

The Fourth Pillar:
Syrian Refugee Education in Lebanon

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Abstract

Since the outbreak of the Syrian war in 2011, large numbers of Syrian refugees have fled to Lebanon, which is currently hosting the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. Almost half of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon are school-aged children. This has created a high demand for education. However, access to quality education in the public school system is limited, and the majority of Lebanese children are enrolled in private fee-based schools. Simultaneously, nearly 70% of Syrian households are living below the poverty line, and most Syrians are not able to pay school fees required by the private schools. Thus, the Lebanese government has taken on the leading role, in collaboration with UN-agencies, to provide education for the Syrian children in Lebanon. The public schools are however, over-stretched, and international funding has fallen short. The rigorous residency requirements in combination with increasing poverty have pushed many Syrian households to utilize negative coping strategies, such as the use of child labor and early marriage. Despite an increased international awareness of the importance of emergency education, almost 250,000 Syrian children are still remaining outside of the formal education system in Lebanon. This thesis seeks to examine the education policy for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, drawing on the social, political, and economical factors preventing Syrian refugee children from enrolling in Lebanese schools.

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Bahar Mahzooni

Oslo, November 2019

Notes on Transliteration and Translation

I have chosen to spell all personal and organizational names, names of cities and other geographical locations as they are commonly written in English language media.

All translations from Arabic interviews are my own.

List of Abbreviations

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
BLN	Basic Literacy and Numeracy
EiE	Education in Emergencies
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organizations
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MSSCF	Maarouf Saad Social and Cultural Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NORWAC	Norwegian Aid Committee
RACE	Reaching All Children with Education
SMEB	Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

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1. Introduction

While attending a midwifery session in the Old City of Sidon, the third largest city in Lebanon, I noticed one of the girls giving a pamphlet to her mother to read out loud. The girl, pregnant with her second child at the age of seventeen tried to read it herself, but quickly became uncomfortable. Described by her mother as a bright pupil while living in Syria, her education abruptly ended once the family fled to Lebanon.

Of the approximately 950 thousand registered Syrian refugees living in Lebanon at the end of 2018,¹ more than 488,000 thousand were school-aged children (3-18 years old).² More than half of these children were not in formal education, according to Human Rights Watch.³ Despite an increased international awareness of this situation, several hundred thousand children are still remaining outside of the formal school system in Lebanon. Many Syrian refugee children are being deprived of numerous years of schooling and are thus often referred to as “The Lost Generation.”

In the fall of 2018, I was conducting a study on early marriages among the Syrian refugees in Lebanon. However, the issue of low school enrollment among Syrian children was repeatedly brought to my attention during interviews and conversations. As I got to know some of the Syrian residents in the Old City of Sidon, I came to realize that many of the children were not able to, or did not have access to education in their host community. Others had ended up as school dropouts. Furthermore, during my conversations with groups of young girls between the ages of eleven to fifteen, I found them constantly changing the topic from early marriage to education. The girls expressed a desire to continue their education, or to return back to school in the future. Additionally, through conversations with social workers and representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) working in Lebanon, I realized how substantial this problem was all over the country, and not only limited to the Syrians living in Sidon.

¹ UNHCR, “Situation Syria Regional Refugee Response,” *UNHCR*, accessed October 10, 2018,

² UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, “VASyR 2018: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon,” *UNHCR, WFP, and UNICEF* (December 2018): 62, <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2018/12/VASyR-2018.pdf>.

³ Human Rights Watch, “Lebanon: Stalled Effort to Get Syrian Children in School, Donors, Education Ministry Should Fulfill Promises,” *Human Rights Watch*, December 13, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/12/13/lebanon-stalled-effort-get-syrian-children-school>.

Lebanon has been widely praised for its hospitality and has received international funding to tackle the challenges following the refugee crisis.⁴ Despite this international support, providing quality education for the Syrian refugee children has been difficult to achieve for the Lebanese government. The influx of approximately one million Syrian refugees has pushed the education system in Lebanon to its limits. This situation has created a protracted crisis which almost a decade later is still affecting the Syrian refugee community in Lebanon.

So which political, social, and cultural factors are preventing more than 250,000 Syrian children from attending school in Lebanon? This leads to the main research question in this thesis:

Why is the enrollment rate among the Syrian refugee children in Lebanon so low?

I will present the various solutions implemented by the Lebanese government in collaboration with the United Nations (UN) agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in order to provide education to the Syrian children. I will also examine the research question by presenting the multiple barriers hindering the Syrian refugee children's access to education.

This topic is highly relevant because education is believed to weaken the appeal of extremist groups. Kevin Watkins, the chief executive of Save the Children UK, and Steven A. Zyck, researcher with experience on aid delivery in conflict environments, claim that schooling brings optimism and limits the appeal of extremist groups.⁵ According to the authors, there is a risk of Syrian refugee children being attracted to extremist groups, particularly in Lebanon. The hospitality of host communities has come to an end and tensions are rising along with evictions and violent assaults on the Syrian refugees. This affects the Syrian communities in Lebanon, and many refugees are feeling unwanted and frustrated. Admitting that education is not a guarantee against extremism, nonetheless the authors claim it will give the younger

⁴ Government of Lebanon and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon, "Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2019 (2019 update)," *Government of Lebanon and the United Nations* (January 31, 2019): 5, <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-2017-2020-2019-update>.

⁵ Kevin Watkins and Steven A. Zyck, "Living on hope, hoping for education: The failed response to the Syrian refugee crisis," *Overseas Development Institute (ODI)* (September 2014): 2.

generations hope for their future and can thus make the young refugees more resistant to the appeal of the extremist groups.⁶

Syria had close to universal enrollment in primary education, and a national literacy rate above 90% prior to war.⁷ Less than a decade later, Syrian children are living harsh and marginalized lives in Lebanon. With limited educational opportunities, investment in educating these children have been stalled and more than half of the school-aged children are still outside of the education system. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set in year 2000⁸ was to achieve universal primary education by 2015,⁹ Syrian children are falling behind, deprived of their right to education.

1.1. The Fourth Pillar

There is an increased academic interest in education during crisis and among refugee populations. The school as a place to create hope, especially during times of conflict and displacement is argued in several studies on refugee education. In order to achieve quality education programs, coordination between the involved sectors of education policy is requested. However, urban refugee settlement generates new and additional obstacles in the implementation and provision of refugee education.

Education plays a vital role in generating hope and stability for conflict-affected populations during times of conflict and emergencies. Thus, there should be a framework for the international community, governments, and NGOs to facilitate a quick response. Education should be what Margaret Sinclair calls the “fourth pillar of humanitarian response,” following food, housing, and health facilities.¹⁰ Sinclair has worked with the UNHCR programs and education and conflict since 1987,¹¹ and lays out a framework for education in conflicts, and highlights the significance of education in her booklet “Planning education in and after

⁶ Watkins and Zyck, “Living on hope,” 2.

⁷ Louisa Visconti and Diane Gal, “Regional collaboration to strengthen education for nationals & Syrian refugees in Arabic speaking host countries,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 61 (2018): 108.

⁸ Signed by the United Nations’ member states.

⁹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNICEF, *Fixing the broken promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children*, (Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015): 7.

¹⁰ Margaret Sinclair, *Planning education in and after emergencies* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2002), 27.

¹¹ 7th Global Forum Baku 2016 United Nations Alliance of Civilization, ”Margaret Sinclair, Technical Adviser, Education Above All Foundation (EAA),” *7th Global Forum Baku 2016 United Nations Alliance of Civilization*, accessed March 23, 2019, <http://baku.unaoc.org/speaker/margaret-sinclair/>.

emergencies.”¹² Sinclair states that the main roles of education for conflict-affected children are to bring *hope* to vulnerable communities, to create a state of *normalization* after experiencing trauma, and to create a *safe place* for the children.¹³ According to Sinclair, every crisis has its own distinct qualities. Thus, there are no fixed methods to achieve desired results for emergency response. Nevertheless, Sinclair has identified some general principles necessary to provide quality education during crisis situations.¹⁴

Sinclair claims that when a crisis occurs, there is often a shortage of coordination between the different agencies and governments, and the initiative programs are often implemented separately. Both local- and national-level expertise is needed. Management by the government, in collaboration with relevant UN agencies is also desirable.¹⁵ According to Sinclair, local knowledge and ability, to contribute in the forming and development of education systems and programs, is on many occasions overlooked.¹⁶ To combat prejudices and hostility in the host communities, encouragement of inclusive activities between locals and refugees is important.¹⁷ As I will discuss in later chapters, collaboration with the Syrian refugee community in Lebanon was close to non-existent.

Furthermore, Sinclair states that the host government should first ensure that all refugee children have access to primary, secondary and tertiary education on the same level as nationals, without additional fees or exclusion. This should be provided as soon as possible, while other issues such as curriculum can be discussed later, for the purpose of a rapid response. Such implementation is to be provided locally, and easily reachable by the refugees. Second, the education and training courses should be officially recognized. Sinclair emphasizes the importance of providing the refugee children documents and proof of degrees achieved as many of the refugee families will probably return to their home country.¹⁸ The timeframe is a crucial aspect of education in emergencies. However, Sinclair’s framework is unclear about this matter. Sinclair requests urgent provision of education during times of emergency and states that structured activities for children and adolescents should be created “in most locations within a month of displacement, and in all locations within three

¹² Sinclair, “Planning education.”

¹³ Ibid., 26.

¹⁴ Ibid., 26.

¹⁵ Ibid., 81.

¹⁶ Ibid., 83.

¹⁷ Ibid., 90.

¹⁸ Sinclair, *Planning education*, 88.

months.”¹⁹ She further states that “A unified education system should be in place for completion of the interrupted school year or for a new school year, not later than six months after the first major displacement.”²⁰ Additionally, study skills classes should be established “as soon as possible, and to focus on the progression of students into full schooling.”²¹ It is not clear what “as soon as possible” actually means.

Sinclair provides an Education in Emergencies framework, which may be difficult to implement within the timeframe she suggests, particularly in Lebanon. The most important initial steps are to provide shelter, nutrition, and health services for populations affected by conflict. This is time-consuming, particularly in Lebanon. However, Sinclair recognizes that fully functioning schools will take time, primarily to find teachers and acquire the school material. Nevertheless, this is in regard to the secondary level education, according to Sinclair. Thus, Sinclair’s framework should be considered as an ideal approach to education in emergencies. This framework might not be possible to achieve to the fullest in the case of Lebanon, due to several social, political, and economical barriers, as I will illustrate in the coming chapters.

In the UNHCR book *Learning for A Future: Refugee Education in Developing Countries*, Sinclair contributes with a chapter about emergency response in education for refugees.²² While this chapter is mainly dedicated to the first steps towards emergency response, Sinclair claims “a false step at the beginning can lead to problems later.” She also elaborates on the term “emergency education” explaining that within UNHCR, emergency response applies to the first few months until the organization’s staff and equipment is working. However, when emergency response is applied to the education segment in the *Handbook for Emergencies* of the UNHCR, the process takes longer than other units.²³ Again, it is unclear what precise timeframe Sinclair actually considers, regarding education response.

Sarah Dryden-Peterson, a scholar who researches on the connections between education and community, also stresses that education can provide protection. She however, argues that

¹⁹ Sinclair, *Planning education*, 42.

²⁰ Ibid., 42.

²¹ Ibid., 43.

²² Margaret Sinclair, “Education in Emergencies,” in *Learning for a Future: Refugee Education in Developing Countries*, ed. Jeff Crisp, Christopher Talbot, and Diana B. Cipollone (Geneva: Presses Centrales Lausanne, 2001), 1-83.

