



## Sanctuary in the City? Beirut

This year marks one century of Lebanon hosting Armenian refugees, which community of over 150,000 now forms an integral part of the country's economy and social fabric. 450,000 Palestinian refugees are registered in Lebanon,<sup>1</sup> mainly originating from families displaced during 1948. Many of the Palestinians living in the 12 refugee camps or within the cities in Lebanon lack basic rights and services, including access to decent work, public education or health services. Most live in abject poverty, resulting in a long-term social and political crisis that is well documented and locally felt. Uniquely, the UN provides no protection for Palestinian refugees, and their principle service provider also has been criticized widely for its performance in Lebanon, in particular, leading to dissatisfaction of both beneficiaries and donors.<sup>2</sup>

Since March 2011, the conflict in neighboring Syria has resulted in over 200,000 deaths and displaced some 9 million persons from their homes, with an estimated 1.85 million living in Lebanon by end 2015.<sup>3</sup> At present, almost one out of every three people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee.<sup>4</sup>

With the Syrian conflict now well into its fourth year, informal "camps" and shelters that have emerged along the Syrian border are no longer sufficient to address the long-term needs of refugees and asylum seekers, and many are settling in the City of Beirut and other major urban centers. This reality has shifted much of the protection, planning and service provision for refugees into local jurisdictions, despite the lack of clarity on these issues on the global, national and local levels. With the history of the Palestinian refugees and the recent influx of Syrian refugees (and Palestinian refugees displaced from Syria) in Lebanon, urban infrastructure, resources (natural, housing, jobs, etc.) and economy face new pressures, and it is critical that the humanitarian perspective takes a more long-term approach that interacts directly with local authorities, communities and service providers. This requires not only an emergency humanitarian response, but one that aligns with development and human rights criteria.

The refugee and displacement crisis in the world is a global and shared responsibility. However, as persons living with a well-founded fear of persecution or direct threat of serious harm overwhelmingly seek refuge in relative proximity to their home countries. Neighboring countries and, increasingly, subnational authorities find themselves bearing burdens beyond their capacities, facilities and resources. Therefore, the local actors need greater capacity and support to carry their disproportionate responsibility.

Despite its role as a major host to refugee populations, Lebanon has not signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees nor the 1967 Protocol, which are the core legal instruments outlining minimum standards for the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. Without this framework outlining roles and responsibilities, nonetheless Lebanon largely has relied on the international community to provide services and aid for the interim and long-standing refugee population, specifically United Nations' High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Lebanon's municipalities are becoming exemplary of the global phenomenon of refugees and migrants integrating into urban centers, often for the long term.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNRWA, "Where We Work," at: <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>.

<sup>2</sup> "Confirmed: UNRWA guilty of mismanagement," *The Daily Star* (23 April 1999), at:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/1999/Apr-23/31799-confirmed-unrwa-guilty-of-mismanagement.ashx>.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, "2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Lebanon," at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486676.html>. As of 6 May 2015, UNHCR Lebanon has temporarily suspended new registration as per Government of Lebanon's instructions. Accordingly, individuals awaiting to be registered are no longer included.

<sup>4</sup> Based on estimated Lebanon population in "Lebanon Demographics Profile 2014," *index mundi*, at: [http://www.indexmundi.com/lebanon/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/lebanon/demographics_profile.html).

<sup>5</sup> Overseas Development Institute, "Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability," 2013, at:

The contemporary problems this project seeks to address are:

