



NRC

NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

IMPACT EVALUATION

An evaluation of the NRC Shelter Occupancy Free-Of-
Charge modality in Lebanon | October 2018

Evaluator: Malene Soenderskov lead evaluator, and Omar Majdalawi team member from Strategy House DK

“The landlord’s wife used to help me find a job, and transportation was easier to the factories we work in. People knew us better so we were able to find more opportunities”.

Female refugee household member, February 2018 (Field research, Interview conducted by NRC)

List of Abbreviations

CSP:	Community Support Projects
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HoH:	Head of Household
HoM:	Head of Municipalities
KII:	Key Informant Interview
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OFC:	Occupancy Free of Charge
SSI:	Semi-structured interview
WASH:	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Acknowledgement

The team would like to thank NRC’s staff, and the Monitoring and Evaluation team in particular, for all their logistical support, their professional input, their co-facilitation of focus groups and interviews, the interesting and good discussions and their good company as we drove for long hours. This contributed – we are certain – to making the evaluation a learning journey for all of us.

Coverphoto: Copyright 2018 Joshua Berson <http://www.bersonphoto.com/>



IMPACT EVALUATION: An evaluation of the NRC Shelter Occupancy Free-Of-Charge modality in Lebanon | OCTOBER/2018

© Norwegian Refugee Council

Contact: Kate McGrane, Head of Programmes

kate.mcgrane@nrc.no

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	8
From emergency to longer-term solutions?	8
1.1. Main findings	8
A) Impact on households post OFC	8
B) Impact on the low-income housing	9
C) Impact on host communities	10
1.2. Recommendations	10
2. Introduction	12
3. Methodology	14
3.1. The intervention's impact on refugee households post OFC	14
3.3. The intervention's impact on host communities	15
3.4. Geographical areas of data collection	15
3.5. Limitations of the evaluation	17
4. Findings	19
4.1. The context	19
4.2. The intervention's impact on households post OFC	23
4.2.1. Findings	23
4.2.2. Key drivers	28
4.2.3. Key barriers	30

4.3 Intervention impact on the low-income housing market	32
4.3.1 Findings	32
4.3.2. Key drivers	37
4.3.3. Key barriers	38
4.4. The intervention's impact on host communities	39
4.4.1. Findings	39
4.4.2 Key drivers	40
5.4.3 Key barriers	41
5. Recommendations	43
6. Conclusions	49
6.1. Main findings	49
6.2. Proposed way forward	50
7. ANNEXES	52
Annex I Findings from Focus Group Discussions with households	52
Annex II Terms of Reference	56
Annex III Results framework and ToC	62
Annex IV Team biographies	72
Annex V Bibliography	73

1. Executive Summary

This evaluation finds that the project has largely attained its three objectives: The OFC has increased the availability of minimum-standard housing for vulnerable households, through support to landlords to upgrade their housing units and through the provisioning of rent-free occupancy for refugee households. It has improved transitional tenure for vulnerable refugee households and it has reduced the strain on overstretched public infrastructures.

Since 2012, NRC has supported medium scale rehabilitation of water and sanitation infrastructure, such as water tanks and solid waste disposal sites (community support projects) and Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) to Syrian refugees in border areas, and in the most vulnerable cadastres in Lebanon.

The aim was to contribute to¹

- An increased availability of minimum standard housing for vulnerable households, at affordable cost.
- An improved security of tenure/lease for vulnerable refugee households and landlords and an enforcement of the legal rights of refugees.
- A reduced strain on the already overstretched public infrastructure in communities with a high refugee caseload.

By provisioning rent-free occupancy, during which hygiene promotion sessions and Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) services were provided to households, NRC further hoped to contribute to the stabilisation of families' household economy, to the improvement of beneficiary health and understanding of rights, to the promotion of school attendance and to the reduction in social tension, through an integrated programme that went far beyond merely providing a 'roof over their heads'.²

From emergency to longer-term solutions?

This impact evaluation of NRC's 'Occupancy Free of Charge' modality is, in some ways, a symptom of an evolving recognition of and desire for a 'shift in focus'; from short-term responses to longer-term interventions and developmental impact. Much has changed, since the OFC modality was first launched in 2012. The modality was planned in a different political context. In the meantime, the Lebanese population's hospitality is strained, as problems of water, electricity, sewage and solid waste grow, and livelihood opportunities are few for Syrian and poor Lebanese families alike. In many ways, NRC's OFC modality reflects a 'typical' humanitarian response, with a key focus on alleviating refugees' urgent needs for shelter, protection against diseases and preservation of basic rights. Yet, the questions to be answered in this evaluation were, by and large, 'developmental' and 'long-term' in nature as it focused on:

- The intervention's impact on households' post OFC
- The Intervention's impact on low-income housing
- The Impact of the intervention on host communities

1.1. Main findings:

A) Impact on households post OFC

The evaluation found that the households' socio-economic situation was stabilised or improved during the OFC. This had a positive impact on households' food consumption as they were able to buy meat and fresh vegetables. Households also reported that they could afford to buy medicine and non-food items such as soap or clothes. The OFC reduced the financial stress and enabled households to pay accumulated debts.

The OFC also has a positive impact on refugees' social capital as staying in the

same location enabled refugees to build relationships with neighbours and landlords. This was instrumental in terms of accessing information, potential jobs, help to look after children or access credit.

