



# HOUSING AND LAND RIGHTS NETWORK

## Habitat International Coalition

### Report of First Workshop of the “Sanctuary in the City: Beirut” project

Beirut, 17–19 August 2016

The Housing and Land Rights Network of Habitat International Coalition held its first set of workshops, in collaboration with Amel Association, for the “Sanctuary in the City: Beirut” project on 17–19 August 2016. The initial workshops introduced the principles and purposes of universal human rights, contextualizing their implementation in the urban context. In application, HLRN presented the Global Charter for the Right to the City, the Gwangju Principles for Human Rights Cities and the UCLG-CSIPD Charter Agenda on Human Rights in the City as models. The workshop considered these and related instruments to explore the prospect of developing such a charter for Beirut emphasizing the municipal commitment to apply human rights principles in the particular circumstances of the protracted crisis of refugees and displaced persons. The workshop program presented the principle such that, while the refugee crisis is also a global responsibility, that responsibility is discharged by local governments. The program focused on the specific experiences of three cities in different regions as human rights cities (Gwangju and Vienna) and/or applying the “right to the city” (São Paulo). With the case of Lebanon as example, the message emphasized also the human rights obligations of local government under treaty, as well as the role of the international community to shoulder its responsibilities to support local governments. The workshop discussion produced observations of the current situation of refugees’ and displaced persons’ living standards and social cohesion, as well as recommendations on how local governments in Greater Beirut could contribute to improved living standards and promote social cohesion in this context by operationalizing the principle of citizenship in the city that is common to the applicable charters.

The workshops raised a series of observations as a diagnosis of the situation in Lebanon and evaluate the importance of work toward a charter for Beirut as a major human rights city in light of the crisis faced by the situation of refugees in Lebanon. They also served as domestic assessment of the applicability of the right to the city/human rights city principles to Beirut.

The most important take-aways arising from the workshops include:

#### **Participant Observations:**

- One of the most important urban experiences in the current period is the refugee and displacement crises that challenge both service delivery and governance in cities.
- This experience informs the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and their implementation, although neither global policy instrument addresses the phenomenon sufficiently;

- The refugee crisis is a global responsibility belonging to the international community as a whole, but in operation, framework that responsibility falls to local governments in the provision of basic services and other needs in the exercise of the right to the city and according to the principles of human rights;
- The voices of Beirut should contribute to the global debate and discourse in the role of local governments, especially in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region, as well as the global and international responsibility in responding to the refugee crisis and the application of human rights principles locally in accordance with the framework of human rights obligations at the local level;
- There is no unified international concept of the right to the city because it has yet to be discussed in the international legal framework; so there are several different concepts have emerged from the right to the city;
- The right to the city/human rights in the city is the accumulation of all the human rights of inhabitants and the corresponding obligations of the municipality;
- The concept of the right in the city/human rights cities does not obviate the need for fair and equitable development and distribution of investment in the countryside;
- The workshop clarified the human rights of refugees and the other relevant international legal norms and sources, in particular the role and obligations of local governments in protecting and assisting refugees in accordance with the framework and general principles of international law, as well as specific treaties; these include the requirement of *nonrefoulement* pursuant to the rules of public international law, including human rights, and not only according to the 1951 Convention;
- Governmental institutions play the primary role in providing protection and assistance to refugees, even if Lebanon is not a ratifying party of the 1951 Convention;
- Recognition of the legal status of non-citizens in exercising their civil rights remains a fundamental challenge in applying the concept of the right to the city/human rights *in* the city/Human rights city;
- Recognizing the legal personality and the fundamental rights of the refugees is an obligation in accordance with the general rules of international law;
- The obstacles facing the refugee community include access to means of redress when basic rights are violated in the country of asylum;
- We need to monitor and assess the practices by state agencies in dealing with the refugee crisis in light of what is stipulated in the international covenants and conventions as an obligation of states to provide basic protection to refugees and displaced persons;
- CSOs have an important role to play to support refugees and displaced persons in realizing their legal personality and accessing means of redress;
- The lack of any rights or regard for Palestinian refugees and displaced persons coming from Syria, including their lack of any legal status, compounds their vulnerability;
- Refugees have a right to voluntary and safe return as a key element of reparations in the case of gross violations leading to their flight, along with property restitution, compensation and rehabilitation; resettlement, guarantees not to repeat the violation (displacement and eviction) and satisfaction, in accordance with the rules of general international law (A/RES/60/147).