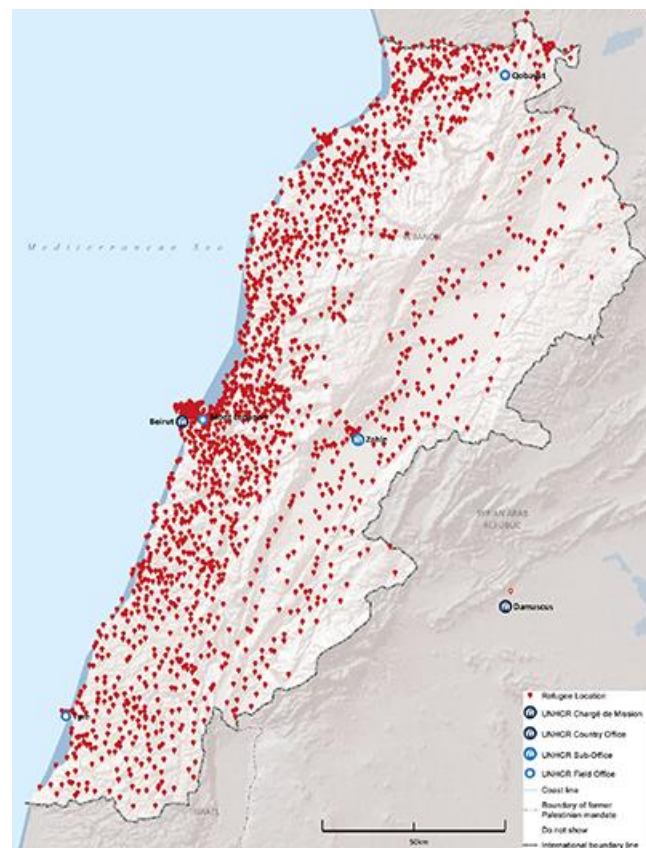
- The changing roles and challenges of local authorities in the global refugee protection regime?
- The lack of local and regional models for managing and administering refugee and migrants into urban life.
- The specific challenges of urbanization as a function of current internal and cross-border displacements.
- The need for coherence and relevance of the *World Charter on the Right to the City* and the UCLG *Global Charter Agenda for Human Rights in the City* through the documentation and exchange of experiences and practices, in general, that improve participation of non-national citizens generally, and refugees specifically, that informs local decision making processes, especially those related to access to services.
- The need for norm-based assessments of local authorities' needs to address migration within their jurisdictions.
- The lack of data and understanding of these issues and potential solutions applied in the exceptionally afflicted MENA region.

Like many marginalized urban populations globally, many refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Beirut and other Lebanese cities suffer vulnerability as "urban poor," but also as female-headed households and/or with precarious residency statuses. Many also lack access to adequate water, sanitation and urban planning, among other basic goods and services. With their diversity, all require a targeted and concerted effort toward addressing the root causes of the problems, as essential to addressing them.

With a global shift of refugees and displaced persons moving from camps into cities, much of the research on protection gaps and development roles of refugees and displaced persons, generally, and, in the MENA region, in particular, has been undertaken.<sup>6</sup> A better conceptualization is needed to create real long-term solutions for refugees in urban environments, and in particular the women and children who are more vulnerable to rights violations. With certain rights and needs identified, in order to create real development, opportunity and integration of the refugee community, it is up to the host government at all levels and local population to regulate the extent of which these rights are fulfilled. In Lebanon, as stated previously, no strong national or treaty-based framework for protection exists. With more refugees entering cities such as Beirut, local authorities face the imperative to work together with the local community, refugee community, concerned civil society and international aid agencies to generate a protection framework and immediate services. The displaced persons are essential to that deliberative process.

The crisis in Syria will result in long-term political and economic crises within that country, making return a difficult prospect in the near-term. Meanwhile, in the absence of other "durable solutions," refugees and host

Distribution of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 2015



<http://www.odi.org/projects/2437-sanctuary-city-urban-displacement-vulnerability>.

<sup>6</sup> "Protecting Syrian Refugees: Laws, Policies and Global Responsibility Sharing" (Boston: Boston University, School of Law, 2014)

have little option integrate into the urban fabric of Beirut, other Lebanese cities and their environs. This project seeks to benefit from available frameworks, lessons and governance tools to make the best of the situation by fostering stronger relationships among local authorities, local communities, civil society and the refugee/migrant/asylum-seeker population.

### **Activities and Approach**

The project, initiated by Habitat International Coalition's Housing and Land Rights Network (HIC-HLRN), will facilitate refugee communities' interaction with the local community and local authorities, in order to create stronger social inclusion within the community and better provisions for protection. It will also focus specifically in promoting specific measures that protect refugee women and children, who are often engaged in precarious work and/or are more vulnerable when basic rights and services are not met (housing, water and sanitation, etc.). This project will engage local civil society organizations providing support to the refugee communities in Lebanon, which include Amel Association (co-partner in the proposal) and Pal Camp Coordination NGO, as well as the United Cities and Local Governments (co-sponsor) in connection with local authorities and refugee communities, to assist in facilitating relationships with the local authorities. HIC and Amel Association will work with local authorities, in coordination with UCLG/Lebanon and UCLG-MEWA, to compile any proposals for local charters on the Right to the City that addresses these issues.

This project depends upon the participation of many stakeholders, but primarily local authorities and service providers, and the refugee community. HIC-HLRN will provide the technical and consultation input, but the content and actions will be led by local actors to ensure relevance, continuity and sustainability of the project. HIC's local partner, Amel Association, a local CSO service-providing collective based in Beirut, has strong links in the refugee community and will facilitate their participation. However, it will be a priority to have some separate workshops with women (as noted above), in order to meet their specific needs and address the challenges they face. Other HLRN members and friends in Lebanon will assist in communicating with local authorities in Beirut. It will be critical to also build relationships with relevant humanitarian actors (local and international) providing support and protection to the refugees living in Beirut. HLRN staff work in international refugee dialogue and research will facilitate the necessary links with these institutions.

