”

Conclusion

This report has examined qualitative and quantitative findings across various themes, such as legal status, aid and coordination, housing and urban services, social services, employment and job opportunities, mobility, safety and conflict resolution. It also brings together perspectives of local stakeholders regarding the local governance of Syrian refugee presence. Although the LCSRHCL survey was not conducted in Hermel, this report has resorted to VASyR findings, in addition to the findings of the qualitative interviews, which provide insights that can inform local policy challenges, assuming a clear breakdown of the local population's characteristics is provided.

The report unpacks local communities' interaction with stakeholders and access to services, as well as their coping mechanisms. It also highlights the plight of Syrian refugees under challenging conditions of governance and management, demonstrating the precarious situation of Syrian refugees with regard to their legal status by providing examples whereby legal status affects access to other services or mobility, for instance. Findings also examine the reasons behind Syrian refugees choosing to settle in a particular locality.

The report investigates the perspectives of local stakeholders, namely the municipality, public agencies, aid providers, and religious actors, vis-à-vis their role in the governance of service provision, as well as in coordination and aid. Lebanese resident and Syrian refugee perspectives on the performance of various institutions, such as the municipality, security agencies and aid providers, is also examined. The report additionally identifies and analyzes the challenges that local communities face with regard to access to housing and urban and social services.

With the VASyR findings on the unemployment rate, type of job opportunities and employment in the locality, qualitative interviews also elaborated on Syrian refugees' employment-related experiences and working conditions. Research findings provide information about the experiences and challenges relating to mobility, inter- and intra-group interactions, and conflict resolution mechanisms.

Although Lebanon's political, economic, financial and social conditions have tremendously deteriorated since the data was collected in 2018, the report still provides a rich analysis of local governance of Syrian refugees' presence in the locality of Hermel. The findings of this report can inform policy decisions and agendas of local stakeholders and international organizations in ways that will hopefully advance the integration of Syrians in Lebanese cities and towns.

Annex 1: List of Interviewees

Interviews were held with meso- and local-level actors in Hermel between August and November 2017. Semi-structured interviews were held in Saida, Zahle, Halba and Hermel, and were carried out in accordance with ethical research protocols. Interviewees confirmed their verbal consent in order to be mentioned and quoted in the research outputs. Interview findings reflect the accounts of interviewees based on their experiences, and do not reflect their affiliated institutions' official positions.