²³ Sinclair, “Education in Emergencies,” 4.

protection is only possible when “schools are physically safe, psychologically and emotionally healing, and cognitively transformative.”²⁴ Children will choose to drop out if they do not feel that secure and protected in schools. Dryden-Peterson also states that urban refugee children are facing different and intensified disadvantages in their attempt to access schools. It is more expensive for refugees to live in urban areas, and their children often receive less support in national schools, compared to camp settled refugees. Intensified discrimination and bullying is also a common problem for refugee children in urban settlements. Additionally, adapting to new curriculums and new languages are difficulties, which may hinder urban refugee children from enrolling in schools.²⁵

The term “emergency” is often perceived as something urgent or a sudden crisis. However, it is also a concept used of “meeting the needs of education systems ‘affected by’ conflict, calamity and instability.”²⁶ Thus, education in emergencies (EiE) is consistently considered essential while a population is still affected by a conflict or disaster. The term “Education for children affected by emergencies” is thus defined as

Education that protects the well-being, fosters learning opportunities, and nurtures the overall development (social, emotional, cognitive, physical) of children affected by conflicts and disasters.²⁷

Dryden-Peterson also stresses the importance of immediate access to education for refugee populations. She further emphasizes quality education that encourages hope for the future, which is not only essential for the individual, but also for the society as a whole. Setting long-term goals for quality refugee education could prevent what Dryden-Peterson calls a “backward development.”²⁸ Many conflicts go on for many years and protracted conflicts are a reality that should not be ignored. Thus, “the education most refugee children receive in exile is not a stop-gap measure but their main shot at education.”²⁹ Dryden-Peterson is not clear about the timeframe either, but emphasizes the need for quality in education. She also calls for an integration of urban refugees into the national schools.³⁰

²⁴ Sarah Dryden-Peterson, “Refugee Education: A Global Review,” *UNHCR* (November 2011): 34.

²⁵ Dryden-Peterson, “Refugees Education,” 44.

²⁶ Sinclair, *Planning education*, 22.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁸ Dryden-Peterson, “Refugee Education,” 9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

Sinclair requests a need for a “bottom up” approach in order to respond to a distinctive crisis, and to engage the local community and the conflict-affected population in the process. The resources should meet the children’s needs in their community, and the curriculum and activities should provide skills to create hope for the future, even for repatriation.³¹ Thus, the set of principles that should be followed in order to provide quality education are, according to Sinclair; establishing access, gathering resources, creating activities/curriculum, and encouraging co-ordination and capacity building.

1.2. Methodology

This thesis is mainly based on existing literature and reports about education among refugee populations. My fieldwork from 2018 will provide this thesis with my primary sources. This fieldwork was conducted while I was working as an intern for the Norwegian humanitarian foundation Norwegian Aid Committee (NORWAC), which gave me the opportunity to obtain a greater insight into the lives of the refugees in Lebanon. It was also through my work with NORWAC that I was introduced to the Maarouf Saad Social and Cultural Foundation (MSSCF) in Sidon. The MSSCF works with the people in the Old City of Sidon. By visiting their community center, the Mada center, and their clinic I was introduced to most of my informants, which I interviewed during the two months I regularly visited Sidon

I conducted interviews with seven Syrian women and girls between the ages of 16 and 35, all of them were married. I also conducted group interviews with 13 Syrian girls between the ages of 11 and 15. Most of these girls were enrolled in school, while some were no longer in school. I was also able to conduct two interviews with two Syrian men, 22 years and 25 years, both single. I spent a lot of time with MSSCF employers. I conducted interviewed three of their social workers, and discussed many topics with them during time there. I also conducted one interview with Hiba Hamzi from Naba’a, a local Lebanese organization. Hamzi is a Malala Fund’s Gulmakai Champion, and works to keep girls in school in addition to raise awareness about early marriage.

Dalal Chehade, the Projects’ Coordinator and Mental Health for Children Projects’ Director was my main contact and introduced me to MSSFC’s social workers. Because of the trust that

³¹ Sinclair, *Planning education*, 29-30.

people find in her, and her social network, my transition into the community in the Old City turned out to be much easier than expected. The Old City limited my area of fieldwork, and I was able to recognize many of the faces around in the area after a few visits. While attending different sessions and activities, I was mostly an observer. Yet, I would become an active participant whenever I was given the opportunity to ask questions and join in the discussions. I also made friends in Beirut and was introduced to people outside of the MSSCF's beneficiaries.

Most of the interviews were conducted in Arabic. However, when my Arabic knowledge was insufficient, English words were used in combination with the help of Dalal Chehade and Amineh Mohebbi Sadeq (social worker at MSSCF) as translators. This was done in order to ensure full comprehension during my interviews. I conducted two interviews in English with two Syrian men who both had a high level of proficiency in English. Interviews and conversations with NGO employees were also conducted in English.

Not being able to carry out all my conversations in Arabic was a challenge. However, as a Kurdish woman, I felt it was easy to blend in with the local population in Lebanon. It also stirred curiosity, and created a setting where I was able to tell them about my background and myself. This was very helpful in building more trust between my informants and me, especially in the beginning of my fieldwork. I also felt that due to the short period of time I was in Lebanon, I preferred to have MSSCF employers present while talking to young girls. This was in order to create a more comfortable atmosphere, as most of the people I interviewed knew Dalal or Amineh.³² During the sessions I attended, I would write down certain things and ask Amineh after the sessions, while other times she would just translate whenever I didn't fully understand the conversation. I have also stayed in touch with Dalal Chehade after leaving Lebanon. Her insight and help was very helpful for me to grasp the current situation regarding education.

I conducted interviews, participated in different sessions and meetings and got to know some of the people living in Sidon. The MSSCF employers introduced me to most of my contacts and allowed me to attend several sessions and activities at their clinic and community center, the Mada center. The majority of the participants and beneficiaries of MSSCF were Syrian

³² MSSCF social worker.

refugees at the time of my fieldwork. However, other residents such as Lebanese nationals and Palestinians were also using the clinic and the Mada center.

In addition, I have also talked to local friends and people that I have had the chance to meet throughout my stay in Lebanon. Dalal Chehade was my main contact, good friend, and the person I could turn to with all kinds of questions.

1.3. Ethical Challenges

Many Syrian refugees are unable to fulfill all requirements to stay legally in Lebanon and I thus never asked about their status. However, I met Syrians throughout my stay expressing fear of either losing their permit, or being arrested if their status was revealed. This fear had a noticeable impact on my interviews.

For example, I experienced some hesitation among some of my interviewees when I asked them if I could take notes during our conversations. This was particularly the case in the beginning of my fieldwork. Some had to be reassured repeatedly that they would remain anonymous, and that I had no intentions of revealing their identities. I eventually stopped asking question about their background and current residency in Lebanon. I also believe that rumors spread in the area about my research and the interviewees came to realize that I was more interested in their views about certain topics, rather than their legal status.

Most of my interviewees (both NGO employees and Syrian refugees) did not seem to find my questions problematic and even stated that I could use their names in my report. However, I have decided to keep all my informants' identities anonymous.

1.4. Central Argument and General Outline

As I will show in this thesis, it is clear that the poor living conditions of the refugees have driven the conflict-affected families in Lebanon to prioritize their urgent needs instead of setting long-term goals that will benefit them and their Syrian societies in the future.³³ Some families are forced to send their children to work to contribute to the family income. Others marry off their young girls in order to have one less mouth to feed, or to form relations with other families for survival. Limited access to schools is another contributing factor, which prevents many families from sending their children to school. Furthermore, the lack of

³³ Nina Maadad and Julie Matthews, "Schooling Syrian refugees in Lebanon: building hopeful futures," *Educational Review* (2018): 11.

schooling among an already vulnerable population increases the likelihood of a vicious cycle of poverty where these children might face a future of unemployment and underemployment.³⁴

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter two presents a background of the Lebanese refugee policy and the Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon. Chapter three discusses the education system in Lebanon, and the Syrian refugee children's access, and lack of access to education. Chapter three discusses poverty as a cause of low school enrollment. Chapter five examines early marriage and the consequences following this practice on education enrollment, particularly for Syrian refugee girls. The sixth and final chapter concludes the thesis and presents the main findings.

2. Refugee policy in Lebanon

In order to understand the refugee education strategy in Lebanon, it is necessary to have an overall background of the official refugee policy. The aim of this chapter is to present the legal environment of Syrian refugees with a primary focus on the refugee policy in Lebanon, and how changes in policy has affected the lives of the Syrian refugees since 2011.

2.1. Lebanese Refugee Policy

Lebanon is hosting the world's largest number of refugees per capita, with approximately one fourth of the population consisting of refugees.³⁵ However, Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, nor its 1967 Protocol. Lebanon "does not assign refugee status to those who would otherwise qualify for it under international law."³⁶ Thus, Lebanon is not a country where refugees can seek asylum. The Palestinians are the only population recognized as refugees and hold refugee status. The Syrians and other populations are referred to as 'displaced' or 'non-Lebanese.'³⁷ The resistance to becoming a country of asylum is due to the fear of permanent settlement and integration of non-Lebanese citizens. In addition, Lebanon

³⁴ Lorraine Charles and Kate Denman, "Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: the Plight of Women and Children," *Journal of International Women's Studies* Vo. 14 issue 5 (2013): 100.

³⁵ Rola Yasmine and Catherine Moughalian, "Systemic violence against Syrian refugee women and the myth of effective intrapersonal interventions," *Reproductive Health Matters* vol.24 (47) (2016): 27.

³⁶ Elizabeth Buckner, Dominique Spencer, and Jihae Cha, "Between Policy and Practice: The education of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," *Journal of Refugee Studies* (2017): 4.

³⁷ Buckner, Spencer, and Cha, "Between Policy and Practice," 4.

considers itself a “country of transit,” not a “destination country.”³⁸ Paradoxically, Lebanon voted in favor of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which in Article 14 states that “everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”³⁹

Due to Lebanese refugee policy, integrating into the Lebanese society is challenging, if not impossible for the Syrian refugees. This has also been the case for most of the Palestinian refugees who fled to Lebanon 70 years ago, as a consequence of the Arab-Israeli war in 1948.⁴⁰ The Norwegian professor in International Migration Law, Maja Janmyr, states that Lebanon’s “history with Palestine refugees is testament to the considerable ideological obstacles to any local integration or naturalization (*tawteen*) of foreigners.”⁴¹ The absence of legal refugee status has led many Syrian refugees to live without legal residency in Lebanon. During my fieldwork I learned that the term “refugee” is often connected to poor and underprivileged populations in the local Lebanese context. One of my Syrian interviewees told me that he did not like the term “refugee,” and preferred to refer to himself as a foreigner. This was due to the negative associations linked to the term “refugee.” He further explained that he preferred to distance himself from everything connected to the Syrian refugees, and he even tried to talk with a Lebanese accent to avoid discrimination. He would for instance not wear sandals, as it was a typical dress code associated with the Syrian refugees. I was wearing sandals myself on that day, and asked if this would make me look like a Syrian. Conversely, this was not the case, according to him. As a foreigner coming from Europe I could wear anything and still not experience discrimination, but for Syrian refugees, everything would be linked negatively.⁴²

The fear of integration and permanent settlement of refugees is often explained as a result of the sectarian political division in Lebanon. The political positions in the government are reserved and allocated to particular religious sects in Lebanon based on the census from 1932.^{43 44} Since the majority of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon belong to the Sunni sect, as

³⁸ Maja Janmyr, “No Country for Asylum: ‘Legitimizing’ Lebanon’s Rejection of the 1951 Refugee Convention,” *International Journal of Refugee Law* vol. 29 (3) (2017): 454.

³⁹ United Nations, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” *United Nations* (December 10, 1948), Article 14:1, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>.

⁴⁰ Marwan Khawaja, and Laurie Blome Jacobsen, “Familial relations and labor market outcomes: the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon,” *Social Science Research* vol. 32 (December 2003): 582.

⁴¹ Janmyr, “No Country for Asylum,” 441.

⁴² The author’s conversation with Syrian refugee man, October, 2018, Sidon.

