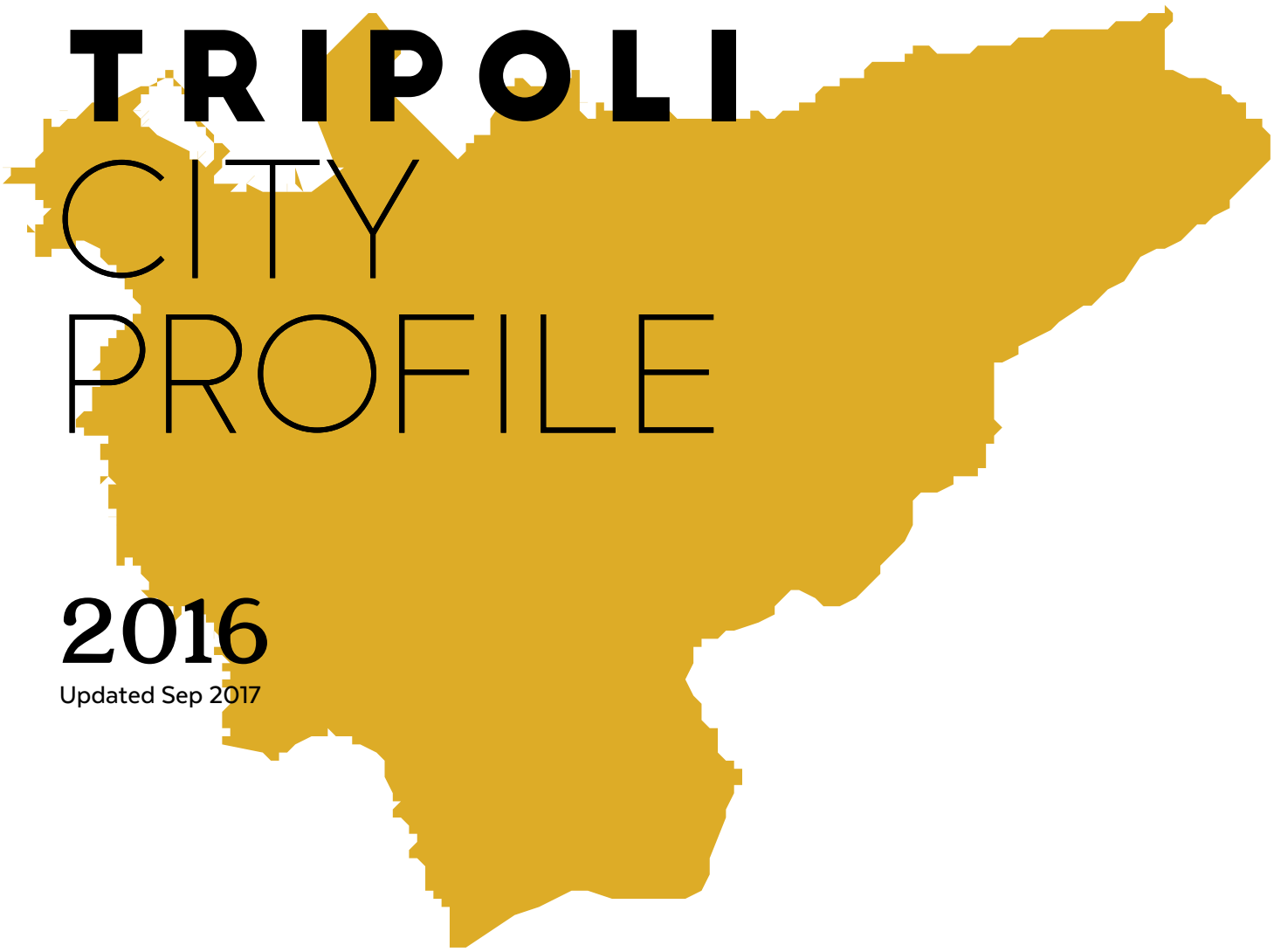
TRIPOLI
CITY PROFILE
2016

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

TRIPOLI

CITY PROFILE



2016

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UN-Habitat Mandate

UN-Habitat is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities, and adequate housing for all, and is the lead agency within the United Nations system for coordinating activities in the field of human settlements. It is mandated through the Habitat Agenda to take the lead in disaster mitigation, and post-crisis rehabilitation capabilities in human settlements.

UN-Habitat's global responsibilities in emergencies, humanitarian, and post-crisis response are to support national governments, local authorities, and civil society in strengthening their capacity for managing human-made and natural disasters affecting human settlements. Experience has shown that the potential for development gain is high in the aftermath of a crisis, and this is a key principle underlying UN-Habitat's efforts to deploy at the earliest opportunity following a disaster. UN-Habitat added value is that it is the UN agency specialized in working in cities and human settlements.