Networking also leaves refugees in a vulnerable situation, however where 'rights and entitlements' are based on personal affiliations and not on legal and universal human rights. Refugees whose relationships with landlords were strained were placed in a particularly vulnerable situation. Female heads of households seemed to be particularly vulnerable to landlords' abuse of power and arbitrary decisions, e.g., to increase the electricity bill or to deny access to water.³

The evaluation found that, except for the social capital developed, the positive changes were not sustained beyond the OFC period. Contributing factors were that the intervention did largely not address and support the strengthening of refugee households' human capital, that competition for jobs and livelihood opportunities is fierce and that work permits are hard to obtain for refugees.

The OFC has not built nor strengthened the resilience of beneficiary households post-OFC. None of the refugees interviewed had used the 12 months OFC to plan for the future or invest in human or manufactured capital that would contribute to resilience. The supported families mostly spent the money they saved on rent, on medical expenses, food and non-food items and none of them used the rent-free period to plan or develop alternative coping mechanisms.

As one focus group participant said: We spent the money to cover 'other emergencies'. Another said: 'We just hoped the OFC contract would be extended'. Therefore, the families' economic situation was as difficult after the intervention as it was before the intervention. Political and legal constraints on refugees' ability to seek and find a job and fierce competition in the labour market were no doubt contributing factors.

However, refugees' human capital, including refugees' belief that 'I can influence my own

life', seem to be a contributing factor also. Most informants hoped for an extension of the OFC while others were 'surfing' between various OFC modalities provided by different humanitarian agencies.

B) Impact on the low-income housing

The evaluation found that the OFC increased the availability of minimum standard housing for Syrian refugees. The OFC did not increase the availability of minimum standard housing for other, vulnerable (Lebanese) groups. The reasons should be found in the market's demand and supply side:

Demand

Low-income Lebanese families do not usually rent apartments in rural areas. They build on their own land, and if they rent, they would demand apartments above the level-one upgrade provided by the OFC modality. NRC's OFC modality may contribute to change this behaviour towards renting in rural areas, however. Demand is also affected negatively by the rent asked by landowners. This is generally too high for low-income Lebanese households.

Supply

Landlords make their properties available for rent temporarily. They do it because it provides them with a financial opportunity to continue the process of finalising their property so that a son can use it when he is getting married. Therefore, the upgraded properties do not necessarily stay on the market.

The intervention affected landlords' incentives to host refugees positively. Several mentioned that the incentive was purely economic at the onset. But when they got to know the family staying in the apartment, the incentive became humanitarian too.

There are geographical deviations. In Wadi-Khaled, an area with strong ethnic, cultural, family-related, and economic ties between Syrians and Lebanese are up to 20 per cent of landlords hosting their own Syrian relatives. In such situation the OFC modality did not

¹ Project Results matrix: Strengthening Adequate Shelter, Housing, Land & Property Rights for Vulnerable Households and People Affected by Displacement in Lebanon (Annex III)

² Evaluation Terms of Reference, NRC Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) Programme – Lebanon, June 2018 (Annex II)

³ Focus group discussions with female heads of households suggests that 'vulnerability with respect to male landlords is 'gendered' and may need a special focus. The evaluation was unable to include a thorough analysis of the particular challenges facing female heads of households, however.

create incentives to host refugees; the incentive was born from a feeling of obligation and solidarity, even before the OFC intervention was introduced. Yet, the OFC did contribute to help these landlords/families help themselves.

C) Impact on host communities

The evaluation found that the OFC has had a positive economic impact on host communities as landlords have hired local contractors (Syrian and Lebanese) to upgrade housing units. The OFC's community support projects have contributed to alleviate problems related to water, sewage and solid waste disposal for community members benefitting directly from these projects.

The intervention has not contributed to reducing social tensions between refugees and community members, beyond those tensions directly related to the competition over scarce resources. The evaluation team finds that this would also be unrealistic to expect: Not least of all when we consider the magnitude of the refugee challenges — in some municipalities, refugees outnumber Lebanese by a factor 3:1 and the frustration caused by a situation where Syrian refugees access support while low-income Lebanese families, in an equally difficult situation, do not.

The evaluation finds that there is still scope for community support projects (CSP) to play a bigger role in building social cohesion or reducing tensions, but only if NRC facilitates CSPs that are planned, decided, implemented and monitored by community members themselves and in cooperation with refugees. Experiences and lessons-learnt from other parts of the world, including the Middle East region, show that such participatory planning processes can play a key role, not just in identifying solutions to pending problems at community level but also in strengthening ownership to the solutions. They also support and enhance the human and social capital that is so vital for poor people to possess, in a situation where most other resources and options are drained.

1.2. Recommendations

What could a solution be, if the challenge faced is transitioning interventions from short-term responses to refugees' immediate needs to sustainable longer-term interventions? This evaluation suggests that the short answer is the 'active participation' and 'empowerment' of those directly affected by the problems: Refugees and local communities alike.