⁴³ Suad Joseph, “Political Familism in Lebanon,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol.636 (1) (July 2011): 154.

well as the Palestinian refugees, there are widespread worries that their possible integration will disrupt the delicate sectarian balance in an already delicate political environment.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Lebanese civil war from 1975 to 1990 is a painful memory that by some is blamed on the Palestinians' presence in its eruption. This is often stated as the main reason for Lebanon's discerning refugee policy.⁴⁶ As Janmyr states,

“The institutionalized rejection of the Palestine (and now increasingly Syrian) refugee presence appears to have led to the belief that ratifying the Refugee Convention would give permanency to the country's refugees in general, and to its Palestinian population in particular.”⁴⁷

The “Third-party surrogacy” is yet another key cause for the resistance towards the ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention, according to Janmyr. The United Nations (UN) takes on the responsibility of the refugees, “practically and economically.” While the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) manages issues related to the Palestinian refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the agency that administers the non-Palestinian refugee affairs. Nonetheless, this “surrogacy” is beneficial as the UN agencies take on the management of refugee response, without pressuring Lebanon to ratify the 1951 Convention.⁴⁸ The UNHCR has followed through by assisting Lebanon on several fields regarding refugee response such as registration, livelihood assistance, nutrition, and education. Consequently, it has also led to a strained balance in the governance of the refugee response at times. The decisiveness of the UN agencies regarding many refugee related issues has led the Lebanese government to believe that it is being undermined.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ A new census was conducted in 2019 by an independent regional research and consultancy firm in Beirut. The results reported a major shift in demographics. While the the census from 1932 concluded that the Muslim population made up 40% and the Christians approximately 58%, the new census concludes that the Christians make up 30% of the Lebanese nationals. The muslim populations has increased to almost 70%.

Tala Ramadan, “New report reveals substantial demographic changes in Lebanon,” *An-Nahar*, July 30, 2019, <https://en.annahar.com/article/1002964-new-report-reveals-substantial-demographic-changes-in-lebanon>.

⁴⁵ Robert G. Rabil, *The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: The Double Tragedy of Refugees and Impacted Host Communities* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), 111.

⁴⁶ Janmyr, “No Country for Asylum,” 450.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 452.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 456.

⁴⁹ Janmyr, “No Country for Asylum,” 456.

2.2. The Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

The conflict in Syria started in 2011, and the following year massive numbers of Syrian refugees had fled to Lebanon. By 2014, over one million Syrians had crossed the border to their neighboring country.⁵⁰ In November 2018, the number had decreased to fewer than one million, estimated at approximately 950 thousand.⁵¹ However, these numbers are believed to be much higher due to the many unregistered refugees. Most Syrian refugees have settled in the eastern Beqaa Valley, Tripoli in north Lebanon, and in Beirut. The southern cities of Sidon and Tyre also host large numbers of Syrian refugees.⁵² They mostly live in informal tented settlements and rented apartments in the cities.⁵³ Others have settled in the existing Palestinian camps as a result of lower housing costs. Additionally, camp settlement is perceived as a safety measure since many Syrian refugees and Palestinian Syrian refugees are unregistered and the Lebanese security forces usually do not patrol these camps.⁵⁴

Daily survival is difficult for the Syrian refugees. The outcome of the Syrian war has left many with injuries and mental health problems, while the lack of basic health services in Lebanon is further contributing to their dire circumstances.⁵⁵ The situation for the Syrian refugees in the Old City of Sidon seems to be quite similar to the Lebanese and Palestinian residents in the area. The Old City is a small area and there are approximately 1400 families that are living below the poverty line of less than three dollars per person, per day. The Old City is overcrowded and there is limited access to basic services like schools, primary health care and mental health services. The Maarouf Saad Social and Cultural Foundation (MSSCF) was the only NGO that provided primary healthcare in this neglected part during the time of my fieldwork in 2018. The birthrates are high and early marriage is very common. The majority of the girls are married between the ages of 13 and 16 years.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Sarah E. Parkinson, and Orkideh Behrouzan, "Negotiating health and life: Syrian refugees and the politics of access in Lebanon," *Social Science & Medicine* 146 (2015): 325.

⁵¹ UNHCR, "Situation Syria Regional Refugee Response," *UNHCR*, accessed October 10 2018, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>.

⁵² Parkinson, and Behrouzan, "Negotiating health and life," 325.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Susan Andrea Bartels et al., "Making sense of child, early and forced marriage among Syrian refugee girls: a mixed methods study in Lebanon," *BMJ Global Health* (2018): 2.

⁵⁶ The information in this paragraph is taken from NORWACs application for financial support to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 2018.

2.3. From Hospitality to Hostility?

Up until 2015, Syrian refugees were allowed to enter Lebanon legally and freely for up to six months and further prolong their residency by six more months. After their first year, they had the option of going back to Syria for twenty-four hours and then return to Lebanon. As the war intensified, going back to Syria became more difficult. At this point, the Syrian refugees could pay a fee of \$200 to avoid returning to Syria in order to renew their visa. However, the Lebanese government inserted new regulations in 2015. As of 2015, legal stay required registration with the UNHCR, or sponsorship by a Lebanese citizen in addition to the \$200 fee. Children below fifteen years do not have to pay the \$200 to renew their residency, however, their application is linked to the status of the household.⁵⁷ The Lebanese government also asked the UNHCR to stop the registration of Syrians seeking protection in Lebanon in 2015, and imposed new requirements for legal stay.⁵⁸ The Syrian refugees were obligated to

“...present valid ID and an entry slip obtained upon entry into Lebanon at the border, submit a housing pledge confirming their place of residence, and provide two photographs stamped by a Lebanese local official, known as the mukhtar.”⁵⁹

If these requirements were not followed, their stay was considered illegal and they could risk harsh penalties such as prison detention, or being sent back to Syria. This has created fear and uncertainty among the many unregistered refugees. Registration with the UNHCR is now restricted only to those who are able to provide documents that can show one of the permitted motives for access. However, requesting protection in Lebanon is not considered a justified cause. The Ministry of Social Affairs could accept some extraordinary cases. Nevertheless, this permission is difficult to obtain.⁶⁰

Moreover, in 2014, the Lebanese authorities began the process of systematically monitor border crossings. This resulted in the logging of 18,000 registered Syrian refugees traveling

⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch, “‘I Just Wanted to be Treated like a Person,’ How Lebanon’s Residency Rules Facilitate Abuse of Syrian Refugees,” *Human Rights Watch*, January 12, 2016, accessed April 2, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/01/12/i-just-wanted-be-treated-person/how-lebanons-residency-rules-facilitate-abuse>.

⁵⁸ Rima R. Habib, *Survey on Child Labour in Agriculture in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon: The Case of Syrian Refugees*, (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2019), 15, <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/reports/survey-child-labour-agriculture>.

⁵⁹ Ramola Sanyal, “Managing through *ad hoc* measures: Syrian refugees and the politics of waiting in Lebanon,” *Political Geography* 66 (2018): 71.

⁶⁰ UNHCR, “Protection,” *UNHCR*, accessed August 19, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/protection>.

back and forth between Lebanon and Syria, according to the Lebanese government. Thus, they were not considered to be at risk of going back to Syria. Consequently, the Lebanese government requested the UNHCR to de-register these Syrians. Additionally, a new requirement was implemented, which would reverse their legal status at the Lebanese border when re-entering Lebanon from Syria. Although not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention, this act is in agreement with Article 1, which states that if a refugee voluntarily re-availed him- or herself “of the protection of the country of his/her nationality,” their registered refugee status should be canceled.⁶¹ By referring to this specific article of the 1951 Refugee Convention, without ratifying it, 12,345 Syrian refugees had their legal status annulled by June 2014 on the basis of their travel to Syria. In October the same year, 68,000 lost their status by UNHCR due to various reasons, such as not in the need of international protection as a result of visits to Syria.⁶²

The influx of the Syrian refugees has further aggravated the weak infrastructure of Lebanon, and measures were taken in order to slow down the refugee flow. According to a joint report by UNHCR, UNICEF, and the World Food Programme (WFP), the annual funding to accommodate the Syrian population in Lebanon since 2015 did not meet the requested amount of approximately two billion US dollars. The received funding remained at less than half the requested amount. In 2018, only one third of the requested funding was met. Thus, it is stated in the report that “insufficient funding threatens assistance and protection, safe shelter and effective education, as well as constraining the ability to adequately support the most vulnerable refugees, including women, children and individuals with disabilities.”⁶³

2.4. Lack of Protection

Due to the residency requirements, the refugees can easily be exploited. A young Syrian man explained that the fear of harassment at the checkpoints, and the possible rejections when re-entering Lebanon had led him to search for a Lebanese sponsor after 2015. Through acquaintances, he managed to find a family friend of Lebanese nationality who was willing to sponsor his stay in Lebanon. He was able to find work with a local NGO and to manage his life in Lebanon, despite a relatively low salary as a result of his status as a “displaced person.” However, after a while, the Lebanese sponsor started to blackmail him for money, threatening

⁶¹ Maja Janmyr, “UNHCR and the Syrian refugee response: negotiating status and registration in Lebanon,” *The International Journal of Human Rights* (2017): 15.

⁶² Janmyr, “UNHCR and the Syrian refugee response,” 16.

⁶³ UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP, “VASyR 2018,” 1.

to cancel his sponsorship if he didn't pay. The demanded sum could sometimes reach as much as \$700, which is a high sum for most Syrians.

The rapid increase of military checkpoints that often, but not always require presentation of ID-papers in Lebanon is also problematic for many refugees, even for those who try to cross one area to another with the purpose of registering with UNHCR or to seek health care. I experienced this during a field visit with the NORWAC foundation on October 30, 2018 to the city of Arsal, a Sunni town in the northeast of Lebanon. The presence of several Lebanese military checkpoints were blocking both the entrance and exit of the small city that now is overpopulated with over 65% Syrian refugees.⁶⁴ After a short field-visit to the only hospital in Arsal, we had to rush back to Beirut in order to reach the checkpoints before the swapping of guards. We were told that the new military guards could be less cooperative and create problems for us, in spite of the fact that we had legal permission to enter Arsal. Permissions are required at these checkpoints. Restrictions implemented by the government and in the different municipalities create a continuously static living situation that affects the refugees' daily lives and optimism.⁶⁵

This is also problematic regarding transportation to schools. Some of the Syrian refugees are living inside the Palestinian camps, or in informal settlements in areas with limited access to schools. Thus, many children are forced to travel longer distances in order to reach their schools. This creates several problems. First, the cost of transportation is a heavy burden for the most vulnerable families. Second, many household are not willing to send their children through checkpoints, particularly if they are living illegally in Lebanon.

Initially practicing an open-door strategy, the influx of over one million Syrian refugees resulted in new and more rigorous policies. However, the influx of over one million refugees requires certain security procedures. In contrast, the Lebanese government took a different

⁶⁴ These numbers were given to us (NORWAC) by the employees at the Union of Relief and Development Associations (URDA), one of NORWAC's local partners in Lebanon. According to URDA staff, the city of Arsal had a population of approximately 30-35 thousand inhabitants prior to the Syrian war, but has now exceeded 100 000 with the arrival of the Syrian refugees. As we passed several checkpoint to enter Arsal, we were required to pull over and show our passports and our names were registered at two of the checkpoints, although we had applied for permission and sent copies of our passport beforehand and traveled with employees of URDA. We also feared trouble at the checkpoints on our way back to Beirut, in case of changing of military guards and had to rush back within a few hour to leave while the same guards were working their shifts. We were also told that many Syrians fear leaving Arsal and feel trapped inside this small city, even if they need urgent medical help, because of harassment at the checkpoints and in the surrounding cities.

⁶⁵ Sanyal, "Managing through *ad hoc* measures," 73.

approach to handle the education of the Syrian refugee children. By ultimately taking the lead on the education response, new policies were established in order to integrate the Syrian refugees into the public school system. However, the Lebanese government has faced many challenges, as I will discuss in the following chapter.

3. The Lebanese Education System

Syria had a primary school enrollment rate at 97% prior to the war in 2011,⁶⁶ while more than half of the 488,000 Syrian refugee children in Lebanon were not enrolled in education in 2018. The limited capacity of the public schools, and the Lebanese government's reluctance to modify the Lebanese curriculum has limited the Syrian refugee children's access to education. Furthermore, the Lebanese government has faced many obstacles in the attempt to implement refugee education policy to provide access for all children in Lebanon. In this chapter I will discuss the obstacles hindering Syrian children from enrolling in Lebanese schools.