Putting the project direction and outcomes into the hands of the local actors is critical to having a long-term impact and to have sustainable outcomes. Building the local authorities directly into the project will create a stronger political will to implement the policies and open a new dialogue via participatory planning. This project also will relate to the larger Right to the City Platform project that is currently underway at the global level (see below) and will be a critical example toward reformulating the World Charter on the Right to the City in its support for migrants and refugees. With this project, HLRN will work with global partners to provide ongoing support to the local partner, Amel Association and local authorities.

The engagement of local authorities is localizing the normative Right to the City framework to develop a gap analysis and needs assessment will identify, in part, budgetary requirements to ensure that services and participation mechanisms are sufficiently resourced to ensure that both refugees and host communities share the benefits of (1) budgetary and (2) extra-budget assistance, as well as (3) new economic opportunities. These include (1) social services and capital investment for infrastructure, (2) housing, food and health assistance, and (3) financial and other assistance arising from international cooperation and direct foreign investment.

The consultations will consist of four structured 2-day workshops spread over 3-month period (project period of 12 months). Within the consultation, the project will conduct a gap analysis and needs assessment of local authorities to determine requirements of central institutions and international cooperation in order to implement the right to the city, and provide greater protection and integration of the refugee community. HIC's project partner UCLG-CISPD will play a role in providing technical support for, these workshops. The refugee community will also join consultations on refugee rights and the Right to the City in order to fully engage them

in the process. The local refugee community participants, with at least 50% female participants, will share the struggles they face integrating in Beirut and work with the team to discuss potential solutions. Additionally, there will be a separate workshop session for the refugee women to discuss the specific challenges they face in the community, and some brainstorming on practical interventions.

As cited above, specific attention focuses on women's issues, as local women define them. They are more deeply affected by adverse living conditions and lack of rights. As stated above, separate workshops will be held for women to discuss sensitive issues and work together to come up with planning solutions that best address collective needs. The project-implementation team includes women trainers (UCLG, HIC-HLRN, Amel Association), who will conduct some focus groups and consultation sessions for women, including those participants from the local authorities, refugee population and host communities, as appropriate.

Utilizing these workshops, the project team, with input from the local refugee community, will create a template for the Right to the City charter that focuses on the rights of refugees and displaced persons. In designing the workshops and drafting the charter, the project will also liaise with relevant humanitarian actors and organizations that are providing services to refugees/displaced persons in Beirut and other urban centers and will have important insight into the challenges they also face in meeting refugee needs. It will also serve to enhance coordination between local authorities and humanitarian actors in consulting them with policy changes and implementation in the framework of Right to the City, a common focus of HIC-HLRN and UCLG's Committee on Social Inclusion and Participatory Democracy (CISPD).

### **Partner Complementarity**

This proposed collaboration with Cities Alliance will combine the experience of local-authority consultation and needs assessment modules of Habitat International Coalition (HIC), together with UCLG's tools, especially CISDP, and the local experience of HIC's local partner Amel Association to devise solutions with municipal authorities to ensure protection and address needs of local refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

HIC, as a global network, has been a core partner in driving the Right to the City agenda since 2001, as a rational method and developmental approach to managing urbanization as an alternative to perpetuating slums and marginalization, while supporting the participatory development and the social function and management of the city. HLRN's regional MENA program has joined urban social movements in other regions, especially Europe, Latin America and Asia, to enlist lessons and models of the global Right to the City movement to articulate in MENA. HIC also recently undertook a global Right to the City study in several cities including Jerusalem, Cairo, Mexico City and São Paulo, identifying structural challenges and opportunities to realizing the Right to the City.

Working from previous experiences in local authority consultation and collaboration, the project will combine these experiences and competences to create a better understanding among local authorities of their role in protecting urban refugees and displaced persons; in particular the objective is to develop with local authorities' framework for protection; participatory consultation mechanisms; protection policies and services; and to develop an understanding of the roles and rights of the refugee community as well, including in the realization of the human rights to adequate housing, basic services, livelihood, etc.

### **Synergies**

Local governments and authorities, not only national governments, have direct roles—and corresponding obligations—in the global protection regime, but these roles, responsibilities and international cooperation needs have not yet been well defined locally. This project attempts to clarify and develop these concepts.

