HOUSING, LAND & PROPERTY ISSUES IN LEBANON

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

August 2014



UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

European Union

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, works to protect and assist those fleeing war and persecution. Since 1950, we have helped tens of millions of people find safety and rebuild their lives.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAS	Central Administration of Statistics
CDR	Council for Development and Reconstruction
CEDAW	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
COC	Code of Obligation and Contracts
CRI	Consultation and Research Institute
DGU	Directorate General of Urbanism
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HLP	Housing, Land, and Property
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
ICLA	Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IS	Informal Settlements
ITS	Informal Tented Settlements
LBP	Lebanese Pound
MoIM	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PCH	Public Corporation for Housing
PRS	Palestinian Refugees from Syria
RER	Real Estate Registry
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SSU	Small Shelter Units
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UoMs	Union of Municipalities
USD	United States Dollar

INTRODUCTION

Lebanon hosts the highest number of Syrian refugees in the region. UNHCR estimates that over one million refugees currently reside in Lebanon, in addition to at least 50,000 Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS).[1] Most of this influx has occurred in the past year. In January 2013 the refugee population was less than 150,000, but grew almost six-fold during 2013. It is estimated that today 1 out of every 5 residents in Lebanon is a refugee. These refugees are distributed across the country, with the highest population concentrations in the Bekaa (35%), Beirut (25%), and North Lebanon (25%). Most of these refugees are settling in cities and peri-urban areas outside towns and villages, creating different challenges from those normally found in a rural context.[2]

The Syrian refugees' crisis has had a huge impact on Lebanon. At the onset of the crisis, host communities in Lebanon welcomed and supported many refugees, sometimes without asking for anything in return.[3] However, as the crisis has become prolonged, supporting refugees has become an increasing burden on communities a comprehensive national strategy to respond to the crisis, humanitarian actors have increased their cooperation with municipal authorities. In fact, municipalities have in many cases been the Government's "first responders" to the refugee crisis. There are signs, however, that municipalities' capacities are increasingly strained and that they are becoming more and more frustrated with the situation.

The urgent need for basic shelter has pushed many Syrian families to live in poor conditions, frequently in spaces not designed as shelters. The situation is further exacerbated with the arrival of new refugees, reducing hence the availability of housing and increasing the risk of eviction. The presence of these refugees has also had adverse consequences for host communities due to increased competition over affordable housing, the inadequacy of the existing infrastructure and services, and competition over limited employment opportunities.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In light of these challenges, UNHCR and UN-Habitat conducted an assessment of housing, land and property (HLP) issues related to the Syrian refugee crisis.[4] This report reviews the impact of the crisis in four specific areas: (i) shelter options available to refugees; (ii) HLP rights of refugees and host communities; (iii) housing and property markets; and (iv) land-use, particularly in heavily impacted cities and towns, but also in rural areas.

The purpose of this research study is to inform humanitarian and government entities and help in designing policies, planning decisions and programs so as to ensure that refugees and

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