3.1. Public and Private Education in Lebanon

The civil war from 1975 to early 1990s had a colossal effect on the education system in Lebanon. The government was not able to finance the education sector sufficiently due to the protracted civil war, thus, the private schools took over most of the education sector.⁶⁷

Lebanon's education system consists of public schools, private fee-based schools, and free private school. Religious affiliated communities such as the Maronite Christian, Sunni Muslim, Shia Muslim, Druze, Catholic, Jesuit or Presbyterian mostly run the free, or fee-based private schools.⁶⁸ The Lebanese government administers the public schools, while the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) standardizes the education system by certifying the private schools. In addition, the MEHE imposes the requirements for graduates in the private schools.⁶⁹ In the 2009-10 school year, only 30% of the Lebanese students were enrolled in the public schools. 17% were in free private schools, while 53% were enrolled in fee-based private schools.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ UNHCR, "Decline in education for Syrian children 'worst and fastest in region's history'," *UNHCR* (December 13, 2013), <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2013/12/52aeb679/decline-education-syrian-children-worst-fastest-regions-history.html>.

⁶⁷ Visconti and Gal, "Regional collaboration," 112.

⁶⁸ Madaad and Matthews, "Schooling Syrian refugees in Lebanon," 6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁰ Visconti and Gal, "Regional collaboration," 112.

There are also some schools founded by the Syrian community in Lebanon. Nonetheless, the MEHE does not authorize non-Lebanese curriculum, with the exception of the French Baccalaureate. Hence, these schools are required to use the Lebanese curriculum. The Syrian children have faced major challenges in adapting to Lebanese curriculum. I will discuss this further later in this chapter. An alternative option for the Syrian schools has so far been to register their students in Syria while providing a modified Syrian curriculum in Lebanon. However, the children enrolled in such schools will not obtain official documents for accomplished schooling in Lebanon. Thus, the school administrators can send the children back to Syria for their final exams in order to receive their certificates. These schools are free, and their students are offered books and uniforms. Nonetheless, due to the war in Syria and the risk of detention at the checkpoints, it is not a risk that most Syrian households are willing to take.⁷¹

3.2. Management

As mentioned previously, Sinclair claims that it is common when a crisis occurs, there is a lack of structure and coordination among the different actors involved, such as international agencies, local and international NGOs, and the governments. A joint effort between local and national level in collaboration with the UN agencies is advantageous, according to Sinclair. However, the Lebanese government did not take the initiative to provide education to Syrian refugees when the Syrian refugees first arrived in Lebanon in 2011. There are several reasons for that.

First, Syrian nationals had a long history of labor migration to Lebanon, thus many refugee families were able to use their connections and enroll their children into the public schools.⁷² Second, the Lebanese government did not expect the intensified entry of refugees that followed in the coming years. The influx of Syrian refugees exceeded by far the initial expectations. In 2013, over 500,000 Syrian refugees were already registered with the UNHCR, while the expected number was approximately 300,000.⁷³ Third, it is common for the international and local NGOs to provide refugee education in order to support local governments at the initial stages of a crisis. This was particularly the case in Lebanon, and

⁷¹ Maha Shuayb, Nisrine Makkouk, and Suha Tuttunji, "Widening Access to Quality Education for Syrian Refugees: The Role of Private and NGO Sectors in Lebanon," *Centre for Lebanese Studies* (September 2014) 54.

⁷² Buckner, Spencer, and Cha, "Between Policy and Practice," 8-9.

⁷³ Ninette Kelley, "Responding to a Refugee Influx: Lessons from Lebanon," *Journal on Migration and Human Security* vol. 5 (1) (2017): 88.

non-formal education was initiated by local and international agencies.⁷⁴ This is in contrast to Sinclair's recommendations, as she urges immediate collaboration and planning.

However, in 2013, the Lebanese government decided it was time to make a change in their education approach and took over the leading role. The Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) strategy was initiated in May 2014 by the MEHE.⁷⁵ This strategy was established to give the education sector a framework to tackle the challenges of providing education to the Syrian refugee children, as they were outnumbering the Lebanese national students in the public schools.⁷⁶ The RACE strategy was in collaboration with the UNICEF's Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP). As a response to the substantial numbers of refugees in Syria's neighboring countries, the 3RP was launched in 2015 and has connected more than 270 partners from the UN system, NGOs, and the private sector in order to meet the rapidly growing populations of Syrian refugees in their neighboring host countries.⁷⁷ In addition, one of the first steps taken by the Lebanese government was in 2012, when the MEHE initiated a waiver of school enrollment fees and instructed all public schools to enroll Syrian refugee children regardless of their legal status.⁷⁸ However, a research carried out by Human Rights Watch revealed that some public school administrators were still not allowing unregistered refugee children to enroll in their schools, despite the Lebanese government's endorsement.⁷⁹

The urbanization and the informal environments of refugees create further complications in refugee policies and their implementation. According to Buckner, Spencer and Cha, scholars from Columbia University and the University of Toronto, self-settled refugees are often living in "weakly legalized environments" and thus the implementation of refugee policy is seldom fully achieved.⁸⁰ Urban self-settled refugees are facing different challenges than refugees in camp settlements, as urban refugees are to a much greater extent dependent on host governments.⁸¹ The authors state that

⁷⁴ Buckner, Spencer, and Cha, "Between Policy and Practice," 8-9.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Shereen Hamadeh, "A Critical Analysis of the Syrian Refugee Education Policies in Lebanon using a Policy Analysis Framework," *Journal of Education Policy* (2018): 8.

⁷⁷ UNHCR, "3RP – Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2018 – 2019: In Response to the Syrian Crisis, Regional Strategic Overview," *UNHCR* (2017): 5.

⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Lebanon: 250,000 Syrian Children Out of School," *Human Rights Watch* (July 19, 2016): Under: Access to Education for Syrian Refugees, forth paragraph, last accessed November 2019, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/578e2d8a4.html>.

⁷⁹ Human Rights Watch, "'I Just Wanted to be Treated like a Person'."

⁸⁰ Buckner, Spencer, and Cha, "Between Policy and Practice," 1.

⁸¹ Ibid., 3.

“In Lebanon, competing forms of authority may be particularly significant because many forms of informal authority exist outside the official state. For example, Hezbollah, a Shi’a-affiliated political party, operates autonomously and has developed a network to provide typical state services, such as education, health and micro-credit. Additionally, Lebanon has an active civil society that provides many welfare services, although these are often provided along sectarian lines.”⁸²

In the case of Lebanon, there are many unofficial groups that do not implement the government’s educational policies completely, and sometimes operating fully outside of, and often, in contradiction with government policy.⁸³ Consequently, in order to broaden our understanding of refugee education policy, Buckner et al. propose further research on the decision-making process at the local level.⁸⁴ The gap between the local implementation and government plans makes the study of Lebanese policy difficult since policies often are implemented in a different manner from what is stated in the government’s plans.

The RACE strategy was set to three years with three main goals. The first goal was to give better *access* to education by expanding the public school system. The second goal was to improve the *quality* of education, and the third goal was to *strengthen* the existing school system.⁸⁵ The strategy intended to provide education for the vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugee children between the ages of three to fourteen. However, the Lebanese public schools did not have the capacity to accommodate all the children. Thus, the plan was to enroll approximately 200,000 out-of school Syrian children in formal school, and provide the remaining with language classes, Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN), or Accelerated Learning Program (ALP). By the school year of 2015-16, more than 158,000 Syrian refugee children were enrolled in Lebanese schools.⁸⁶ The ALP’s goal is to prepare seven to fourteen year olds to enroll in public education, while the BLN is for the children between ten and fourteen years with no previous schooling.⁸⁷ The strategy was to expand the already existing

⁸² Buckner, Spencer, and Cha, “Between Policy and Practice,” 6.

⁸³ Ibid., 2.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 8-9.

⁸⁶ Visconti and Gal, “Regional collaboration,” 109.

⁸⁷ Nasser Yassin, *101 Facts & Figures on the Syrian Refugee Crisis – Volume II*, (Beirut: Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, 2019), 88, <https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Pages/publications/books/2018-2019/20190701-101-facts-and-figures-on-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-volume-2.aspx>.

education system, which is known to be weak and of poor quality compared to the private schools.⁸⁸

Besides, integrating the Syrian children into the public schools was also an opportunity to improve the Lebanese public education system. According to Sinclair, the general standards for education *should be lifted*, when large groups of refugees arrive in areas with a weak educational system. This should be possible through national and international donation funds.⁸⁹ Consequently, it would not only benefit the Syrian refugee children, but also the vulnerable Lebanese populations. The RACE strategy was able to increase the enrollment of the Syrian refugees in public school in addition to reinstate the Lebanese nationals' enrollment in public schools to the "pre-Crisis levels."⁹⁰ Some Lebanese families did not want their children to share classrooms with Syrian children, as they believed that the quality of the education would drop.⁹¹

A report published by the Centre for Lebanese Studies states that separate education programs for refugee should only be provided for a limited time, such as "in the transition and preparatory stages, inclusion rather than exclusion should be the medium term objective."⁹² The authors see the negative effects of establishing parallel schools instead of integrating the refugee children into the national education system. Also pointing to the segregation of Palestinian refugees and their separate schools has left the education of Palestinian children as the most deprived in the education system in Lebanon. The authors are asking, "Will the Syrian refugees face a similar plight?"⁹³ The authors also state that there is no evidence of lowered educational quality as a result of shared classrooms of Syrian and Lebanese children.⁹⁴ However, there are evidence of exclusion and negligence of the Syrian refugees in the public Lebanese school, which I will come back to in the section about second-shift classes.

⁸⁸ Buckner, Spencer, and Cha, "Between Policy and Practice," 5.

⁸⁹ Sinclair, *Planning Education*, 59.

⁹⁰ "RACE II," Reaching All Children with Education – Lebanon, last modified 2019, <http://racepmulebanon.com/index.php/features-mainmenu-47/race2-article>.

⁹¹ Samira Shackle, "How the Lebanese school system is segregating refugees," *The New Humanitarian*, June 27, 2017, <http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2017/06/27/how-lebanese-school-system-segregating-refugees>.

⁹² Shuayb, Makkouk, and Tuttunji, "Widening Access to Quality Education," 12-13.

⁹³ Shuayb, Makkouk, and Tuttunji, "Widening Access to Quality Education," 12-13.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Despite an increase in Syrian refugee and vulnerable Lebanese national enrollment in the public schools, the RACE strategy was criticized on several matters. It was criticized for the shortage of funding and deficiency in policy implementation. In addition, the limited collaboration between government authorities, and its relation to the NGOs reduced the efficiency of the strategy.⁹⁵ The RACE strategy attempted to gather international agencies, NGOs (local and international) and the government's policy under one framework. Nevertheless, official government policies are not always implemented completely. This is not specific to Lebanon, or to the implementation of education policy concerning the Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Buckner et al. state that "there is significant treatment in policy studies on the distinction between what is intended and what is enacted,"⁹⁶ in their research about policy implementation and how it is practiced with Lebanon and the Syrian refugees as a case.

So why was the implementation of educational policies so challenging? In Lebanon, there are many national and international NGOs, political and religious actors that maintain authority and influence in different parts of the country, and even within one city. This has resulted in limiting the national education policy's legitimacy. Religious affiliated political parties are often stepping in within their respective communities and provide the population with education and health services. These political groupings are also functioning independently and are at times ignoring state policies.⁹⁷ This creates many barriers for the implantation of educations policy.

Furthermore, many NGOs were running non-formal schools autonomously. The new education framework set by the MEHE limited the independent teaching of these schools, and enforced guidelines with the new education policy. If these guidelines were not followed, the schools could risk to be shut down by the government. This action created resentment and some have claimed that this was an attempt to direct all education funding to the government, as the funding was based on the number of students attending the schools.⁹⁸ At the same time, it was clear that the Lebanese public schools were not capable of providing sufficient access to the many out-of-school children.

⁹⁵ Hana El-Ghali, Nadine Ghalayini, and Ghida Ismail, "Responding to Crisis: Syrian Refugee Education in Lebanon," *AUB Policy Institute Policy Brief* no. 7 (2016): 1.

⁹⁶ Buckner, Spencer, and Cha, "Between Policy and Practice," 6.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 14.