This implies that NRC

- Strengthens their interventions' positive impact on refugees' social capital to 'build' human capital in order to strengthen refugees' ability to develop positive coping and livelihood strategies that they can use regardless of their place of living.
- Further strengthens the 'mutual benefit' approach and reliance on/support for the use of the communities' own resources in dealing with the refugee crisis so as to address communities needs and interests and continue to find cost effective solutions that benefit refugees.
- Adopt an 'area' or community-based approach to supporting Syrian refugees and Lebanese citizens in need in line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework⁴ to ensure that needs of all parts are addressed.
- Conduct market assessments of supply and demand factors affecting low-income housing opportunities and possible modalities for affordable housing for low-income families of Lebanese origin.
- Draw on positive experiences and lessons-learnt from NRC's Urban Displacement and Outside of Camps (UDOC) approach to cooperation with local communities and municipalities.
- Advocate for a change in housing taxes to strengthen landlords' incentives to let empty housing units and /or for a housing policy that stimulates investment in affordable housing, particularly in larger city centres such as Beirut or Tripoli.

⁴ See also the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus



2. Introduction

This report contains the findings of an evaluation of the impact of NRC's Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) modality and the corresponding Community Support Project (CSP). The modality was implemented in Tripoli, Akkar, Bekaa and Baalback-Hermel, between April 2016 and June 2018.

The evaluation aims to expand the evidence-base on the impact of the OFC modality. This serves a dual purpose of allowing recommendations to be made for future implementations and of fulfilling NRC's obligations of accountability to its beneficiaries and donors. The evaluation aimed to cover households who had stayed in the property for more than nine months since the OFC modality began and who had ceased to benefit from the OFC modality for a period of at least six months, as of May 2018.

The evaluation was focused on three main areas:

- The intervention's impact on refugee households, following the twelve months during which they were granted OFC with private landlord.
- The intervention's impact on the low-income housing market, and its contribution to low-income housing for poor Lebanese households.
- The intervention's impact on host communities, including its ability to reduce or prevent tensions between the host community's members and refugees.

The evaluation team would like this report's recommendations to inspire NRC interventions in other, equally complicated and protracted contexts. The team hopes that the report's findings will help NRC design interventions that preserve and build on the human potential of refugees, who have the strength and courage to flee war and terror, and to support and encourage the communities that host them, sometimes for indefinite periods of time.



3. Methodology

The evaluation team used the following research methodologies to evaluate and answer the questions raised in the three focus areas, as detailed above:

3.1. The intervention's impact on refugee households post OFC

For the sake of the evaluation, a 'household' was defined as one or more persons living in the same dwelling, who pooled their income and shared meals and living accommodation. A household might consist of a single family or some other groupings of people. A single dwelling was considered to contain multiple households if either income, meals or living space was not shared. Relatives, not sharing the same accommodation, but who may have – for instance – contributed to the household's economy through remittances – were not considered part of the household.

Demographic characteristics such as gender and age are vital determinants of the way households function and how individual household members influence, contribute to and benefit from the 'household'. In order to embrace the gender and age differences within a household, the evaluation team conducted focus group discussions with household representatives of both sexes and of various ages. The evaluation team's sampling of household representatives was based on the following criteria of post-OFC households:

- Some who have stayed in the shelter and some who have left.
- Whose rent-free period expired six to ten months ago and whose rent-free period expired eleven to fifteen months ago.
- Who had benefitted from an extension of their rent-free period.
- Who were representative of the 'typical' household size, composition and socio-economic profile.
- Who represented North Lebanon and Bekaa.
- Who represented male and female heads of households and/or household members.
- Who represented youth (e.g., twelve-sixteen of age) (Younger age groups may be considered also).

The focus group participants' criteria were identified in cooperation with NRC.

Focus groups were conducted with men and women separately, to reduce the risk that gendered power relations and cultural expectations, related to the conduct of men and women, would adversely affect the discussions. Focus groups with children and youth took place with the prior consent of parents only, and in compliance with NRC Child Safeguarding Policy.

The evaluation team used score cards to facilitate the focus group discussions. This enabled the evaluators (and NRC facilitators of the focus group discussions) to facilitate a structured dialogue, which in turn enabled them to keep track of and to quantify and identify patterns in the answers given. At the same time, they were able to facilitate open-ended dialogue around the provided answers. This dialogue contributed to deepening the understanding of the answers and feedback provided by the respondents.

3.2. The intervention's impact on the low-income housing market

It was beyond the scope of this evaluation to assess the impact of the OFC on the low-income housing market per se. However, the evaluation did assess how the intervention affected landlords' attitudes towards and their incentives for hosting refugees. The team was also able to assess how the interventions' 'investment' in low-income housing affected the local construction sector and how it benefited the local (household) economy in the longer term.⁵

To do this, the evaluation team conducted semi-structured interviews with landlords whose OFC contract with NRC had expired. The team also managed to talk to two company owners in Tripoli and Aamayer who also participated in focus groups for community members.

The sample of landlords represented:

- Landlords located in North Lebanon and Bekaa.
- First time landlords and landlords who had signed two or more contracts with NRC.
- Landlords who had multiple properties and those with a single dwelling.
- Male/female landlords (if relevant).
- Landlords aged between thirty and forty-five, and between forty-five and sixty.

3.3. The intervention's impact on host communities

For the purpose of this evaluation, a community was defined as the people of a local, municipal area, who were considered collectively, especially within the context of social values and shared (natural) resources (such as WASH).