Since 2006, the agency has been present in Lebanon, first involved in recovery and reconstruction efforts in Southern Lebanon, Beirut, as well as Northern Lebanon (Nahr el Bared crisis response), and in efforts to improve the living conditions in the 43 Palestinian out-of-camp concentrations. Since 2013, UN-Habitat has been involved in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis.

Credits & Acknowledgements

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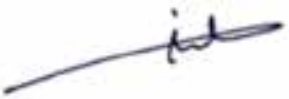
Foreword

UN-Habitat Lebanon is pleased to present the Tripoli City Profile, one of a series of urban profiles being undertaken for the country's major cities. The current refugee crisis in Lebanon, which has seen an influx of nearly 1.5m registered and unregistered displaced people, is in important ways an urban crisis. Unfolding in a nation that is 88% urbanised[1] against a backdrop of pre-crisis urban stresses and socio-economic polarisation, post-2011 refugees have concentrated in urban areas with a high share in the biggest cities. They have located alongside the Lebanese poor in low-cost, deprived neighbourhoods characterised by deteriorated building conditions and inadequate service provision.

UN-Habitat City Profiles are a multi-sectoral spatial tool to improve understanding of vulnerabilities in specifically urban settings and to inform the response. Developed in close collaboration with unions, municipalities, humanitarian partners and other stakeholders, the profiles are based on currently available data and will be updated online to take account of new information, including that from UN-Habitat Neighbourhood Profiles and reported activities of crisis response partners from the 2016 year end and beyond.

We look forward to receiving feedback in order to maximise the resonance of City Profiles with the reality on the ground.



Tarek Osseiran
UN Habitat Lebanon Programme Manager

[1] World Bank (2015) Urban population as % of total. http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS

Introduction

Purpose

UN-Habitat City Profiles are formulated to offer a cross-sectoral perspective on urban vulnerabilities that will inform holistic and inclusive interventions by local authorities, humanitarian partners and others to respond to needs and alleviate poverty amongst host and displaced populations. They also aim at contributing to an analytical knowledge base that will facilitate nuanced medium to long term public sector planning and investment agendas.

Themes

Concerned with the status of urban infrastructure and services and how these interplay with the distribution and socio-economic characteristics of host and refugee populations across the city, UN-Habitat City Profiles are structured around the four themes of space, governance, population and services. National and city-specific data is presented against each theme followed by identification of gaps and challenges.

The last theme, services, is divided into economy, basic urban services and social services. For each of these sectors, relevant activities reported by partners to the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan in the online portal ActivityInfo is included, forming part of the evidence base against which gaps and challenges are suggested[2]. The two full reporting years of 2014, 2015 and 2016 are currrently included; 2017 will be added at the year end, with the run-up to that point typically showing a surge in reported activities.

Methodological outline

Data collection is primarily desk-based, with some supplementary primary data collection and surveying where necessary.

In defining the study area, continuous built-up area is used as an imperfect morphological proxy for the functional urban area[3]. This methodological choice is aimed at facilitating analysis of the city in terms of its active spatial interactions as opposed to its historic administrative boundaries. To illustrate, topics optimally addressed at this scale elsewhere typically include economic development, mobility including public transport infrastructure, spatial planning including housing, and implementation structures. Selecting the study unit in this transparent, replicable way allows for comparison between cities on a like-for-like basis.

Falling in the category of 'area-based' approaches, characterisable not only as geographical and multi-sectoral but also participative, UN-Habitat City Profiles are developed through a collaborative and consultative process that engages from the outset the local authorities (unions of municipalities and municipalities), NGOs and other UN agencies. 'Round tables' facilitated by UN-Habitat are convened by the local authorities at key profile development stages for consultation and endorsement purposes. Information and validation is gained from services providers as well as the humanitarian sector leads for the relevant territory.

In terms of human resources, a dedicated field-based area coordinator works in collaboration with a central office lead urban researcher/planner to compile and analyse data in conjunction with mapping stakeholders.

Structure

Following an outline of the city's historic and developmental context, the four themes are addressed in turn. Each theme begins with key summary points, followed by discussion in terms of their national and urban dimensions. Conclusions are then drawn, focussing first on resounding findings and second on policy and research implications. The latter incorporates a set of suggested projects of potential strategic impact which may respond to some of the challenges identified.

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[2] A tailored selection of ActivityInfo indicators was selected for the purpose of City Profiles. Short-term impact interventions such as cash for food were omitted, with medium to longer-term impact projects.

[3] Ideally functional urban areas are defined not only on morphological parameters but also on direct functional ones, particularly travel-to-work trips for mapping economic integration across the urban margin. Such functional data does not exist in Lebanon.