In 2015, the MEHE initiated the “Back to School,” campaign in order to reach all children in Lebanon. With this action, the Lebanese government waved all tuition fees for enrollment and books for primary schools. UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Bank, NGOs, and other donors funded this initiative. This was a substantial support for the vulnerable refugee families. The cost of this campaign was set to approximately \$94 million. Nevertheless, one of the NGO employers I interviewed criticized the neglect of secondary school levels. The adolescents are the most vulnerable group among the refugee minors, according to her. While the UNICEF provides school transport for the primary school children, the secondary school children are left to pay for their own transportation, according to her. Furthermore, most of the learning programs that are implemented are also concentrated on the primary school children. She identified this neglect as one of the main reasons of low school enrollment among the adolescent Syrian refugee children, and the heightened risk of child labor and early marriage.⁹⁹

Despite difficulties in implementing the new education policy, RACE II was launched for 2017-21.¹⁰⁰ The plan aims to further develop previous goals and to provide education for the almost 500,000 Syrian refugee children in formal education by the school year of 2020-21.¹⁰¹ Regardless, one of the strongest aspects of the RACE strategy was the official introduction of access to education for all children and youth, regardless of nationality or legal status. Even with several measures taken by the Lebanese government, weak implementation and the lack of long-term goals has prevented many Syrian children from enrolling in school. According to a conference document developed by the Lebanese government, the European Union and the United Nations from 2018, it is stated that refugee response in Lebanon has mainly rested on short-term economic support, and also that “there remains room for improvement in terms of refocussing international support on longer-term projects.”¹⁰²

3.3. Lack of Long-Term Strategies

In an article from 2017, the director of the UNHCR’s New York Office, and the Lebanon representative from 2010-2015, Ninette Kelley claims that, “there was a general view that the

⁹⁹ The author’s conversation with NGO employee, December 1, 2018, Sidon.

¹⁰⁰ Reaching All Children with Education “RACE II.”

¹⁰¹ Visconti and Gal, “Regional collaboration,” 109.

¹⁰² Brussels II Conference, “Supporting the Future of Syria and the region,” 1, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/34145/lebanon-partnership-paper.pdf>.

crisis inside Syria would be short-lived.”¹⁰³ This prediction was also the dominant view of the Lebanese government, the Syrian refugees, and the humanitarian actors involved. Thus, during their planning, the humanitarian actors miscalculated the influx of Syrian refugees that were to come to Lebanon.¹⁰⁴ In a survey from 2016, 54% of the Syrian refugees expressed that they initially believed they would return back to Syria within a month.¹⁰⁵ Improved planning and better analyses could have decreased some of the challenges in the first years of refugee settlement in Lebanon in 2011.

Political sensitivities affected the humanitarian response at beginning of the Syrian war. These sensitivities regarded the outcome of the war. Kelley states that humanitarian response is based on four main principles. These principles are *humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence*. The Syrian war was, and still is, a highly politicized conflict. Planning refugee response based on assumed outcomes could be interpreted as being partisan. Kelley states that “In the Syrian context, projecting mass outflows could have been perceived poorly by the Syrian government, hindered humanitarian operations there, and caused panic in neighboring countries.”¹⁰⁶ Thus, a prediction of huge populations fleeing Syria could have not only been regarded negatively by the Syrian government and blocked operation within its borders, but also resulted in neighboring countries closing up their borders immediately.¹⁰⁷ A prediction of massive influx to Lebanon could have resulted in closed border at a far earlier stage, due to Lebanon’s reluctance to being a country of asylum.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, by the time the Syrian population in Lebanon had stretched beyond capacity, the humanitarian agencies were struggling to meet the increasing needs, thus limiting the capacity for development.¹⁰⁹

The Lebanese government’s fear of permanent settlement of refugees was also a contributing factor to the resistance of long-term response. The sectarian political division in Lebanon has resulted in a fear of refugees as a risk to the solidity in Lebanon.¹¹⁰ However, Sinclair claims that short-term education programs for refugee populations will not *slow down plans on returning home*.¹¹¹ Some of the Syrians have already spent more than eight to nine years in

¹⁰³ Kelley, “Responding to a Refugee Influx,” 88.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Yassin, *101 Facts & Figures*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ Kelley, “Responding to a Refugee Influx,” 88.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid..

¹⁰⁸ Janmyr, “No Country for Asylum,” 454.

¹⁰⁹ Kelley, “Responding to a Refugee Influx,” 88.

¹¹⁰ Madaad and Matthews, “Schooling Syrian refugees in Lebanon,” 6.

¹¹¹ Sinclair, *Planning education*, 28.

Lebanon, and many will probably stay for many years to come.¹¹² Most of the Syrian refugees I talked to expressed a desire to go back to Syria when the situation in Syria is safe enough. Many felt unwanted in Lebanon, and most could not see a future there. In 2017, a survey was conducted among the Syrian refugees, which stated that 89% wish to return to Syria.¹¹³ Several Lebanese nationals would also express that they preferred the refugees to be there on a temporarily basis and then return back to Syria. Typical phrases I often heard were; “They are taking our jobs! Business owners will hire three or four Syrians and split the salary of one Lebanese worker.”

3.4. Access to Education

There are many barriers hindering Syrian refugee children from enrolling in Lebanese schools such as overcrowded classes, bullying, language barriers, administrative restriction, and poverty. Poverty as a barrier will be discussed in chapter 4. Thus, there are many problems that leave an already vulnerable population without the access to education, or leading to high dropout rates.

The Lebanese government introduced second-shift classes to accommodate more children in the existing public schools for the 2013-14 school year.¹¹⁴ Around 350 schools provide second-shift classes, and approximately 70% of the Syrian refugees were attending second-shift classes in the 2017-18 school year. These classes usually start at 2 pm and end at 6 pm.¹¹⁵ A social worker from the Maarouf Saad Social and Cultural Foundation (MSSCF) stated that the second shifts are mainly for the refugee children, while the morning classes are meant for the Lebanese nationals. She further explained that the second shifts are shorter and several topics are removed from the curriculum, such as physical training.¹¹⁶

In order to compensate for some of the eliminated subjects in the public schools, the Mada center of the MSSCF provides activities such as mental health activities, art and music classes, computer sessions, and drama classes. They are receiving about 40-70 children from the Old City of Sidon on a daily basis. They also provide language classes and homework

¹¹² Shelly Cubertson, and Louay Constant, *Education of Syrian Refugee Children: Managing the Crisis in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan*, (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2015), 7-8.

¹¹³ Yassin, “101 Facts & Figures,” 135.

¹¹⁴ Shuayb, Makkouk, and Tuttunji, “Widening Access to Quality Education,” 15.

¹¹⁵ Yassin, “101 Facts & Figures,” 84.

¹¹⁶ The author’s conversation with MSSCF employer, October 2018.

support. These activities and classes are mainly a part of their mental health program, as they see lack of support for the vulnerable children in the public school schools.¹¹⁷

Approximately 80% of the children between the ages of six to fourteen that are attending the Mada center are enrolled in public schools.¹¹⁸ Despite relatively high school enrollment rates among their beneficiaries, the MSSCF employer offer the children activities and classes that they recognize as vital for the targeted population they are working with at the Mada center. Most of the children are living in overcrowded households with no space to play or do homework, and the center provides the children with a safe place to do homework and participate in activities with other children from their community. The Mada center is specifically focusing on mental health and wellbeing in their program. Most of their activities are a part of their Mental Health Program. The public schools do not have the capacity to provide psychosocial activities, thus the Mada center provides sessions such as anger management and coping skill techniques that are managed by a psychological counselor. They even provide food and nutrition session to teach the children about the importance of healthy nutrition.

Initially intended to integrate Syrian children in the Lebanese schools, the second-shift class system has been criticized on several matters. First, it is mostly dedicated to the refugee children, which creates a gap between the refugee children and the Lebanese nationals. The teaching hours have been reduced in the second-shifts, and some subjects such as physical activities and other non-core classes are removed.¹¹⁹ Many Syrian refugee children are also experiencing bullying, which affects their performance on a daily basis. The arrival of the refugee children has led to hostility as the refugees are often settling in the most impoverished areas in the country where the resources are already limited. This resentment, which often unfolds in bullying during the school days, results in dropout for some of the refugee children. Many children have also lost several years of schooling and are often placed in lower classes with younger children. Some children may find that uncomfortable and decide to leave school.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ The author's text message exchange with MSSCF employer, November 2019.

¹¹⁸ The author's text message exchange with MSSCF employer, November 2019.

¹¹⁹ Visconti and Gal, "Regional collaboration," 109.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Dryden-Peterson states that, “the lack of quality education in a crisis is holding back development potential, even allowing ‘backward development’.”¹²¹ One young Syrian man recognized this backward-development. According to him, he was witnessing a reversed development regarding most aspect of the Syrian refugees living in Lebanon. He believed that “It goes backwards with the situation most Syrians live in.”¹²² Prior to the war in Syria, early marriage was estimated to 13%, while the new rate in Lebanon is at approximately 35%.¹²³ Additionally, school enrollment has dropped from almost universal primary enrollment in Syria,¹²⁴ to less than half of the school-aged children in Lebanon attending school.¹²⁵

The language of teaching can be a barrier to refugee children and hinder school enrollment, according to Sinclair.¹²⁶ From grade seven the Lebanese public schools are using English or French as instruction languages. This is creating new barriers for the Syrian refugee children, as the education in Syria was taught entirely in Arabic. However, English and French instructions apply to the morning shifts in Lebanon. The second-shifts are mainly taught in Arabic, but science and math are in English or French. According to a background report from 2018, some teachers are giving all their classes in English or French, even during second-shifts. At the secondary schools, all classes are taught in English or French.¹²⁷ All of the NGO employers I talked to stated the language barrier as one of the most challenging obstacle to low school enrollment among the Syrian refugee population. It is also a problem for the whole family, as most Syrians do not know English or French, consequently, parents are not able to help their children with their homework.

Dryden-Peterson states that the quality of education is highly impacted by the language of instruction. In addition, “research is clear that children are better able to acquire literacy initially in their first language and then to transfer those skills to the target language of instructions.”¹²⁸ The problem of language barriers is common in education for refugees, and many children end up not understanding their teachers and are thus downgraded to lower

¹²¹ Dryden-Peterson, “Refugee Education,” 9.

¹²² The author’s conversation with Syrian man about early marriages, education, and the living standards of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, November 2018, Sidon.

¹²³ Bartels et al., “Making sense of child,” 2.

¹²⁴ Visconti and Gal, “Regional collaboration,” 108.

¹²⁵ Human Rights Watch, “Lebanon: Stalled Effort.”

¹²⁶ Sinclair, *Planning education*, 10.

¹²⁷ Wannas Carlier, “Background Report: The Widening Education Gap for Syrian Refugee Children,” *KidsRights Foundation* (2018): 10-11, <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/widening-educational-gap-syrian-refugee-children>.

¹²⁸ Dryden-Peterson, “Refugee Education,” 64.

classes as consequence of the language barrier, rather than their cognitive development.¹²⁹ A new instruction language combined with a new curriculum can be demotivating for some of the Syrian refugee children. If parents send their children to school in the midst of many daily challenges and harsh living circumstances, then the school should be able to provide quality education.¹³⁰

Education aimed at refugee populations living in urban settings, entails other needs and assessments than education provided for camp-settled refugee populations.¹³¹ Refugee children enrolled in host country education system are more vulnerable as they are generally more exposed to the expectation of adaption to the existing school system. This is less challenging in refugee camps, as education and surroundings are usually more adapted to the population living in the camp. Furthermore, the UNHCR Education Field Guidelines advocate education programs that are in accordance with the refugee population's country of origin.¹³²

Safety is another an issues for many Syrian refugees. As mentioned previously, bullying in the schools is a problem that many Syrian refugee children are facing. This problem was not mentioned to me during my fieldwork, as it might not have been a problem among the community in the Old City of Sidon. However, according to Shuayb et al., most Syrian children described bullying and violence not only from other students, but also from teachers and principals in the Lebanese schools.¹³³ Additionally, the mixed-sex classes are also a contributing factor to low school enrollment for some of the conservative Syrian families.¹³⁴ In Syria, primary and secondary schools are same-sexed, and some families do not want to send their girls to school, as they do not want their girls to attend classes with boys.¹³⁵

3.5. Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education (NFE) operates mostly as an alternative to the lack of access to formal education in the public schools in Lebanon. Many non-formal schools are also preparing

¹²⁹ Dryden-Peterson, "Refugee Education," 64

¹³⁰ Brenda Haiplik, "Donor Investment for Education in Emergencies," in *Even in Chaos: Education in Times of Emergency*, ed. Kevin M. Cahill (New York: Fordham University Press and The Center for International Humanitarian Cooperation, 2010), 46.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 44.