## Recommendations:

- Local authorities and governments, as well as civil society organizations (CSOs) have an important role to play in ensuring refugees' and displaced persons' access to knowledge about the rights of refugees and the responsibility of local governments toward them;
- Basic education and work are among the greatest needs and rights of refugees/displaced persons in Greater Beirut;
- The curfew imposed by some municipalities under municipal law has a negative impact on vulnerable refugees and displaced persons;
- The lack of certain institutions in Lebanon and the region (such as facilities for legal aid, a National Human Rights Institution or the European Court of Human Rights) that processes human rights violations and abuses;
- The Constitutional Council, which monitors the constitutionality of laws, is not challenging procedures and laws that violate constitutional principles;
- UNHCR ensures that all women are also heads of households, but that recognition needs to be uniform across local institutions;
- Municipalities should cease imposing illegal fees on refugees and displaced Syrians;
- Adopting the term "citizen" in accordance with the right-to-the-city/human-rights-city principles and its interpretation would help to change attitudes and help refugees/displaced persons access basic rights;
- Local governments, as the closest official authority to deal with refugee issues, should have access to greater resources for the provision of basic needs and assistance to refugees and displaced persons;
- The principle of the social function of property as related to a right to own property in accordance with the principles of the right to the city, should be developed as one of the most important principles to achieve social justice in land management;
- It is necessary to create a debate between the municipalities and local governments in the region about the importance and role of the social function of property;
- The private sector bears a social responsibility in providing certain kinds of assistance to refugees and displaced persons;
- Local governments could take advantage of the manpower within the refugee community—applying the principles of human rights—for public works in exchange for assistance;
- Recognition of the legal status of non-citizens in exercising their civil rights remains a fundamental challenge to the application of the concept of the right to the city;
- The historical conflict between the Syrian and Lebanese regimes also affects refugees and displaced Syrians in Lebanon, and efforts are needed at reconciliation and conflict resolution;
- It would be important to create protocols between the municipalities on a global level for the exchange of technical and financial expertise and awareness of the issues of basic services to refugees and displaced persons within city jurisdictions;
- The executive bodies of the central government and municipalities need greater capacity to do their respective parts in confronting the refugee crises;

- Lebanon should find ways to take advantage of the contributions of refugees with the high qualifications and professions as citizens to raise awareness of the marginalized and vulnerable groups in liaison with other bodies and organizations involved in assisting refugees;
- Syrians level of educational curriculum less rigorous than Lebanese. The central government proposal for education in camps differs from Lebanese curriculum, thus making longer-term integration harder.

The workshop with municipal officials was not well attended, so the project was not able to communicate sufficiently with municipal officials to capture their vision, beliefs and challenges they face as the duty bearer within the principles of international human rights law.