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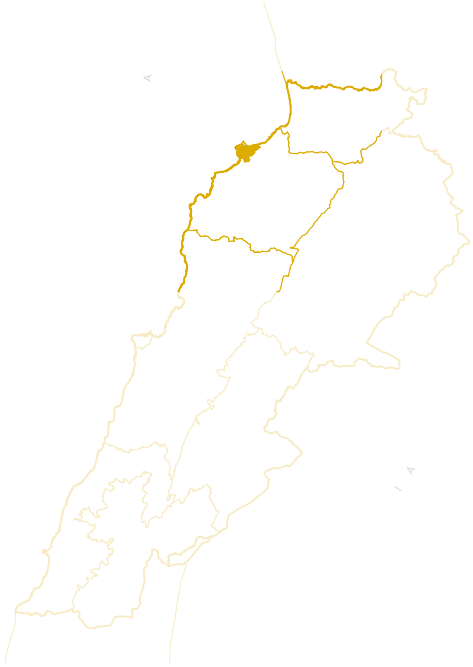

Figure 1 Tripoli's location in Lebanon. Source: UN-Habitat (2016).

Context

Former regional capital

- 8th Century: The Phoenicians founded Tripoli. It originally comprised three neighborhoods situated in the current location of Al Mina. It was the centre of a Phonician confederation with Sidon and Tyre and Arados Island, hence the name "Tripolis", meaning "triple city".[4]
- 10th Century: The Fatimid Caliph, Al-Muiz, conquered the city. It became an independent province encompassing Lattakia (Syria), experiencing a commercial and cultural boom that rendered it a significant centre of Shiia.
- 1109: Tripoli was conquered by Raymond de Saint Gilles, Count of Toulouse. It became the capital of Tripoli County, one of the main Crusader states, and remained under domination by the Franks for almost two centuries under the name "Triple".
- 1258: The Mameluks were victorious over the Crusaders. The Crusader city located on the peninsula was razed and a new city developed near the citadel 2km east of the previous site to protect the Mameluks from invasions. The medina (now the old town) with its narrow alleys was also designed to prevent military invasions. Henceforth, the city grew separately from the port of Mina. It became the second most important Mameluk city after Cairo, and the third Syrian city after Damascus and Aleppo.
- 1516: The Ottomans were victorious over the Mameluks. The citadel was reinforced. The souks continued to play their traditional role. City growth continued but at a slower rate relative to the preceding Mameluk era.
- 19th Century: Competition between the ports of Tripoli and Beirut increased, with Beirut prevailing from around 1860.
- 1909: A road link was created between Tripoli and Beirut.
- 1911: A rail connection was created between Tripoli and Aleppo.
- 1920: The State of Great Lebanon was declared by General Gouraud, and Lebanon came under a French mandate. The inclusion of Tripoli in this entity was not well accepted by its people.
- 20th Century [first half]: Tripoli underwent continued population growth fed by a rural exodus. Rural immigrants tended to settle in Tabbaneh and the souks, whilst well-off existing residents moved out of the historical city.
- 1955: The Abu Ali river flooded. Following the flood, a concrete channel was built leading to the demolition of around 2000 residential units, displacing many towards the historic centre[5]. It affected the socio-economic composition of the neighborhoods in generating migrations of the middle class from Tabbaneh and the old city to the new neighborhoods. Simultaneously, socio-spatial segregation deepened in the city.

The Civil War and its aftermath

- 1970s: The city witnessed progressive deindustrialization. Major infrastructure services ceased to operate with the war (rail connections, fair and refinery).
- 1980: The first violent clashes took place between Jabal Mohsen and Tabbaneh. The military intervention of the Syrians rooted the conflict. Syrians shelled Bab al Tabbaneh because of its popular support for the PLO[6]. On its side, Jabal Mohsen is assimilated to the Syrian regime (particularly as the youth of Jabal Mohsen became involved with the Syrian forces). Thus began the "retaliation game". This antagonism was marked by the 1986 slaughter when Syrian forces killed 300 people in Bab al Tabbaneh.
- Tebbaneh suffered deeply from the war, experiencing heavy destruction and migration of a third of its population.

[4] http://phoenicia.org/cities.html visited in 2016.

[5] Nahas, C (2001) "Stakeholder Analysis and Social Assessment for the Proposed Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development Project"/ http://charbelnahas.org/textes/Amenagement_et_urbanisme/Cultural_Heritage_Report/E-Tripoli_64-106.pdf

[6] PLO: Palestinian Liberation Organization.