The evaluation assessed the intervention's impact on host communities at two levels:

- The immediate 'community' around shared WASH infrastructure (solid waste collection, water and sewage pipes) e.g., a ward or a compound.
- The political community of the municipality at large. For the sake of the evaluation 'political community' is defined according to the political and administrative boundaries applicable to the areas selected for the evaluation e.g., the village or municipality of Bannine.

To achieve this, the team proposed conducting:

- Focus group discussions with host community members living next to and sharing the WASH infrastructure with Syrian refugees. As men and women use shared infrastructure and geographical areas differently, focus groups were gender segregated.
- Semi-structured interviews with mayors and community leaders (mukhtars).

3.4. Geographical areas of data collection

Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in the Bekaa Valley and in Northern Lebanon. In the Bekaa Valley, refugees outnumber the original community members by a factor of 3:1 – sometimes more. In Aamayer in Wadi Khaled (North Lebanon), the numbers of Syrians and Lebanese community members were almost equal.

⁵ A wish to include this focus in the evaluation was expressed during preliminary conversations with key staff in NRC

Table 1: Focus Group Discussions by area and group composition

Location	Gender
Ghazze	Female
Ghazze	Male
Ghazze	Community members
Ghazze	Youth
Bar Elias	Female household members
Bar Elias	Male HoH
Bar Elias	Landlords (M/F)
Bar Elias	Community members
Deir Ammar	Female HoH
Deir Ammar	Male HoH
Deir Ammar	Females (Male HoH)
Deir Ammar	Community members
Deir Ammar	Children (12-16)
Deir Ammar	Landlords
Aamayer	Male HoH
Aamayer	Children (12-16)
Aamayer	Female HoH
Aamayer	Females (Male HoH)
Aamayer	Community members
Aamayer	Landlords

Table 2: Semi-structured interviews and focugroups⁶ – by area, representative and type

Location	Informants	Type
Wade Khaled- Jermanaya	Landlords	SSI
Zouq Bhannine	Landlords	SSI
Deir Dalloum	Landlords	SSI
Minieh	Refugee HH	FGD
Aamayer	Refugee HH	FGD
Khreibet el Jindi	Refugee HH	FGD
Bebnine	Refugee HH	FGD
Bebnine	Lebanese community members	FGD
Bebnine	HoM, MSA and garbage truck driver	KII
Mokaible	Refugee HH	FGD
Mokaible	Lebanese community members	FGD
Mokaible	HoM, MSA and garbage truck driver	KII

Table 3: Semi-structured interviews by area and representative

Location	Title
Ghazze	Mayor
Ghazze	Mukhtar
Bar Elias	Mukhtar
Bar Elias	Mayor
Deir Ammar	Mayor
Deir Ammar	Mukhtar
Aamayer	Mayor
Aamayer	Mukhtar

In addition, the evaluation team was informed by and used quantitative outcome data and other statistical material concerning to the OFC modality collected by NRC.

3.5. Limitations of the evaluation

The evaluation team regrets that the sample of focus group participants was significantly smaller than originally planned. The team did not succeed in gathering ten participants per group discussion, despite NRC's hard work and continued efforts. The reason may have been that the sample consisted of households whose OFC contract had expired. This may have significantly reduced those households' interest in joining the sessions.

The evaluation aimed to cover households who had stayed in the property for more than nine months since the OFC modality began and who had ceased to benefit from the OFC modality for a period of at least six months, as of May 2018. Some households interviewed did not fulfil these criteria, however.

Approximately half of the informants had ceased to benefit from the modality within the past six months, while others had a contract that was about to expire. Yet, these informants expressed similar difficulties in terms of paying rent and 'making economic ends meet', as other informants who were no longer benefitting from the modality at an earlier stage.

Another limitation was that the team was unable to gather female headed households in separate groups. This may have contributed to 'blurring' the specific challenges faced by this group, despite the team's best efforts to keep track of these participants' input.

However, the team is confident that the focus group participants (+80 household community members) are representative of larger groups. Not only are the participants' contributions relatively consistent with each other, they also resemble findings from other, recent and now published research.⁷

6 Conducted by NRC in February and May 2018

7 Clingendael Research Institute, March 2018; The untapped resource: Protecting and leveraging refugee social capital in protracted displacement.



This winter, many families lost their tents, their temporary home. Mohammad, one of the refugees living in an informal tented settlement in South Lebanon was telling NRC how the stream had a devastating effect on his tent. "I lost everything, my personal belongings, my mattresses, the latrine, my water tank... I lost the one place I called home for the past two years." Photo: NRC

4. Findings

4.1. The context

NRC's OFC modality was implemented within a context that held several contextual challenges. These affected the performance and impact of the modality, as well as the feasibility of its underlying theory of change and the way in which the current situation was understood. It was a context that had evolved over time and which differed from the context in which the OFC modality was initially planned in some significant ways. Firstly, the OFC modality was not planned with a 'protracted crisis' in mind. The original expectation was that Syrian refugees would be able to go back to Syria in a foreseeable future. Secondly, the OFC modality was planned for a context where the political 'climate' inside Lebanon would be more conducive towards Syrian refugees than it is today and that it would leave a wider space for Syrian refugees to find livelihood opportunities.