### Lessons:

- In pursuing social cohesion with refugees/displaced persons, some contradictions come to the surface. In particular, some observed that Lebanese have not achieved social cohesion, let alone with the new-coming Syrian and other refugees.
- In the case of Lebanon, decentralization is only theoretical (تشكلية وليس فاعلية), so relevant powers have not devolved to local government.
- Refugees replicate social patterns and seek their own means of problem solving; e.g., informal justice.
- The scales of rights and responsibilities expected of refugees/displaced persons depend on their longevity in the country: immigrant, refugee (N.B.: Palestinian refugee), displaced person. The less permanent, the fewer the perceived (and actual) rights and responsibilities they assume.
- NGOs are essential actors (1/3 of the equation); e.g., al-Zaituna, al-Watan, Amel, Consultancy Commission for Syrian Refugees, Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center, etc.
- UNHCR established Refugee outreach volunteers (ROVs). The ROVs are Syrian refugees that usually live in the harder to reach parts of Lebanon. They are volunteers who act as a link between the UNHCR and its partners, and refugees who might find it hard to get to major UNHCR centers.
- Municipalities have similar functions, but local authorities differ politically.
- Syrians work harder/longer than Lebanese (e.g., 15 hrs. v. 10 hrs.).
- Syrians double-up in housing, while Lebanese do not, but both endure inflation.
- Refugees provide labor for infrastructure projects in municipalities and villages (with Ministry of Public Works).
- Municipalities generally do not have much direct contact with refugees/displaced persons in their jurisdiction. In an exceptional case, Norwegian Refugee Council negotiated to convince the mayor of Chouifat to dedicate one hour of his time for consultation with refugees/displaced from Syria.

**Remaining Questions:**

- How do municipalities respond to « rights of cities » ?
- Beirut has avoided major conflict, despite the plurality of political and other divisions. How do Beirut municipalities avoid conflict? UNHCR hired a consultant in mediation. Did s/he consult with municipalities?

**Adjustments for the next period:**

In addition to the consultations and small group discussions of the constituencies, the project will need a wider pool of respondents to the questions about livelihood conditions and social cohesion. In order to cover the greatest number of possible respondents, HLRN will draft online questionnaires for each constituency, in consultation with Amel Association.

The original project design did not call for the involvement of CSOs until later stages. However, the role of CSOs as intermediaries with municipalities, service deliverers and their potential in conveying the right-to-the-city/human-rights-city principles makes it important to include them on an equal basis with the refugees and municipalities.

## **Report of Second Workshop of the “Sanctuary in the City: Beirut” project**

Beirut, 13–15 December 2016

Habitat International Coalition’s Housing and Land Rights Network organized the second phase of the series of workshops of the “Sanctuary in the City: Beirut” project in cooperation and coordination with the Lebanese Amel Association from 13 to 15 December 2016. This phase consisted of two workshops: one for civil society organizations working on issues related to refugees and displaced persons in Greater Beirut, and one for members of the refugee community. A third workshop, which was scheduled for the staff and officials of the municipalities within Greater Beirut, did not take place. Instead, the HIC-HLRN/Amel team conducted a meeting with the mayor of Burj al-Barajneh municipality to discuss the project and the coming series of workshops.

On the first day, the workshop for civil society organizations covered an introduction to universal human rights, in general, and their application in the urban context within the international law framework. Then the succeeding sessions presented the purposes and objectives of the three principal international charters (the Global Charter for the Right to the City, the Gwangju Principles for Human Rights Cities and the UCLG-CSIPD Charter Agenda on Human Rights in the City), their common elements and distinct approaches. That was followed by the experiences and initiatives in three other cities and a session on the local legal and political framework affecting refugees and displaced persons in Greater Beirut. Finally, small group discussions addressed (1) living conditions and livelihood issues, and (2) social cohesion within the responsibility of civil society organizations in support of the principles and purposes of the right to the city/human rights governance in Beirut as a model for other cities in the Middle East and North Africa.

### **CSO workshop:**

In their workshop, civil society participants recounted several challenges that hinder the attainment of adequate and decent standard of living for refugee communities in Lebanon, the most important of which is the lack of freedom to engage in professional opportunities and employment, and the consequent high cost of living and housing rents. They considered the most important social challenges were (1) sectarian approach of municipal councils, (2) a lack of efficiency and capacity of both refugees and municipal employees to communicate between them, (3) the inability to adapt/apply university degrees, (4) lack of access to medical treatment, in addition to (5) the pressure on refugees/displaced persons from the authorities and political groups, which affect the performance of municipalities toward the conditions of refugees/displaced, (6) legal challenges to obtaining a residence permit, in addition to (7) the absence of an electoral policy to ensure the election of municipal council members with sufficient experience and competence.