¹³³ Shuayb, Makkouk, and Tuttunji, "Widening access to Quality Education," 10.

¹³⁴ Madaad and Matthews, "Schooling Syrian refugees in Lebanon," 7.

¹³⁵ Dahlia Nehme, "New school offers education 'salvation' for Syrian girls in Lebanon," *Reuters*, October 23, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-lebanon-education/new-school-offers-education-salvation-for-syrian-girls-in-lebanon-idUSKBN1CS2C6>.

Syrian refugee children to overcome barriers such as language difficulties before entering the public school system. The non-formal schools are implementing intensive language classes (French and English), community-based education, classes for children with learning difficulties (remedial classes), psychosocial activities, and providing classes for those who had their education interrupted or never entered school. Non-formal schools give children the tools to enter public schools and to reduce the possibility of school dropouts.¹³⁶ However, only 6% of the Syrian refugees are aware of the non-formal school services, according to a study on facts and figures of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, published in 2017.¹³⁷

Some view the non-formal schools as "a stopgap" for Syrian children and youth, rather than an alternative to education for refugee children in Lebanon. The children are not receiving official certificates and they are stuck in a limbo. However, a more decentralized and flexible education program considers the refugees' needs in their host country and their future employment there. Non-formal schools also provide an alternative for those who might not have a public school close by their host community.¹³⁸ The NFE is also more at liberty to adjust the schooling according to Syrian refugee children's requirements. At the same time, it also increases the possibility of unorganized education with lower level of quality education.¹³⁹

Although non-formal schools might be regarded as a stopgap in which the children do not attain certificates, it may provide vulnerable children with a safe place to develop skills and qualities to cope better in their dire circumstances. Especially considering the overburdened public school where children are experiencing bullying and have become the outsiders. However, the lack of funding in non-formal school education contributes to poorer quality.¹⁴⁰ The Mada center in the Old City is not a non-formal school, however, they are able to provide the children with supplementary classes, activities and homework assistance. The children who are not enrolled in official schools are also able to develop useful skills and interact with their peers.

¹³⁶ Karam, Monaghan, and Yoder, "The student do not know," 450.

¹³⁷ Yassin, "101 Facts & Figures," 88.

¹³⁸ Karam, Monaghan, and Yoder, "The student do not know," 451-452.

¹³⁹ Shuayb, Makkouk, and Tutinji, "Widening Access," 12-13.

¹⁴⁰ Aneta Hayes, Derek McGhee, Natalie Garland, and Brian Lally, "Could refugee education in Lebanon provide a model for all?," *University World News – The Global Window on Higher Education* (August 31, 2019), <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190827121636840>.

The Lebanese government waived school and book fees, and provided extended access to public schools with the second-shifts. However, many Syrian children are struggling to adapt to the Lebanese curriculum, while the limited funding has pushed the public school system to its limits. The non-formal schools are restricted by the government's education framework, whereas many public schools are ignoring the government's national education policy. A decentralized Lebanese government has not succeeded in implementing its RACE strategy sufficiently, and many children are suffering from marginalization and bullying. However, poverty is also a major contributing factor to high dropout rates or hindering Syrian refugee children from attending school. The coming chapter will discuss poverty and child labor as a causes of low school enrollment

4. Poverty and Child Labor

Many Syrian refugee families are struggling to meet their most basic needs as a result of increasing poverty. This has led to negative coping strategies such as taking their children out of school, in order to contribute to the family income. Many households suffer from restricted mobility due to their illegal status in Lebanon, as the annual residency fee of \$200 is too expensive, and registration with the UNHCR requires a no-work contract.¹⁴¹ Thus, many vulnerable Syrian refugee families have been forced to take their children out of school in order to put them to work, as the risk of arrests and detentions are higher for adults than for children.¹⁴²

4.1. Poverty

69% of Syrian refugee households are living under the poverty line in Lebanon. This means that these families have to survive on less than \$3.84 per person per day, according to the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees.¹⁴³ Additionally, more than half of the Syrian refugee families are living in under the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) with \$2.90 per person per day.¹⁴⁴ The SMEB provides a measuring tool for agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP) to identify households that are not able to cover their most basic needs.¹⁴⁵ Hence, the households identified as living under the SMEB are living in

¹⁴¹ Habib, *Survey on Child Labour*, 15.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP, "VASyR 2018," 1.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Arif Husain, "Minimum Expenditure Baskets: Interim Guidance," *World Food Programme* (July 2018): 5.

extreme poverty, and incapable of covering their most basic daily expenses such as food, shelter, and health services.

The WFP's food assistance benefits approximately 650,000 Syrian refugees with twenty-seven dollars every month. This program started with food packages in 2012, then paper vouchers were provided, and now the assistance is given on an electronic card, which can be used to purchase food. From 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also connected their assistance with the WFP and transfer their share to the same electronic card on a monthly basis. The most vulnerable families have also received an amount of 175 dollars from 2017 onwards.¹⁴⁶

Approximately 34% of Syrian refugee families were living in "non-permanent" or "non-residential" homes in 2018, compared to 26% in 2017. This indicates an increase in poverty, as families are forced to move out of their homes and move into informal settlements. Some households are living in farms, garages, and active construction sites. The remaining 66% are mostly living in rented apartments and houses.¹⁴⁷ However, one of my interviewees, an NGO employee, stated that in most cases, several Syrian families share one apartment due to the high rental prices. Thus, there could be between ten and twenty people living in one single room.¹⁴⁸

One Syrian mother explained that although her family was not wealthy when they lived in Syria, their living standard was substantially better. They used to have their own house with privacy, and what she called a "normal life." Later during the interview I asked her what she missed the most about Syria, and her answer was "our home, where I could relax and not always be worried about all the people around me." I did not ask whether they were sharing apartment with other families, but the lack of privacy was mentioned several times during our interview.¹⁴⁹ Her daughter, a seventeen-year-old girl was also present during the interview, and she also talked about the difficulty of living in a small space with her extended family. At the time of our interview, she was mother of a two-year-old child and pregnant with her second. During our conversation it became clear that she was spending most of her time at

¹⁴⁶ Lebanon Co, "Food assistance for refugees: A lifeline of hope," *World Food Programme* (August 27, 2019): 1.

¹⁴⁷ Yassin, *101 Facts & Figures*, 40.

¹⁴⁸ The author's interview with NGO employee, December, 2018, Sidon.

¹⁴⁹ The author's conversation with Syrian refugee mother, November, 2018, Sidon.

home with her extended family, taking care of house chores, while her husband was out working, or trying to obtain work.¹⁵⁰

People living in informal settlements are usually the most vulnerable population among the Syrian refugees. Their living conditions are poor, usually with no, or limited, access to toilets, electricity, running water, and kitchens.¹⁵¹ Their settlements are constantly at risk of being demolished by the Lebanese government due to security reasons.¹⁵² Additionally, the government does not allow neither formal refugee camps, nor permanent settlement for the Syrians in Lebanon. Syrians who could afford to build walls, or construct the main foundation of a settlement from lightweight bricks such as cinder blocks, were often ordered to tear them down by the Lebanese authorities. Thus, any house “made of anything but timber and plastic sheeting,” risks being demolished. According to an article by Al-Jazeera, the Lebanese authorities ordered the Syrian refugees living in the Aarsal area to tear down the cinderblock rooms they had built.¹⁵³ Destruction of any foundations “higher than two cinder blocks, and cement foundations,” is in accordance with the 2004 Lebanese Construction Law Act. Nonetheless, this law has only rarely been enforced prior to the Syrians arrival, according to the article. When settlements now are demolished, it is perceived as a signal that Syrian refugees should return.¹⁵⁴

Due to low income, many households are also borrowing money. The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees from 2018 reported that nine out of ten households had borrowed money within the last three months prior to the survey to cover their daily needs.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the arrival of the Syrian refugees has forced approximately 200,000 Lebanese nationals into poverty,¹⁵⁶ and increased an already high unemployment rate by 250,000 to 300,000. These negative repercussions mostly affect vulnerable Lebanese citizens, especially those operating within the unskilled labor market.¹⁵⁷ As many Syrian refugees are willing to work for lower salaries than poor Lebanese nationals, tensions are rising between the Syrian

¹⁵⁰ The author’s conversation with Syrian refugee girl, November, 2018, Sidon.

¹⁵¹ UNCHR, “Shelter,” UNHCR, accessed November 19, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/shelter>.

¹⁵² Habib, *Survey on Child Labour*, 17.

¹⁵³ AL-Jazeera, “Destruction of Syrian refugees’ shelters in Lebanon Condemned,” *Al-Jazeera*, July 5, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/destruction-syrian-refugees-shelters-lebanon-condemned-190705102212768.html>.

¹⁵⁴ AL-Jazeera, “Destruction of Syrian refugees’ shelters.

¹⁵⁵ UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP, “VASyR 2018,” 4.

¹⁵⁶ The World Bank, “The World Bank in Lebanon, Overview,” *The World Bank*, last updated April 1, 2019, accessed August 13, 2019, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

refugees and the impoverished segments of their host communities. Some municipalities have introduced curfews for the Syrian refugees past a certain time (sunset) to reduce mobility and prevent late working hours.¹⁵⁸ However, 32% of the Syrian refugee families reported that no one in their household was working in 2018. This leaves approximately one-third of the Syrian population extremely vulnerable and dependent on support from the humanitarian assistance.¹⁵⁹

4.2. Opportunities – Work and Mobility

Due to illegal residency, or the no-work contract, Syrian refugees are extremely vulnerable to exploitation by their employer if they work illegally. The risk of arrests, imprisonment, or forcibly being returned to Syria has led most refugees to not report abuse or mistreatment by their Lebanese sponsors or employers. Women and children are particularly vulnerable and risk sexual abuse and violence in their work related relations.¹⁶⁰ Several women have informed Human Rights Watch about sexual harassment or attempt to sexual abuse by Lebanese employers or sponsors. However, these women fear the repercussions of reporting mistreatment to the Lebanese authorities, as they fear to lose their legal residency status.¹⁶¹ Sponsorship by a Lebanese national puts the Syrian refugees in a vulnerable position, as the sponsor is able to end the sponsorship, along with the residency permit.

The valid requirements to attain legal residency are difficult for many refugees. Nonetheless, being an unregistered refugee also has its consequences. The increase of checkpoints, which I experienced myself during my internship with NORWAC in the fall of 2018, was more intensified than I had faced during my previous stays in Lebanon. At certain checkpoints, the military guards required seeing ID-papers, and this could be very intimidating for unregistered refugees. Thus, many undocumented refugees have become isolated in their settlements or apartments. The measures taken by the Lebanese government to restrict the mobility of the Syrian refugees add to the fear and uncertainty most Syrian refugees are dealing with on a daily basis. Thus, many households have to rely on their children for work. And within the agriculture sector, children make up a large portion of the workforce, as I will show later in this chapter.

¹⁵⁸ Hamadeh, "A critical analysis," 6.

¹⁵⁹ Yassin, "101 Facts & Figures," 93.

¹⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch, "I Just Wanted to be Treated like a Person'."