Significantly, as the team managed to speak to mayors, mukhtars, NRC staff, male and female representatives of refugee households, landlords and external informants and observers to the situation, we came to understand that the situation today is much more than a mere refugee and housing crisis:

- It is an economic crisis affecting border areas, which have been characterised for centuries by their porousness and the inter-trade relationships between Syrians and Lebanese. These borders have been severely and adversely affected by the Syrian conflict.
- It is a planning crisis. Interventions are planned in a context of transience, yet protraction. This is true for both the international agencies that are attempting to respond to the crisis and for the 1.5 million Syrian men, women and children who are struggling to make ends meet and to cope with health, financial, social and housing challenges.
- It is a scoping and infrastructure crisis. Lebanon's infrastructure was already fragile and worn out before the crisis and; now, it is collapsing under the weight of the demands of 1.5 million Syrian men, women and children for water, electricity, solid waste systems, sewage and roads.

Crisis one: The socio-economic situation

Unemployment and high levels of informal labour were already a serious problem, before the onset of the Syrian crisis, with the World Bank suggesting that the Lebanese economy would need to create six times as many jobs as is currently created⁸, just to absorb the regular market entrants. Unemployment is particularly high in some of the country's poorest localities, including the areas bordering Syria, where the longstanding inequality between poor Lebanese in search for a job and Syrian informal workers is deepening. Tensions at local level have also been noted, mostly over perceived competition for jobs and access to resources and services.

This situation was created in an area where, historically, the borders between Syria and Lebanon have been porous and where large parts of the country, including the areas around Tripoli and the Bekaa Valley have been characterised by a very high economic integration with Syria before the conflict. Other areas, in North Lebanon, were never economically, politically or socially integrated into the Lebanese state, but enjoyed a 'no-state' status until 1994.⁹

⁸ World Bank: Good Jobs Needed: The Role of Macro, Investment, Education, Labor and Social Protection Policies (Miles'), 2013

⁹ Lebanon's border areas in light of the Syrian war: New actors, old marginalisation, March 2018

For these reasons, the border areas – and areas such as Tripoli and the Bekaa Valley - have traditionally oriented themselves towards Syria; particularly towards Homs (Wadi Khaled, Aarsal and el-Qaa) and Damascus (Chebaa and Bar Elias) and economic life has revolved around smuggling or what is locally known as ‘border trade’. Local Lebanese were simultaneously the ‘consumers’ of goods and services coming from Syria, which met their basic needs (food, medicines, schools and hospitals); and/or ‘traders’ who smuggled goods from Lebanon into Syria, to meet the demands of Syrian society for ‘global products’ that were unavailable in Syria (electronics, cigarettes, etc.). On the other hand, Syrian workers took unskilled jobs in the agricultural, construction and transport sectors inside Lebanon, in which they could compete with Lebanese workers on both quality and price. It is estimated that, before the conflict, up to one million Syrians worked in agriculture, the construction sector and in private businesses inside Lebanon and, conversely, the Lebanese traded global products and bought cheap consumer goods in Syria. These workers were not settled permanently in Lebanon, however, but commuted back and forth to their families, based on the season and work available. With the economic interaction, it is therefore not surprising to see marriages between Syrians and Lebanese, particularly in Wadi Khaled and to some extent in the Bekaa Valley. The close, marital, socio-economic and cultural ties between Syrians and Lebanese, raises questions about, or even undermines, the relevance of a ‘hard distinction’ between ‘Syrian’ and ‘Lebanese’ beneficiaries and community members, particularly in Northern Lebanon.¹⁰

However, the border areas and other areas with high economic integration were not immune to the economic consequences of the war in Syria. ‘Border trade’, including commercial activities in the harbour of Tripoli collapsed with the war, as did the opportunities for Lebanese consumers to satisfy their basic needs through cheap shopping in Syria. At the same time, it was hardly surprising that the border areas were witness to a steady flow of Syrians escaping the war and settling in Lebanon.

The influx of refugees into Lebanon has led to increased competition for low-income and unskilled jobs. At the same time, rental costs and the price of water have increased, as the – now permanent – presence of 1.5 million Syrians has meant a remarkable increase in demand.

If one is to understand how NRC’s (and other international agencies’) interventions affect ‘the local economy’ and the livelihood opportunities that exist for poor Lebanese and Syrian families alike, it is vital to first comprehend all of these contributory elements: the porous nature of the border areas, the economic interdependence and limited livelihood opportunities, how financial ‘streams’ flow and have flowed between Syria and Lebanon for decades, and how Syrians and Lebanese have crossed and searched (and continue to search) for markets and livelihoods on both sides of the border.

Crisis two: Political visioning and capability, locally and nationally.

Holistic planning, let alone strategic city planning, with all that this entails in terms of shelters, electricity, water, sewage, roads and solid waste is impossible without the political commitment, capability and visioning of national and local decision makers to talk openly about the challenges and to address them with open eyes. Unfortunately, the historical marginalisation of the border areas and the presence of Palestinian refugees’ in Lebanon for the past seventy years have affected the response towards the Syrian refugees and the ability to strategically address the challenges associated with the mass influx of Syrian refugees.

The Lebanese government has welcomed and accepted millions refugees. In fact, when

the numbers of refugees are combined with the many Syrians already living in Lebanon, Syrians now make up a quarter of the country’s population. However, due to concerns that the Syrians will stay and disrupt the country’s delicate balance between religious groups, Lebanon has felt obliged to restrict their presence too.¹¹ Syrian refugees have restricted access to legal residency, limit access to services, employment and movement in Lebanon. This has had profound consequences for the refugees’ ability to ensure their livelihoods, and has resulted in 76% of registered Syrian refugees finding themselves under the national poverty line in 2017.