This effort also coincides and links with related global processes. The human rights obligations of local authorities have become a topic of increased discussion in international forums, from the UN Human Rights Council's

Advisory Committee, to the 4<sup>th</sup> UCLG Congress (Rabat, 2013), the International Meeting on the Right to the City (São Paulo, 2014) and the preparations toward the Habitat III summit.

These processes and their outcomes inform the Global Right to the City Platform that HIC and PÓLIS have pursued through research that includes refugee and migrant hosting cities including Mexico City, Gwangju, São Paulo, Cairo and Jerusalem. This initiative also provides the opportunity to conceptualize and understand further the role of urban migrants and refugees within the Global Right to the City Platform generally.

Targeting the root causes of communities in crises is core to methodologies addressing and preventing protracted crises, for example, as recognized by FAO, IFAD and WFP in addressing food insecurity, and merging humanitarian and development approaches to urban displacement: FAO “High Level Expert Forum on Food Security in Protracted Crises,” September 2012, and Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs conference “Urban Displacement and Development: Moving the debate forward,” February 2013], the “Sanctuary in the City” project led by Humanitarian Policy Group of the UK’s Overseas Development Institute (2013), involving HIC-HLRN, and the current Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Displacement Research and Action Network, of which HIC-HLRN is a founding partner. In light of these efforts, this project seeks to align with analysis and current global initiatives also through the HIC-Instituto PÓLIS “Right to the City Platform,” as participation, access to services and housing, and refugee/migrant integration are critical challenges afflicting all displacement-affected cities, including Beirut. HIC also sees this project, coinciding with the Habitat III preparations and global conference, as applying the relevant commitments of Habitat II toward evaluative reporting and priority setting.

### **Project Outputs**

Capacity building and awareness raising form crucial components of this project. It will create a professional consultation curriculum on the Right to the City, developed among HLRN, UCLG-CISDP and the Amel Association with examples from global practice, developed and delivered in Lebanon to local authorities, as well as a course for the refugee community. This process will also develop materials produced in the Right to the City Platform and indigenize them in the Lebanon context. Local authorities in Beirut struggle to respond to the increased pressure on basic services and local infrastructure, including electricity supply, water delivery, education and waste collection, among others. These workshops also will discuss the needs and tangible solutions for these issues. The local authorities’ consultation will also focus on the rights of refugees via national legislation and policy, including sensitization of refugee documents, permits and right to remain; this step is critical and will have immediate impact on the daily life of refugees living in Beirut, as many face problems with these issues. The consultation will also provide information on the Right to the City, and how it can be realized and applied in Lebanon, utilizing practical examples that include those from São Paulo, Mexico City and Gwangju.

In order to have a full understanding of the issues of refugees, the consultation will cover the local needs and gaps in refugee protection, with the support of the local refugee community. The attendees of the consultation will be decided by the city and neighborhoods themselves, with the help of our local partners. But they should represent bureaus and organizations providing social and economic support and services.

HIC and Amel Association will work with local authorities, in coordination with UCLG/Lebanon and UCLG-MEWA, to compile any relevant experiences and proposals for local charters on the Right to the City that addresses these issues.

### **Dissemination of Results and Replicability**

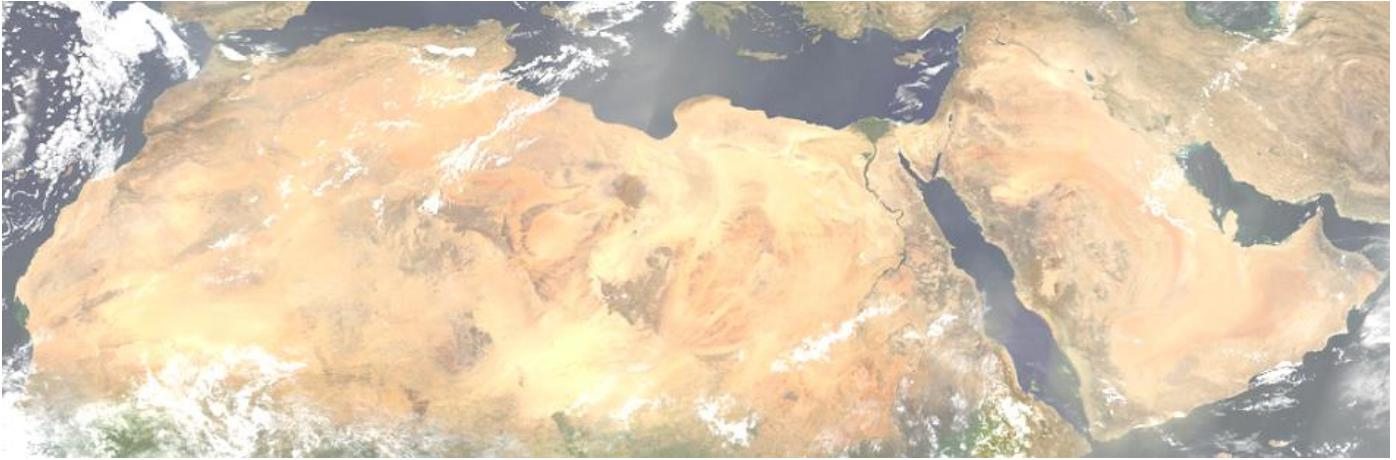
As a Cities Alliance implementing partner with a cross-border profile and operation, HIC-HLRN will assume responsibility for disseminating the project experience and outcomes throughout its Membership of over 400 organizations globally, among them 140 are in the MENA region. HLRN’s regular participation in international events and forums pose opportunities for disseminating the project outcomes globally. HLRN and local partners