### **Diagnosis of needs:**

The workshop for civil society organizations raised several points about the most important priorities of the livelihood of the refugee community and the role of municipalities in the

provision of services and ways of living adequate for them in the Greater Beirut, including to address the following needs to:

- Develop a strategy for a census to count the number of refugees/displaced persons, in order to assess the needs and priorities that should be available to them;
- Respect the principles of international human rights Covenant and Conventions in the development of plans and strategies for dealing with refugees/displaced persons;
- Raise awareness among municipalities about how to handle the refugees/displaced persons, with the need to communicate directly with the refugees on the ground, whether through civil society or the municipalities and people with experience and competence in dealing with livelihood issues of refugees/displaced persons;
- Appoint a special delegate in all municipalities with efficiency and professionalism to assume the function of communicating with refugees and monitoring requirements, and demonstrate the municipality's ability to absorb and ensure livelihoods consistent with available municipal resources;
- Develop and implement regulations/ordinances regulating the affairs of refugees in the municipalities, including the issuance of a specific induction card to refugees, indicating residence in each municipality for the duration of time hosted in Lebanon;
- A fair and transparent approach to funding projects for refugees/displaced persons develop and distribute benefits fairly and equitably;
- Better coordination and communication between the parties concerned, both among civil society organizations themselves, or between them and the municipalities;
- Need for the establishment of councils or participatory social and cultural meetings to assist refugees and non-Lebanese to integrate;
- Strengthen the financial and human resources in municipalities, without cronyism and sectarianism;
- Promote greater cooperation with international organizations both civil society organizations and municipalities within the framework of transparent cooperation.

#### **Specific Proposals:**

- Allow for gainful work, as the highest priority for refugees and essential for satisfying other livelihood needs and achieving psycho-social well-being (Syrian migrant workers traditionally have done many of the construction jobs in Lebanon; however, it is vital to formalize work already done, in order to enter them into tax regime and social security system);
- Standardize rights and responsibilities for all refugee/displaced communities (e.g., Syrians can own property, while Palestinian refugees cannot);
- Refugees could form companies, cooperatives to start enterprises (e.g., IT services);
- Exploit available opportunities where municipalities could arbitrate/mediate with private sector and/or property owners to convert empty buildings to refugee/displaced person housing or enterprises for refugees/displaced persons to operate.

**Refugee/displaced persons workshop:**

The second day was devoted to a workshop for a group of Syrian refugee women (and one Palestinian refugee displaced from Syria). The group was composed mostly of students. The program introduced them to the principles and purposes of the city charters, a review of their contents and to what extent they could be applied to such a charter in Greater Beirut. The following small group discussions identified the key challenges and difficulties they face in achieving adequate livelihoods and social cohesion/integration in the municipalities where they live. For them, the most important priority was an opportunity to get a job and get business cards, in order to escape the harassment and other negative practices of the security men, both belonging to the Ministry of Interior or to municipalities.

It was clear also that the refugee participants as a whole also lack guidance on how to connect with the municipal staff to organize their affairs and to provide them with basic services. At the end of the workshop, the participants reviewed the survey questions contained in the questionnaire on the economic and social situation of refugees, and diagnosed the challenges and difficulties that they face in addition to identifying the most important strategies to overcome those challenges, whether related to the provision of adequate standard of living, or pertaining to ways of integration and social cohesion.

The third day was scheduled for a workshop with municipal employees, but did not take place. Instead, the team conducted field visits with groups of refugees in two social centers in the Chiyah and Hay al-Silam neighborhoods. The team presented the project and the basic principles of the right to the city/ human rights in the city/human rights cities. Two of the groups of youths filled the questionnaires with the project team, overcoming the obstacles that potential respondents face in accessing the internet to participate in the survey.