This situation spotlights the potential role that local municipalities could play in a more comprehensive, efficient and transparent implementation of the response.¹² It is now eight years since the crisis began in Syria. The reality of the response on the ground in the most affected regions indicates that in that time the municipalities have yet to play a consistently effective role in guiding the response and/or in coordinating the diverse range of interventions being implemented by a multitude of actors. These actors include de-concentrated sector service providers, international aid organisations, civil society and the private sector.¹³ In most of the areas bordering Syria, the municipal council’s role is limited to the figure of the mayor, who benefits from advanced executive prerogatives according to the Lebanese law, while municipalities in other parts of the country is stronger.¹⁴

The eight municipalities in Wadi Khaled, hosting a significant number of refugees, were only established in 2012, and the municipal staff typically comprises a mayor, one or two policemen and an administrator. Utility fees are not collected, because of cultural reasons, making the municipalities entirely dependent upon (the limited) government transfers. Most municipal council members also lack experience in development work and coordination¹⁵.

All of this hampers the consolidation of clear plans for local developmental plan and city planning, let alone the implementation of a response to the municipalities’ current situation. The situation is further exacerbated when local feuds and family problems block council decisions and inhibit the council from acting as a neutral actor above the fray of local conflicts. Moreover, the municipal council’s members see it as an institution that might accumulate resources and expand the network of patronage at the local level.

Nevertheless, the municipality benefits from a margin of leeway for actions and initiatives, which are independent from the central authorities, and which can mean that a municipal council in one area might have a completely different policy to that of another. This means that three border areas out of the five host a very high number of refugees, often exceeding the local population.

Lack of predictability of the conflict

The limited visioning and planning capabilities is aggravated by the unpredictability of the situation and ‘fatigue’. When the conflict broke out in 2011, most Lebanese welcomed the Syrian refugees and considered it both a moral and humanitarian duty to host them. All the informants who were interviewed by the evaluation team indicated that, at that time, they expected the crisis to last for a maximum of one year, upon which time they would have expected the refugees to return to Syria. However, the Lebanese population’s hospitality is being drained as the conflict moves into its eighth year, and with refugees equalling or outnumbering the host population in some areas. Added to this the supply of water, electricity, sewage and solid waste systems is falling short of the demand and Syrians offer competitive employment compared to the locals, both in terms of salaries and the quality of work performed.

¹⁰ Ibid. Backed by semi-structured interviews with municipality leaders and mayors in Wadi Khaled, Bekaa and communities North of Tripoli.

¹¹ New York Times, December 2013, Lebanon Worries That Housing Will Make Syrian Refugees Stay

¹² Mercy Corps, Successful Municipal Strategies to Respond to the Syria Refugee Crisis, 2013

¹³ World Bank Strategic Assessment: A Capital Investment Plan For Lebanon- Investment Opportunities and Reforms

¹⁴ Lebanon’s border areas in light of the Syrian war: New actors, old marginalisation, March 2018

¹⁵ Mercy Corps, Successful Municipal Strategies to Respond to the Syria Refugee Crisis, 2013

The longing for a ‘normal life’ also seems to affect the refugee households, according to refugees interviewed. Today, compared to the time when Syrian refugee households first arrived in Lebanon, their tolerance levels as concerns what they will accept in terms of housing conditions, who they are prepared to share a property with and how their ‘vulnerability’ and ‘coping’ materialise have been affected.

A lack of predictability and visioning also affects the situation. No one knows when the conflict will end and with what result. All of the informants we interviewed hesitated to address the delicate question of ‘What will the situation look like in five or ten years from now?’ Consequently, the mayors and muhktars we interviewed seem to have no, or a very weak, vision of how to address the challenges now and in the future.

Additionally, Syrian household members do not know what conditions and opportunities await them if they go home. Many are afraid to return. Many come from areas where their houses have been destroyed, the demography has changed and they fear new groups have occupied the area. This lack of predictability is a challenge, not least, to the authorities and donor agencies’ ability to plan and provide a feasible response to the situation. It makes it difficult for them to find the ‘right balance’ between short-term relief and longer-term development and investment into refugees and host communities alike. It is also a challenge for refugees, as they consider themselves to be in a state of ‘waiting’, where surviving from one day to the next seems the only option, and where one day follows another, gradually turning into months, years and – all too quickly – a decade of waiting

Crisis three: The scope and concentration of the refugee problem

Seven years into the Syrian conflict, the Government of Lebanon (GoL) estimates that the country is hosting 1.5 million Syrians who have fled the conflict in Syria (including 997,905 million Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR), together with 23,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) 35,000 Lebanese returnees and a pre-existing Palestinian population of more than 175,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (PRL). One in four persons in Lebanon today is a Syrian refugee. However, because refugees tend to gather in the areas bordering Syria, some areas are far more affected than others.

The result is that in some areas, where NRC’s OFC modality is implemented, at least partially, refugees outnumber the host population by a factor of two or three, higher in some areas. This is obviously a huge challenge in terms of these communities’ ‘absorption capacity’, access to water, sanitation, electricity, housing and road infrastructure, as well as for establishing a livelihood.