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

The majority of the Syrian refugees have settled in the Bekaa Valley, as this area has a long border with Syria. Moreover, the Bekaa Valley has a long history of Syrian seasonal workers in the agriculture sector,¹⁶² which is one of three legal sectors the Syrian refugees are allowed to work in, along with construction and cleaning.¹⁶³ 42% of the cultivated land in Lebanon is also in the Bekaa Valley, which has attracted many Syrian refugees. The agricultural sector in Lebanon is sustained by low-wage labor, hence the labor market in the Bekaa Valley has profited from Syrian workforce, according to a child labor survey published by the American University of Beirut.¹⁶⁴ This area also holds Lebanon's highest poverty rate at 38%, and many Syrian refugee have mainly settled there due to lower house rental prices.¹⁶⁵

4.3. Child labor

55,2% of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon is under the age of eighteen,¹⁶⁶ and child labor has risen considerably with their arrival. Refugee children are cheaper to hire than adults, and more obedient to their supervisors. In the cities, the Syrian refugee children are working in shops, restaurants, and coffee shops, or they sell flowers and tissues on the streets. Some have no other choice but to beg in order to contribute to the family income. Young girls are often hired as domestic workers, or to peel garlic for restaurants.¹⁶⁷ This was noticeable even in the fall of 2015, during my first stay in Lebanon. Children begging on the streets, shoe shining, or working in shops was already a common sight on the streets of Beirut. Even late into the night, small children as young as four or five year olds were wandering the streets selling flowers to people, sometimes as late as 3 or 4 o'clock at night. Outside the cities it was a regular sight to see men and young boys gathering in certain areas. I asked one of my Lebanese friends whether he knew what these men and boys were waiting for, and he explained that they were probably waiting for trucks to arrive and to pick them up for day jobs at farms outside of cities or at construction sites.

¹⁶² Habib, *Survey on Child Labour*, 15-16.

¹⁶³ IPSOS Group SA, "Unpacking gendered realities in displacement: the status of Syrian refugee women in Lebanon," *UN Women*, (2018), 10, <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20arab%20states/attachments/2018/16-days/syriacrisisimpact-lebanon-final2.pdf?la=en&vs=3545>.

¹⁶⁴ Habib, *Survey on Child Labour*, 15-16.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 14.

¹⁶⁷ The Freedom Fund, "Struggling to survive: Slavery and exploitation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon," *The Freedom Fund* (April 12, 2016), 7, <https://freedomfund.org/our-reports/%EF%BF%BCstruggling-survive-slavery-exploitation-syrian-refugees-lebanon/>.

Despite the Lebanese Labor Code setting the minimum working age to fourteen years for safe work, and thirteen for light work,¹⁶⁸ some of the Syrian refugee children working in greenhouses could be as young as five years old.¹⁶⁹ They are given tasks such as picking beans, figs, and potatoes. Many children are working long working hours in the sun, and are exposed to chemicals like pesticides and fertilizers.¹⁷⁰ According to a UNICEF Baseline Survey, 6.7% of Syrian children were working in 2016, particularly in the rural areas. The survey concludes that children make up to 30% of the work force on the farms. Although many children are seasonal workers, most of the full time child laborers on farms are Syrian refugees. Most of these children are not enrolled in schools, mainly in the Bekaa area.¹⁷¹

The Syrian children receive lower salaries than Lebanese and Syrian women working in agriculture. Furthermore, the agreement upon wages happens between the parents and the “shawish,” and their salary is given to the parents.¹⁷² Most of these children are recruited by the shawish, a community leader and middleman who rents land from landlords and allows one or two families to set up their settlement on this land. Thus, the family members are bound to work for the shawish who often hire children to do different task, such as working for restaurants, shops, or as labor on the farms and in greenhouses. The shawish will then take some percentage of their salary. The Lebanese Ministry of Labor is currently seeking to end this practice.¹⁷³ National Action Plan was initiated in 2013, in order to abolish child labor by 2016.¹⁷⁴ The initiative was altered by the Ministry of Labour to include Syrian child laborers, and was prolonged to 2020, as child labor among the Syrians is a rising problem.¹⁷⁵

Child labor in agriculture is considered to be a sector that exposes children to unsafe environments and long working hours, putting their health at risk. Many children are working with poorly constructed tools under extreme weather conditions. According to a child labor survey from the agriculture sector in the Bekaa Valley, 30% of the children reported work related injuries.¹⁷⁶ Additionally, 20% of the boys and 12% of they girls said that they have

¹⁶⁸ UNICEF and Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), “Child Labour in Agriculture: The demand side,” *UNICEF, FAO* (July 2019): ix, <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/child-labour-agriculture-demand-side>.

¹⁶⁹ UNICEF and FAO, “Child Labour,” ix.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, x.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, x-xii.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, x-xii.

¹⁷⁵ Habib, *Survey on Child Labour*, 19.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

experienced violence at work.¹⁷⁷ According to the author, the surveyed Syrian children might be exposed to heightened risk of exploitation as a result of tensions between the Syrian population and their host communities. As most Syrian households are dependent on their children's income to survive, the difficult circumstances of the Syrian refugees are also contributing to the acceptance of harsh treatment.¹⁷⁸

In the Old City in Sidon, child labor is less common, according to a MSSCF employee. However, many teenagers are dropping out of school, mostly between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. She believed that the school dropouts are high, mostly as a result of work. While most of the teenage girls get married, the boys try to find work to support their family.¹⁷⁹ The increase of school dropouts was also a big challenge for the MSSCF before they had to shut down their school, the Saida Watanieh school, in the Old City. The school had to be shut down in June 2018, as the school had been licensed as a private free school, but was treated as a public school by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). Additionally, higher costs, such as an increase in teachers' salary by 36%, was far beyond the MSSCFs means. They were also experiencing a high dropout rate from their students, which according to the MSSCF employee was a result of increased poverty and child labor in the Old City.¹⁸⁰ The Saida Watanieh School is now replaced by the Mada center.

The influx of the Syrian refugees has increased the use of child labor in Lebanon, particularly within the agriculture sector. The Syrian households are facing many obstacles, which have led many families to take their children out of school in order to survive. The Syrian children are exploited as cheap labor by middlemen, as adults are more at risk of being detained due to their illegal status in Lebanon. While both boys and girls might have to work, girls are more exposed to early marriage, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

5. Early Marriage

Early marriage existed prior to the Syrian war with an estimate of 13% of Syrian women aged twenty to twenty-four years being married before reaching eighteen.¹⁸¹ However, the new

¹⁷⁷ Habib, *Survey on Child Labour*, 56.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁷⁹ The author's text message exchange with MSSCF employee, October, 2019.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Bartels et al., "Making sense of child," 2.

estimates after the outbreak of the civil war are approximately 35% in Lebanon.¹⁸² Thus, there is an increase in early marriages among the Syrians refugees, which also affects school enrollment, particularly for the girls. In this chapter I will present the contributing factors for early marriage among the Syrian refugee girls, and the challenges they are facing in Lebanon.

5.1. Choosing Early Marriage

Currently, a considerable amount of the literature on early marriage presents the practice as a result of gender inequality. According to this view, early marriage is considered a form of “forced marriage,” since “by legal definition a child cannot give consent.”¹⁸³ The practice is also frequently referred to as “child marriage.”¹⁸⁴ Poverty, conservative attitudes and the lack of education are often assumed to be the main motivating factors by the researchers. While most of the literature sees these factors as the main reasons for early marriage, the voices of the young girls often disappear in the academic discourse. Sonya EM Knox presents a different picture of why Palestinian girls would marry before reaching 18 in a post-conflict environment. Most of the girls she talked to in her article “How they see it: young women’s views on early marriage in a post-conflict setting,”¹⁸⁵ stated that the girls decided to get married in order to relieve their families in a difficult situation, or to escape poor living conditions. Poverty seems to be one of the main reasons for early marriage among the Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

In conflict situations, families are not only dealing with limited recourses and financial burdens, but also a lack of safety. Refugees in new host countries are in most cases trying to overcome a new reality in an environment of fear and desperate need for survival. Facing new difficulties, some families see early marriage as a solution to giving their daughters an improved and more secure life. However, the outcome is generally different than envisioned. Many girls drop out of school, and the girls are left without the ability to improve their financial situation and “as a result, child brides – who are more likely to come from poor families in the first place – are likely to remain poor.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Bartels et al., “Making sense of child,” 2.

¹⁸³ Robert Jensen and Rebecca Thornton, “Early female marriage in the developing world,” *Gender and Development* vol. 11(2) (July 2003): 10.

¹⁸⁴ UNICEF, “Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice, A Statistical Exploration,” *UNICEF* (2005): 4.

¹⁸⁵ Sonya EM Knox, “How they see it: young women’s view on early marriage in a post-conflict setting,” *Reproductive Health Matters* vol. 25, sup. 1 (2017): 96-106.

¹⁸⁶ “Too young,” Save the Children, 2.

One of the girls I interviewed in the Old City of Sidon was sixteen years old. She had married a relative, eight years senior to her, when she was fifteen. She was pregnant with her first child at the time of our interview. She had dropped out of school after seventh grade and emphasized that her mother had married when she was twenty-two. She explained that she would have preferred to continue her education, however, getting married seemed to be the best option for her considering their situation in Lebanon. She had chosen to get married, because it would help her, and her family's financial situation. The main reason for her decision was to lift the burden of her expenses from her family's limited income. She further explained that she was relatively happy with her current situation, yet, she would not have married if she was still living in Syria.¹⁸⁷

Following the increased economical hardships on the families in conflict situations, girls are increasingly regarded as a burden on the family because of their limited options to bring an income compared to the boys, especially in urban areas. In addition, conflict situations increase the risk of rape and sexual violence, which would hurt the family's reputation. This creates not only an economic, but also a social reason for early marriage. Therefore, during conflicts, girls are less desirable for their families; nevertheless, they are able to bring children to their in-laws. Another contributive factor for early marriage is the girls' increasingly restricted mobility compared to the boys. Boys are expected to work and protect their sisters by setting rules for their freedom.¹⁸⁸

A nineteen year old woman from a rural area in Syria married at the age of thirteen. She explained that due to safety reasons, it was more appropriate for her to get married when her family first had to flee to Jordan due to the war in Syria. She had to quit school, but hoped to continue her education sometime in the future, when she returns to Syria with her husband and children. She was hoping to study the English language in the future. She also explained that even though she was happy with her marriage and her husband, who is also her cousin, she wanted her children to be at least twenty and have an education before they get married.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ The author's conversation with Syrian girl, November 2018, Sidon.

¹⁸⁸ Jocelyn Dejong et al., "Young lives disrupted: gender and well-being among adolescent Syrian refugees in Lebanon," *Conflict and Health* vol.11(Suppl1) (2017): 29.

¹⁸⁹ The author's conversation with Syrian woman, November 2018.

None of the young women and girls I talked to had been forced into marriage, and they all gave poverty as their main reason to marry at an early age. However, according to a social worker from the MSSCF, the intense control of Syrian girls indicated that some girls accept early marriage as an escape from their family's social control. She strongly argued that "some girls believe that it is easier to live a life controlled by one man, compared to the control of an entire family."¹⁹⁰

5.2. The Changing Gender Roles

The war in Syria and the following refugee crisis has affected the gender roles both in Syria, and in the refugee's host communities. Before the outbreak of the war, Syria was a patriarchal society with well-established gender roles.¹⁹¹ Previous masculine responsibilities, such as being the head of the family, were challenged as a result of the war and displacement. Many men are no longer able to provide for their families like they had used to. This has led to frustration since their expected role as breadwinner and protector of the family has changed,¹⁹² and "for many men this change has triggered hyper masculine associated codes of behaviour in an attempt to reassert normative gender roles."¹⁹³

The traditional gender-roles in Syria are breaking down in the refugee communities in Lebanon. Many men feel that they have lost their position and power in a very unsettled situation. The breakdown of the customary family structures with traditional gender roles in the Syrian society has led to mental stress and an increase in domestic violence amongst the refugee families in Lebanon.¹⁹⁴ Many children are suffering from increased violence perpetrated by the mother and the father. Young girls, who decide to get married at an early age, are not only living under extreme poverty, posttraumatic stress, and unsafe environments, they are also witnessing and experiencing increased violence within their own families. According to a study conducted by the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States, 63% of the surveyed Syrian refugee women reported violence against women as a problem in Lebanon, and 37% experienced an increase since the outbreak of the Syrian war.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ The author's conversation with social worker from MSSCF, October 2018, Sidon.