On the next morning, the team met with the Mayor `Atif Hasan Mansour of Burj al-Barajneh Municipality, to introduce the principles of right to the city/human rights in the city/human rights city and the objectives of the project in addressing the role of municipalities on the front line of the crisis situation of refugees/displaced persons, while providing them with services adequate living and managing their integration into society. He agreed to the proposal that Burj al-Barajneh Municipality host the next workshop for municipality staff and officials, including other municipalities, to publicize the project and its objectives, and begin drafting a declaration of Beirut as a human rights city.

## **Report of Third Workshop of the “Sanctuary in the City: Beirut” project**

Beirut, 28–30 March 2017

The third workshop of the “Sanctuary in the City: Beirut” project took place in Beirut between 28 and 31 March of 2017. As the previous editions, the workshop was organized as one session each day for the three targeted groups: civil society organizations, local authorities and refugee community. The first session on 28 March was dedicated to civil society organizations, the session on 29 March to local authorities and the session on 30 March to mainly refugee community members. The first and third sessions for civil society organizations and refugee community members took place in Amel Association Community Center in the Chiyah quarter of Beirut, while the local authorities’ session took place in the Events Hall of the Municipality of Burj al-Barajneh, as the mayor agreed after the meeting with HLRN last December to host the session for municipality participants.

The third workshop provided an opportunity of the targeted groups--civil society organizations, local authorities and refugee community--to discuss human rights and right to the city application in the local context of Beirut and the relevance, potentialities and content (principles, challenges and recommendations) of a city charter.

Even though the sessions for civil society organizations and local authorities had low attendance, they provided new knowledge and insight into the Lebanese context and the internal situation of municipalities. The session with refugee community members, also attended by some CSOs members, enjoyed high attendance and produced a vivid discussion on the general challenges faced by inhabitants of the city and the priorities and principles that the Charter should focus on.

Furthermore, the participants of the sessions also discussed the potentialities of a Beirut Charter, and debated the main uses and messages that could convey. As agreed among participants, the charter should give a clear message on the importance of social stability and security, and support the rights, needs and improvement of quality of life of host and refugee communities, hence, supporting balanced development programmes that tackle the situation of vulnerability of all inhabitants without community differentiation.

Concerning the potential uses of a politically agreed Charter at local level, workshop discussions focused on how it could be used to develop and define municipalities’ priorities in light of the impact of the refugee crisis on the city and, also, trigger a strategy to extend and operationalize current municipal good practices and policies to address them. The participants generally accepted as well that the Charter could be a starting point and trigger legislative reform. Another debated point reflected the need to increase refugee and host community participation in planning processes, and to involve them in prioritization processes and coordination efforts.

With regard to the particular content of the draft charter, the sessions discussed particularly principles, challenges and recommendations, even though the refugee community session,

which included some CSOs members, was the one providing in-depth information on the three aspects (principles, challenges and recommendations). The main discussed ideas are exposed below:

### **General challenges**

- 1.5 million vulnerable Lebanese (36.36K in Beirut, 322K in Mt. Lebanon), 1.5 million Syrian refugees (283,340 in Mt. Lebanon,<sup>1</sup> 314,731 in Beirut<sup>2</sup>), 80,000 Palestinian refugee, 50.000 Palestinian refugee from Syria; 40.000 Iraqi refugees and 100.000 migrant workers<sup>3</sup>;
- Social practices, legal frameworks, economic constraints and diverse gender roles and cultural background can foster social division and exclusion;
- Lack of information and transparency of practices and policies of central (and local) governments as well as accountability mechanisms increases mistrust toward institutions and the perception of application of discriminatory practices;
- Sectarian political and electoral system and organization are perceived as contributing to inequality, discrimination and social division;
- Poor governance and lack of coordination among public administrations hinder optimal response to population's needs;
- Lack of general data and reliable and recent census information;
- Decrease of employability of Lebanese due to newcomers' acceptance of low salary rates and informal work hinders social acceptance of Syrian refugees;
- Most of international organizations and UN agencies exclude local authorities and local NGOs in the planning, implementation and substantive involvement in projects and programs;
- Most of the international programs and projects do not involve or engage refugee community members, even if they are the main or one of the main target beneficiaries;