The influx of refugees came at a time where there are significant deficiencies in key basic services, including electricity, water supply, sanitation, transport, waste management, telecommunications and others. These services are not only essential for growth of productivity and income, but also for ensuring a basic level of living standard. Out of 137 countries, Lebanon ranks 130 in quality of overall infrastructure, with quality of electricity supply at 134, quality of roads at 120 and quality of mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions at 104. Further, many years of low public investment in these sectors has caused capacity to lag behind demand, a demand that has only increase after 2011.¹⁶

The last big influx of refugees was in 2014. Since then the total number of refugees residing in Lebanon has stabilised. Some Syrians have crossed into Lebanon, in small numbers and without either being registered or having permission, whereas an equally small number are returning to Syria¹⁷. Yet the approximately 1.5 million refugees currently living in Lebanon continue to add pressure an infrastructure that is already severely overstretched.

¹⁶ World Bank, April 2018: Strategic Assessment: Capital Investment Plan for Lebanon.
¹⁷ According to NRC informants interviewed by the team.

4.2. The intervention’s impact on households post OFC

4.2.1. Findings

Evaluation questions

- To what extent has the socio-economic situation of households stabilised and improved and what is the impact of this? Did this impact persist beyond the OFC period?
- Has OFC built/strengthened the resilience of the beneficiary household, post-OFC?

According to NRC’s figures, 70% of Syrian refugee households and 98% of the Palestinian refugees from Syria are severely or highly economically vulnerable.¹⁸ This reflects not only the longitude of the crisis which erupted in 2011 which has contributed to exhausting economic resources, but also to the distress that started a decade earlier and which is explained as a combination of global financial shocks, domestic agricultural shocks and conflict.

The second half of the 2000s was characterised by a sharp increase in oil prices, which resulted in large price increases in both commodities and food prices.¹⁹ These negative shocks were compounded by the effects of a prolonged drought that affected the country during the years leading up to the 2011 crisis.

Over a million rural residents moved into the peripheries of the larger cities, during the years of drought and financial crisis; the same peripheries that would become the theatres of heavy fighting during the conflict. Conflict was then responsible for the displacement of millions of people within Syria. Among this last group, some would find accommodation and resettlement inside Syria, whereas others would opt for, or were forced to choose, leaving.

According to the World Bank and the UNHCR, most Syrian refugees (who are registered with UNHCR) in Lebanon come from the northern governorates of Homs (21.4%) and Aleppo (20.5%) or from rural Damascus (14.1%). Around 85% of these refugees have settled in three governorates of Lebanon: Bekaa (36%), North Lebanon (25%), and Mount Lebanon (25%).²⁰ The vulnerability described in the UNCHR and World Bank reports is also reflected in NRC’s own statistical materials, according to which 96% of the households they supported earned less than USD 165 a month and 84% earn less than USD 66 a month.²¹ The average size of the households hosted in Lebanon is 4 (persons), 5 in Bekaa, and 4.2 in the North of Lebanon.

These figures do not reflect the actual family size of supported refugee families. This is because grandparents, for example, would count as one household and would be eligible for a housing unit (a room) whereas their grown-up daughter or son and his/her spouse and children comprise another household (eligible to another room). Therefore, the households or ‘families’ that participated in the focus groups were significantly larger than the numbers reflected in NRC’s statistics.

The evaluation finds that most households (close to 75%) left the OFC because their contract had expired, whereas eviction, the opportunity to join relatives, conflicts with other families in the property and work opportunities accounted for the remaining reasons why refugees left the unit(s) allocated to them.

¹⁸ <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/fact-sheets/2017/lebanon/shelter.pdf>
¹⁹ The Welfare of Syrian Refugees, World Bank Group and UNHCR, 2016
²⁰ The Welfare of Syrian Refugees, Evidence from Jordan and Lebanon, World Bank Group and UNHCR, 2016
²¹ Figures representing NRC refugee households in Bekaa. Data on households’ monthly income were not recorded by NRC in the North