extensively use email and web-based means of dissemination, in addition to the HLRN periodical bilateral Land Times and annual MENA Land Forum, which are vehicles for learning and exchange of experience. The curricula and consultation materials developed in the project will be replicated and adapted for use by HIC-HLRN in other cities. Additionally, Habitat International Coalition (HIC), which is the umbrella organization of HLRN, is engaged in a global project related to the Right to the City, which would benefit from the inclusion of this project on Beirut and its role in protecting and accommodating refugees. This project represents an opportunity to take practical steps for greater realizing the tenants associated with the Right to the City, and provide an additional global platform for sharing information as inputs to Habitat III.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring the project will be done internally within HIC-HLRN, as well as in direct correlation with cosponsor, UCLG. Monitoring project implementation progress will include reports on production of outcomes, financial accounting, and levels and nature of inputs (e.g., technical assistance, right to the city gap analysis and needs assessment, consultation); Formative evaluation indicators of project accomplishments will include mid-project assessment of the quality and adequacy of activities at the outcome level. The project will develop an evaluation plan and data-collection instruments as part of the project implementation, and will include rapid assessment, low-cost data collection techniques such as focus groups, interviews, consultation-evaluation forms, and simple targeted studies to identify key issues for project management with gender criteria built into their design. The curricula and consultation materials developed in the project will be replicated and adapted for use by HIC-HLRN and Member CSOs, as well as shared with UCLG and Right to the City Platform partners in their continuing pedagogical work with constituents and communities in Lebanon and elsewhere.

## HIC-HLRN Middle East/North Africa Program



The Middle East/North Africa regional program of Habitat International Coalition's Housing and Land Rights Network addresses the need for civil society participation in public affairs by applying the criteria and methodology of human rights and corresponding state obligations as a defining framework for civil discourse. The ultimate objective of this program is to operationalize human rights by developing civil society actors' knowledge and capacity that enable direct engagement with decision makers at all levels to address complex policy issues and pose practical solutions to governance dilemmas related to habitat and related public resources.

HLRN's MENA program combines diverse strategies to upholding housing and land rights, ranging from popular and legal initiatives to posing alternatives to the privatization of public and environmental goods and services, which affect housing and land rights. Activities promote adequate housing, land and water management as public goods and services; land and water as indispensable resources related to food sovereignty; as well as all relevant technologies, ethical principles and other culturally specific values for guiding equitable management of land and natural resources.

The MENA region is exceptionally suitable as a focus for this discussion, with its conspicuous features of foreign occupation, and land and water scarcity and dispossession that affect livelihoods and development. The land, water and other resource dimensions of self-determination threaten indigenous peoples in the region, and people's sovereignty in general.

The MENA Program promotes the development of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) culture in the region and builds capacity by providing training, appropriate methodologies for housing rights monitoring and legal defense, access to international forums, tools and techniques for monitoring ESCR; and related opportunities for co-operation with the UN human rights system and other multilateral forums. Thus, HLRN's MENA program contributes to the region's discourse on ESC-rights and globalization, and organizes regional and inter-regional exchanges of expertise. HLRN seeks to help create the context for MENA communities and housing rights defenders to develop practical skills, to work cooperatively and develop solidarity regionally and with social movements elsewhere. HIC-MENA's on-line resources also provide self-service databases and archives with unique Arabic-language resources on the human right to adequate housing and related human rights.

For more information on the MENA Program and HIC-HLRN membership, go to: [www.hic-mena.org](http://www.hic-mena.org).