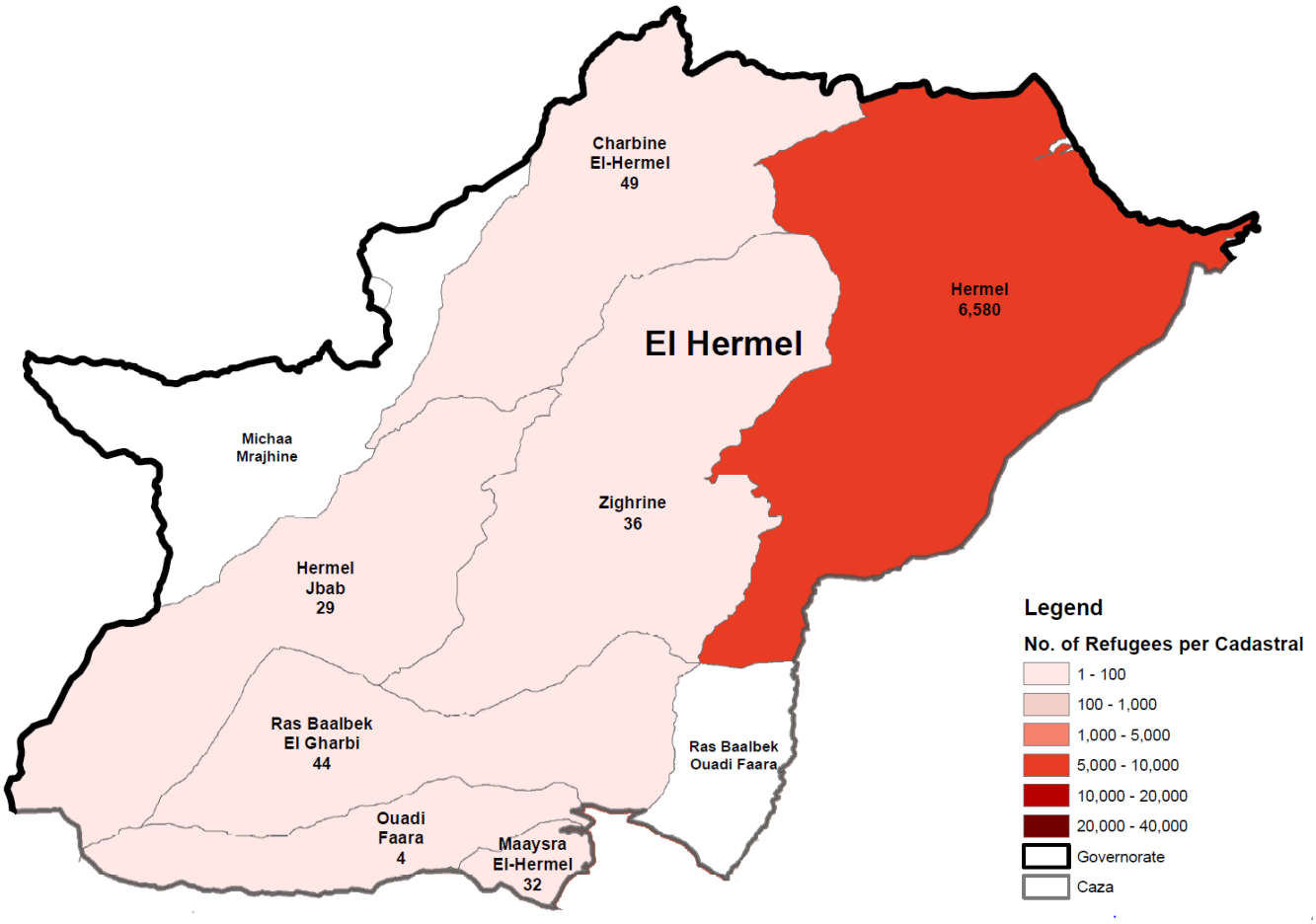
Meso-Level Interviews Active in Hermel

	Interviewee	Institution	Type of Actor
1	Issam Blaybel	Hermel Municipality	Local public institution
2	Anonymous	Anonymous	Local public institution
3	Sajida Rmeih	Médecins Sans Frontières	INGO
4	Ahmad Iskandar	Lebanese Red Cross	NGO
5	Khodr Jaafar	Regional Cooperative Union of the Bekaa	Regional Union
6	Ali Idris	International Rescue Committee	INGO
7	Ahmad Toufaily	Danish Rescue Committee	INGO

Local-Level Interviews with Lebanese and Syrian Households Residing in Hermel

	Nationality	Gender	Occupation
1	Lebanese	F	Sponsor
2	Syrian	M	Construction worker
3	Syrian	M	Agricultural worker
4	Syrian	M	Pastor/Shepherd
5	Syrian	F	Housewife
6	Syrian	M & F	Caterpillar driver & Housewife
7	Syrian	F	Beautician
8	Syrian	F	Housewife
9	Syrian	M	Stone-block factory worker
10	Syrian	M	Construction worker
11	Syrian	M & F	Construction worker & Housewife
12	Syrian	F	Caregiver
13	Syrian	F	Agricultural worker
14	Syrian	F	Cleaner
15	Syrian and Palestinian Refugee from Syria	M & F	Construction worker & Housewife
16	Syrian	M & F	Construction worker & Housewife

Annex 2: Distribution of UNHCR Registered Syrian Refugees in Hermel as of 30 September 2020



Source: UNHCR. 2020. 'Syria Refugee Response Lebanon, Bekaa & Baalbek-Hermel Governorate, Distribution of Registered Syrian Refugees at the Cadastral Level.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/82690

Annex 3: List of UNHCR's Implementing Partners Actively Providing Assistance in Baalbek-Hermel District

Sector	Implementing Partners
Basic Assistance	Gruppo di Volontariato Civile (GVC), Islamic Relief Lebanon, Lebanese Red Cross, UNHCR, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Union of Relief and Development Associations (URDA), World Food Program (WFP)[84]
Education	Ana Aqra, Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale (AVSI), Humanity & Inclusion, LOST, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), SBOverseas, World Vision International (WVI), UNHCR, UNICEF[85]
Energy	Not Applicable[86]
Food Security & Agriculture	Al-Shouf Cedar Society, Food and Agriculture Organization, Intersos, MoSA, URDA[87]
Health	Médecins du Monde[88]
Livelihoods	International Rescue Committee (IRC), UNDP[89]
Protection	ABAAD, Beyond Association, Danish Red Cross/Lebanese Red Cross, GVC, Handicap International, IRC, Nabad, NRC, Terre des Hommes Lebanon, UNHCR, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), War Child Holland, World Rehabilitation Fund[90]
Shelter	GVC, UNHCR[91]
Social Stability	GVC, UNDP[92]

[84] Inter-Agency Coordination. 2020. 'Basic Assistance 2020 Quarter 3 Dashboard.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/83431
[85] Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Education 2019 Mid-Year Dashboard.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71755
[86] Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Energy 2019 Mid-Year Dashboard.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71756
[87] Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Food Security and Agriculture Jan-Dec 2018 Dashboard.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68330
[88] Inter-Agency Coordination. 2020. 'Health Q3 2020 Dashboard.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/82880
[89] Inter-Agency Coordination. 2020. 'Livelihoods Q3 2020 Dashboard.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/83521
[90] Inter-Agency Coordination. 2020. 'Protection (including SGBV and Child Protection) Q3 2020 Dashboard.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/83454
[91] https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/83271
[92] Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Social Stability 2019 Mid-Year Dashboard.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71575

Water	GVC, NRC, UNICEF[93]

[93] Inter-Agency Coordination. 2019. 'Water 2019 Mid-Year Dashboard.' https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71576