### **Challenges faced by municipalities**

- Refugee crisis impact is a key challenge for municipalities;
- Deteriorating situation of people in vulnerable situation living in adjacent refugee camps;
- Economic constraints derived in an increase of informal housing and slum-like areas;
- Lack of coordination, communication and cooperation among municipalities and among municipalities, central government and international organizations hinder effective response to refugee crisis;
- Heterogeneity of local governments practices and policies inside Beirut foster legal insecurity and further demand and pressure on those municipalities providing social services not provided by other municipalities;

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<sup>1</sup> OCHA, Lebanon Overview (February 2016).

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Middle East & North Africa (UNHCR MENA), 2015, at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/partner.php?OrgId=49>.

<sup>3</sup> Including domestic workers and semi-skilled workers, mostly from Egypt, sub-Saharan African, and Southeast Asia, residing in the country. PreventionWeb, Basic Country Statistics and Indicators (2014), at: <http://www.preventionweb.net/countries/jpn/data/>.

- Sectarian political and electoral system fosters discriminatory practices at local level and weakens good governance;
- Sectarian political and electoral system hinders optimal local public administration, collection of taxes and optimal response to the population needs particularly in cases where local governments and the population under their jurisdiction are from different communities;
- Municipalities lack reliable data and information on refugee population (such as numbers and future residency intentions) and inhabitants;
- Municipalities lack financial and human resources to meet the needs of the inhabitants under their jurisdiction and absorb adequately the numbers of Syrian and Palestinian refugee;
- Municipalities are not receiving enough support from central government and international organizations;
- Unfair and/or unequal provision of international aid and grants toward municipalities;
- International organizations and NGOs priorities do not match real needs of the municipalities.

#### **Challenges faced by refugees**

- Lack of quality education services and standardization of the education curriculum that support children integration;
- Lack of access to the legal identity and difficult bureaucratic processes (certificate of birth, marriage contract);
- Economic constraints due low employability and low access to jobs;
- Refugee community do not have easy access to information and communication with public authorities and administrations;
- Difficulty to access housing due high cost;
- Social practices and legal framework foster inequality between men and women (early and forced marriage, violence against women including the refugee women, procedures related to child custody);
- Customary rules are protected by Lebanese legislation even though some do not respect human rights principles and legislation;
- Government shortage of resources to absorb the needs of all population;
- Lack of public and affordable transport services for all;
- Absence of control over food production to ensure affordability and safe nutrition for all;
- Restrictive legislation on employability for refugees hinders access to quality jobs;
- Lack of personal security to preserve human dignity, aggravated by harassment of the political parties' armed groups controlling some municipalities;
- Lack of public spaces and healthy environment.

#### **Proposed charter priorities and principles**

- Right to education and children's rights;
- Right to Legal Identity and good governance's bureaucracy;