¹⁹¹ Dejong et al., "Young lives disrupted," 29.

¹⁹² Charles and Denman, "Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees," 103.

¹⁹³ Ibid.,

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 104.

¹⁹⁵ IPSOS Group SA, "Unpacking gendered realities in displacement: the status of Syrian refugee women in Lebanon," *UN Women*, (2018), 21, <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20arab%20states/attachments/2018/16-days/syriacrisisimpact-lebanon-final2.pdf?la=en&vs=3545>.

A young Syrian refugee girl stated that domestic violence is a problem in her community, and that it had increased after arriving in Lebanon. The topic of domestic violence was brought up as a topic under an awareness session at the Mada center for young girls aged eleven to fifteen. Most of the girls seemed to believe that many girls are marrying at a young age because of overcrowded homes and increased domestic violence.¹⁹⁶ Increased violence in the families was not a topic I would bring up during my fieldwork, unless the interviewee would mention it, as there was usually more than just the interviewee present during our conversations. Whether domestic violence has actually increased among the Syrians in Sidon after the outbreak of the war, remains unanswered. However, due to the overcrowded living situation for most of the families in the Old City, domestic violence might have become more visible than it previously was in Syria. Both older and younger women mentioned the lack of privacy in Sidon, compared to their houses and more spacious dwellings in Syria.

5.3. Early Marriage and Protection

During time of conflict and displacement, many families see early marriage as a way to create protection and stability.¹⁹⁷ Rumors of rape and sexual harassment are widespread among the Syrians in Lebanon. Many women have experienced threatening situations and harassment. This intensifies the fear of harming the family's honor. The notion of protecting a girl's honor existed before the civil war in Syria, and was often used as an argument to marry girls at an earlier age in Lebanon. Displacement and a new level of poverty, in combination with the breakdown of social structures, and affiliations have strengthened this notion. By marrying girls at an early age the burden is lifted from their families, and becomes the husbands responsibility. The absence of measures to support and protect Syrian girls and women in the Lebanese society is also a contributing factor to increased fear of harassment and rape.¹⁹⁸ The pragmatic choice becomes clear to many Syrian refugees, as they don't see other options in their vulnerable situation.

¹⁹⁶ The author's conversation Syrian refugee girl, November 2018, Sidon.

¹⁹⁷ Rima Mourtada, Jennifer Schlecht, and Jocelyn DeJong, "A qualitative study exploring child marriage practices among Syrian conflict-affected populations in Lebanon," *Conflict and Health* vol.11(Suppl 1) (2017): 58.

¹⁹⁸ Sulmone Anderson, "Child Marriages Rise Among Syrian Refugee Girls," *The Atlantic*, May 28, 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/05/child-marriages-rise-among-syrian-refugee-girls/276287/>.

The preserving of a woman's honor and dignity is crucial in the Syrian refugee society where people are forced to live closely together and women quickly become the subject of harmful rumors. Interaction with new social norms for women in Lebanon might also contribute to a fear of changing values among the Syrian girls and increase the need for controlling girls by encouraging early marriage.¹⁹⁹ Marrying girls at an early age was seen as a way of protecting girls in the Old City. However, this protection was meant to keep the girls away from sexual relations outside of marriage and therefore also a protection of the families' honor and reputation.²⁰⁰ Due to patriarchal notions, especially present in conservative communities such as in Sidon, harmful rumors are easily spread.

A young, Syrian man stated that if a young girl rejects a marriage proposal, she might be accused of having an intimate relationship with someone. Such rumors may be harmful for the girl and her family's reputation. He further explained that there are prejudices regarding the Syrian women as "cheaper" than the Lebanese women. These prejudices put them at a higher risk of being exposed to harassments and assaults. This creates a situation of heightened fear among the Syrian refugees that was not present to this degree before in Syria, according to him. Thus, "it creates a state of backwardness, where their mothers would get a certain level of education, and marry at an older age, while their daughter are now getting married as soon as they hit puberty."²⁰¹

5.4. Early Marriage as a Survival Strategy

The main job of all the women and girls I talked to in Sidon, was to take care of the home and their children, if they had children. They all stressed that it is already hard enough for the men in their families to find jobs, and therefore even harder for the women. One of the more outspoken women I talked to, a 22-year-old Syrian refugee who got married at the age of 18, expressed her desire to work and she could envision a future working as a hairdresser owning her private salon. She is married to a Lebanese man of her choice, and she seemed optimistic about her future. Obviously, it is easier for a Syrian woman married to a Lebanese man to get citizenship and to attain a work permit in Lebanon. She had dropped out of school after sixth grade, and she did not see herself going back to school as a mother of three children. Nevertheless, working was not an option for her at this particular time because of the high

¹⁹⁹ Mourtada, Schlecht, and DeJong. "A qualitative study," 6.

²⁰⁰ The author's conversation with NGO employee, December 1, 2018, Sidon.

²⁰¹ The author's conversation with Syrian man, November 2018, Sidon.

unemployment in Sidon.²⁰² However, she stressed the fact that she had managed to resist the pressure of getting married before she reached eighteen. She had chosen her husband, while one of her younger sisters had married a man chosen by their family when she was thirteen years old. She was also eager to talk about the issue of early marriage during a midwifery session, as she believed it had become a rising problem in the Syrian refugee community in Sidon.

Early marriage deprives many young girls from future prospects of education and distinctive progress. Young girls experience a rapid change from no longer being a child to taking on a wife's responsibilities. Many girls decide to marry early to take pressure off the families' strained living condition, hoping to achieve a better living standard for themselves and their families. However, the reality is often characterized by heavy domestic work, early pregnancy, and a life in a vulnerable position due to her (in most cases) older husband being the decision-maker in the house.²⁰³ However, this was not the case for all the girls and women I met during my fieldwork. Some of the of the girls had a certain level of education from Syria and some were even married to husbands of their choices, mostly Lebanese nationals. These girls were often older, and more outspoken during different educational sessions held regularly for women and girls at the MSSCF clinic in the Old City. The topic of early marriage was often brought up by these girls to be discussed with the midwife in order to speak on behalf of other young girls, such as neighbors or family members.

One of the women I talked to was a twenty-four-year old Syrian woman. She had finished two years at the university. She came to Lebanon when she was sixteen years old. She married when she was twenty-two, and was now pregnant with her first child. She did not find it problematic to wait with marriage until she reached an age that she and her family considered appropriate. She could however see a change towards different attitudes regarding early marriage as a consequence of the war. She emphasized that the difference between the families' financial situations and background from Syria also affect their views on early marriage. She stated that Syrians from the urban areas prioritize education over marriage for their young daughters.²⁰⁴

²⁰² The author's conversation with Syrian woman, November 2018, Sidon.

²⁰³ UNICEF, "Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional," 1.

²⁰⁴ The author's conversation with Syrian woman, November 2018, Sidon.

Although early marriage existed in Syria prior to the war, many seemed to believe that Syrian refugees in Lebanon are marrying their girls at an earlier age than what used to be the norm in Syria. One Syrian mother explained that most of the Syrian households around them are marrying off their girls, and thus, it has become more accepted to see girls getting married at a younger age than what they considered as normal in Syria.²⁰⁵ In most cases, the girls have to leave school as new obligations are expected as a wife. Safety concerns often prevents children, and particularly girls, from attending school. Therefore, the need for funding organizations is essential in order to provide the necessary help and structure in the lives of the conflict-affected populations.²⁰⁶ Thus, we can conclude that both economical hardships, and social control contribute to a vicious cycle of early marriage, which hinders young girls from enrolling in school.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to examine the education policy for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. I have identified the political, social, and economical factors that have led to a low school enrollment rate among the Syrian refugees in Lebanon. As I have shown, Lebanon is a country affected by various current, and historical circumstances that shape its refugee policy. The long history of Palestinian refugee settlements, and Lebanon's delicate political balance has impacted the implementation of refugee policy to a great extent.

Sinclair emphasizes the fundamental role of education for populations affected by conflict in her framework for education in emergencies. She states that education should be an integrated part of emergency response, as access to education generates hope and stability. Therefore, education should be the fourth pillar of humanitarian response, following shelter, nutrition, and health facilities. In her framework, Sinclair has identified some general principles, in order to provide quality education during times of conflict.

One of these principles is coordination between the relevant agencies and governments. In Lebanon, coordination was non-existent in the first two years of the Syrians arrival to Lebanon. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has generally taken care of refugee matters in Lebanon, due to Lebanon's rejection of the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, in 2013, the rapid influx of Syrian refugees required the involvement

²⁰⁵ The author's conversation with Syrian woman, November 2018, Sidon.

²⁰⁶ Sinclair, *Planning education*, 10.

of the Lebanese government, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) initiated the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) strategy in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Yet, implementation of refugee education policy has proven to be difficult for the decentralized Lebanese government. Various competing authorities in Lebanon often ignore the Lebanese government's policies, and decisions taken at the state level are disregarded.

The aim of the RACE strategy was to enroll Syrian children in the Lebanese public schools, thus introducing Sinclair's second principle, mainly access to education. Additionally, the MEHE had initiated a waiver of school fees and instructed public schools to enroll all Syrian children. This meant that the lack of legal status would no longer hinder Syrian children from enrolling in the Lebanese schools.

The public schools in Lebanon were not able to accommodate all the Syrian children. Thus, second-shifts were introduced in the public schools to expand the access and reach out to more Syrian children. This step aimed to integrate the Syrian children into the public schools, but the reality was shortened school days combined with a curriculum, which the Syrian children had difficulties adjusting to. Whereas the instruction language in Syrian schools is Arabic, Lebanon uses French and English in teaching.

Lebanon's refugee policy has played a crucial role in the implementation of refugee education policy. While actively inserting a national refugee education framework, paradoxically, the long-established policy of not integrating refugee populations in Lebanon has limited the access to education. The strict residency requirements have created a state of fear and limited the mobility of vulnerable Syrian refugees. Many Syrian families cannot afford to obtain, or renew their residency visas. Furthermore, restrictions on labor has exacerbated the vulnerable economical situation of most Syrian household, as nearly 70% of the Syrian population is living under the poverty line.

The third principle in Sinclair's education in emergency framework is a bottom-up approach in the development of education programs. However, local knowledge and ability is often disregarded, according to Sinclair. In Lebanon, the government facilitated an educational program to enroll Syrian children into the Lebanese schools, but the Syrian population was

excluded from taking part in the decision-making process. The fear of permanent refugee settlements has resulted in marginalization and exclusion of refugee populations.

The arrival of the Syrian refugees provided Lebanon with an opportunity to improve its weak public education system. Nevertheless, lack of funding has not only hindered access to education for Syrian children, it has also pushed the existing education system to its limits. Sinclair states that the general standards of education should be lifted, when large groups of refugees arrive in areas with a weak education system, through national and international donation funds. However, Lebanon has received half of the required funding, which ultimately affects the Syrian children's access to quality education.

Education as the fourth pillar of emergency response, after shelter, nutrition, and health, is what Sinclair requests. However, in the case of Lebanon, it might seem like the first three pillars have not been provided sufficiently. The Syrian refugees' most basic, and important needs are not covered. The state of hope, normalization, and security cannot solely be achieved by providing education for vulnerable populations. Many Syrian households are not able to send their children to school when they are suffering from poverty and lack of security. Most families are forced to take up loans to cover their basic needs. When these fundamental needs are not met, the Syrians have been forced to utilize negative coping strategies, such as child labor and early marriage. The Lebanese government has skipped the first three pillars of humanitarian response, and jumped straight to the fourth pillar.

Although Lebanon has long pursued a non-integration refugee policy, the effort to provide Syrian refugee children has stayed persistent. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize the magnitude of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. As I have shown, Lebanon is a country with a weak infrastructure, and combined with a decentralized government, the process of providing education for the Syrian children has been hampered. A particularly weak public school system has not been able to accommodate the nearly 500,000 refugee children. Thus, we can conclude that Sinclair presents an ideal framework for education in emergencies, which may not be possible to achieve to the fullest in Lebanon.

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