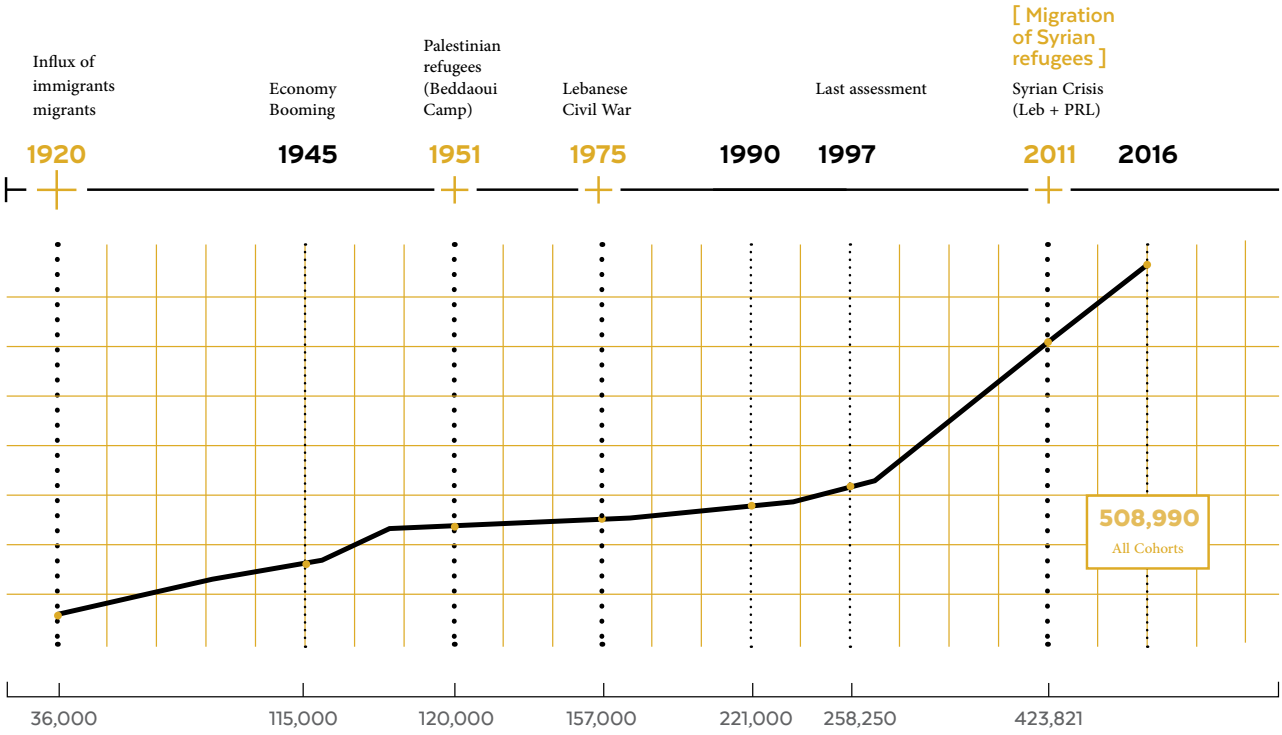

Figure 2 Timeline City Population Growth - 1920 - current. Source: UN-Habitat, 2017.

- The city lost its multi-confessional nature with the out-migration of the Maronite Christians (especially to Zghorta). At the end of the civil war, the urban agglomeration copmrises more than 90% Sunni Muslims. Orthodox Christians live in Al Mina and the Alawi minority lives in Jabal Mohsen.
- With the development of new neighborhoods along the road linking Tripoli to Mina (Azmi, Miatein and Mina Avenue), the two poles are connected in terms of continuous built up area. However, this has been accompanied by a polarising segregation bewteen the poor 'old city' of Tripoli and the more prosperous 'new city'.

Historic urban growth

- The old city (Tripoli) and the port areas (El-Mina) started to develop in the first half of the 20th century simultaneously. The old city was designed as a deterrent to military invasions. It is

influx from Nahr el-Bared (NBC) after the clashes between the Lebanese army and radical militant group, Fatah Al-Islam, which in fact forced 27,000 refugees to flee NBC in 2011[8], increasing the population in Beddaoui from 15,000 to the double. Beddaoui Camp is managed by UNRWA, and still mostly follows the borders set in 1955, but has also spilled over adjacent neighborhoods that now provide low income housing over the years to Palestinian refugees and individuals of different backgrounds and nationalities, more recently Syrian refugees.

- During the early 1950s, the city grew exponentially due to rural-urban migration. The rural population settled in Tebbaneh and the souks, from neighboring Sunni Dinniyyeh and Akkar while the richer population moved out of the historical city.
- The introduction of customs duties by Syria at its frontiers affected the activities of the Port of Tripoli.

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