- Develop economy and foster work opportunities for all;
- Right to adequate housing, focusing on its affordability;
- Gender equality and no-discrimination between men and women;
- Human rights, equality and justice for all;
- Freedom of movement and mobility rights;
- Food security and right to food and nutrition for all;
- Right to personal security and right to equality and fair trial;
- Right to health;
- Public and green spaces for all.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure human rights, equality and justice for all;
- Respect and fulfill right to education and children's rights;
- Respect and fulfill the right to legal identity and good bureaucratic governance;
- Develop economy and foster work opportunities for all, with particular attention to those in vulnerable situations such as Lebanese and refugee under poverty or at risk;
- Respect, protect and fulfill the right to adequate housing, focusing on its affordability;
- Respect, protect and fulfill gender equality and nondiscrimination between men and women, with special consideration for the economic situation of women heads of household;;
- Respect and fulfill freedom of movement and mobility rights;
- Ensure food security and fulfill the right to food and nutrition for all, with special consideration to people in vulnerable situations, such as Lebanese and refugees under poverty;
- Ensure and fulfill the right to personal security and respect and fulfill the right to equality and fair trial;
- Develop and ensure access to public and green spaces for all;
- Lebanese State urged to ratify the Refugee Convention 1951 and 1967 Protocol to ensure the rights of refugee, and support provision of remedies;
- Elaborate specific national policies to address the refugee crisis;
- Promote and increase the awareness about the social function of property, in order to make unused shelter available for refugees and Lebanese living in poverty and vulnerability;
- Conduct surveys and campaigns to raise awareness on rights, cultural diversity and social cohesion and mutual respect;
- Support social and cultural events to foster social cohesion;
- Promote public and affordable means of transport;
- Trigger potential economic and social contribution of refugee community members, such as in projects related to the refugee needs.

**Report of Fourth Workshop of the “Sanctuary in the City: Beirut” project**  
Beirut, 22–24 May 2017

On 22–24 May 2017, HIC-HLRN and Amel Association organized the 4<sup>th</sup> and last round of the Right to the City workshop with the refugee community and conducted interviews with specialized Lebanese NGOs on the first draft of the Beirut Right to the City Charter.

The last round of the workshops focused on reviewing the draft of the Beirut Charter and sharing it with the refugee community to be sure that their priorities, recommendations and comments from the previous workshops were properly reflected.

The two days of the 4<sup>th</sup> workshop included an explanation to the structure and normative framework of the Beirut Charter (principles – challenges – recommendations). The principles cover several key elements and concepts, as follows:

- Human rights;
- Spatial justice;
- Non-discrimination;
- Gender equality;
- Equity;
- Participation/ Citizenship;
- Empower marginalized and vulnerable communities;
- International cooperation.

While the challenges and recommendations reflected two principal dimensions: livelihood and social cohesion.

The third day involved HLRN officers conducting interviews with Lebanese NGOs interested and specialized in “urban justice,” housing rights, rights of persons with disability. HLRN conducted the interviews with five NGOs based in Beirut (Public Works Studio, Jihad al-Binaa, Legal Agenda, Justice and Mercy Association, and the Lebanese National Association for the Rights of Persons with Disability), sharing and discussing with them the articles of the draft Beirut Charter, in order to ensure that no priority issues were missing or needed adjustment.

Two of the Lebanese organizations (Public Works Studio and Legal Agenda) that HLRN met were intensely interested in the Beirut Charter and the concept of the Right to the City (R2C), in general. They welcomed involve in any planned follow-up and mechanism to apply the Beirut Charter and develop R2C with the Lebanese Order of Engineers & Architects and members of the Lebanese Parliament.

Through all three days of the workshops and consultations, HLRN was unable to meet as planned with municipalities/local authorities. They apologized for having available time during the three days, despite efforts of the local partners at Amel. However, the recommendations during the workshop with the refugees and the interviews with the civil society raised priority issues for consideration related to the responsibility of the Lebanese municipalities as follows:

- The need to improve coordination and cooperation among municipalities;
- The potential development of a local mechanism to promote greater transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation and responsiveness of local governance;

- Needed long-term strategic planning with local priorities;
- Developing and strengthening participatory mechanisms with inhabitants and civil society organizations;
- Monitoring and assessment of policies and practices in light of human rights principles;
- Improving population data gathering and analysis.

Also, two recommendations for the future steps, including developing the set of R2C principles and priorities into a civic plan to support local action and coordination with municipalities/local authorities and to attract international partners for cooperation and assistance.