Figure 1: Reasons for leaving OFC facility, North Lebanon²²

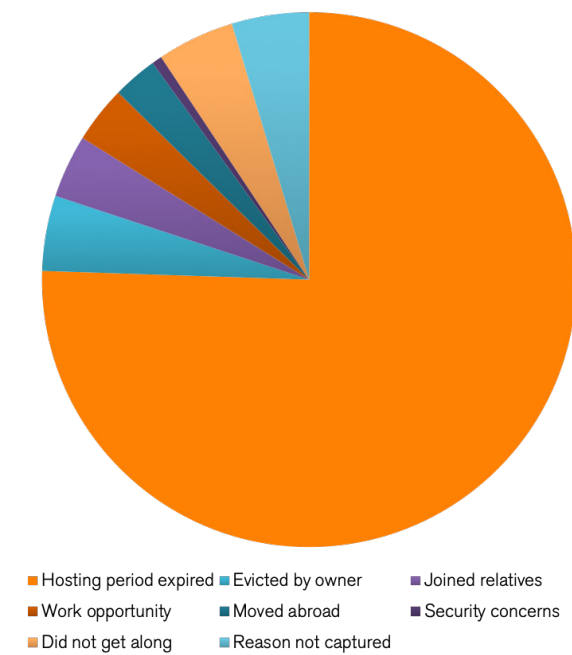
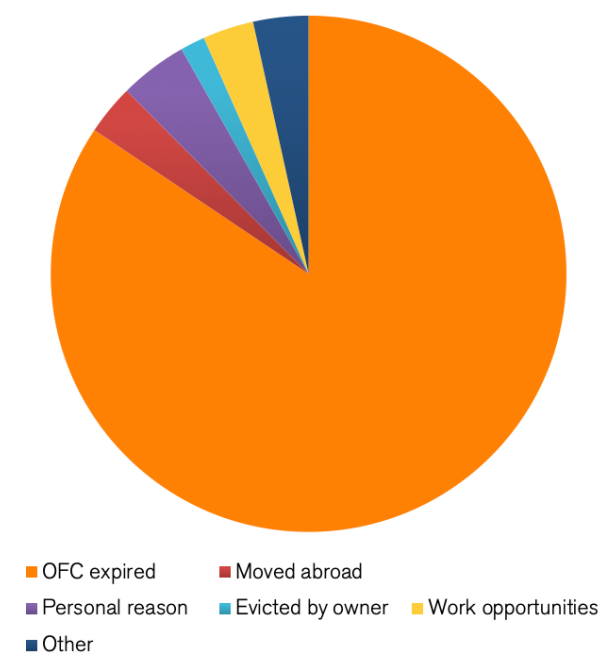


Figure 2: Reasons for Leaving OFC Facility, Bekaa



²² The calculation is based on the number of households where NRC has actually registered a reason for leaving the OFC facility. A reason was stated in approximately 50% of the cases, sample size was 1800 households North Lebanon and 750 from Bekaa (NRCs data base)

The majority (88%) left at the end date of the OFC or within two months after the contract expired.²³ 48% left for accommodation that was worse than the shelter offered through the OFC, 35% left for accommodation of a similar condition and 16% moved to something better. 50% of the households who left the OFC seem to be paying rent for their accommodation as planned, while the remaining 50% accumulate debt, either to the owner, to others, or don't pay rent at all.

Informants participating in the focus groups in August 2018, all explained their decision to leave the housing unit on, or close to, the date of the contract's expiration as stemming from their inability to pay the rent, sometimes in combination with a poor relationship with the landlord. Those who decided to stay after the contract had expired had done so because of the positive social relationships they had developed with the landlord, the neighbours and/or because they liked the place and hoped they would be able to pay the rent. Yet most acknowledged that they were unable to stay in the housing unit, even in the intermediate term, because they had accumulated debt, either to the land lord or to relatives or neighbours.

Consequences of having to leave the OFC

'My OFC period ended a month ago, so I borrowed money to cover the rent; another month paying rent would be a major problem because we don't know what to do. All the families living in the house are worrying about the rent'.

Refugee, focus group participant, August 2018

For some households, leaving a rent-free occupancy that had expired had consequences over and above having to pay rent. Some informants interviewed – children as well as adults – mentioned that having to move had affected their ability to enrol children in school. This was either positive, because the family moved to a new location within a manageable or affordable distance from a school or negative, either because the family would leave a locality in the middle of a semester and/or because longer distances would make it impossible for the family to afford transportation to school. This was confirmed by NRC's own statistical materials, as illustrated in Figure 3 below.²⁴

Other informants mentioned that they had to quit their jobs as the distances to their place of employment had increased and they could no longer afford the transportation costs of going back and forth from the new accommodation. In such situations the loss of the OFC contract was a 'double burden' to the household.

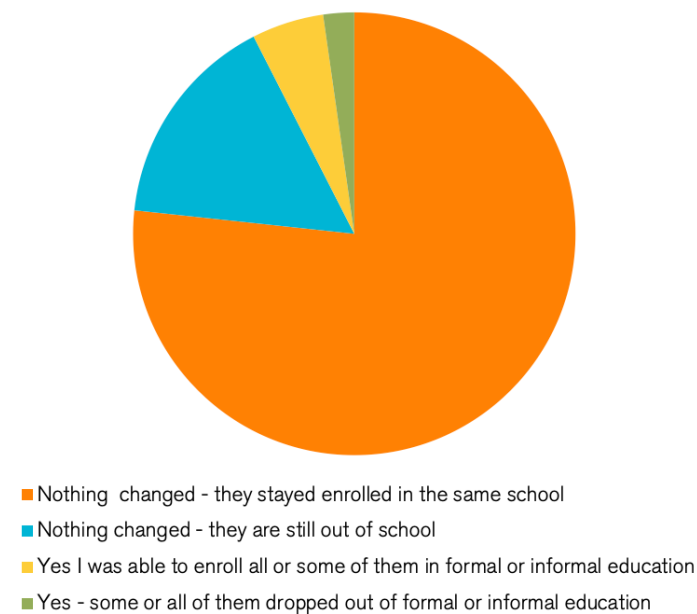
'When my mom is angry and nervous I try to tell jokes to make her change her mood'

Girl, FGD, August 2018

²³ NRC data: OFC modality Outcome results for beneficiaries, June 2018. Sample size: 203 households who left the OFC

²⁴ NRC data: OFC modality, Outcome results for beneficiaries, June 2018, sample size: 274 households, data collected through phone calls to households

Figure 3: Changes in access to school after leaving the OFC

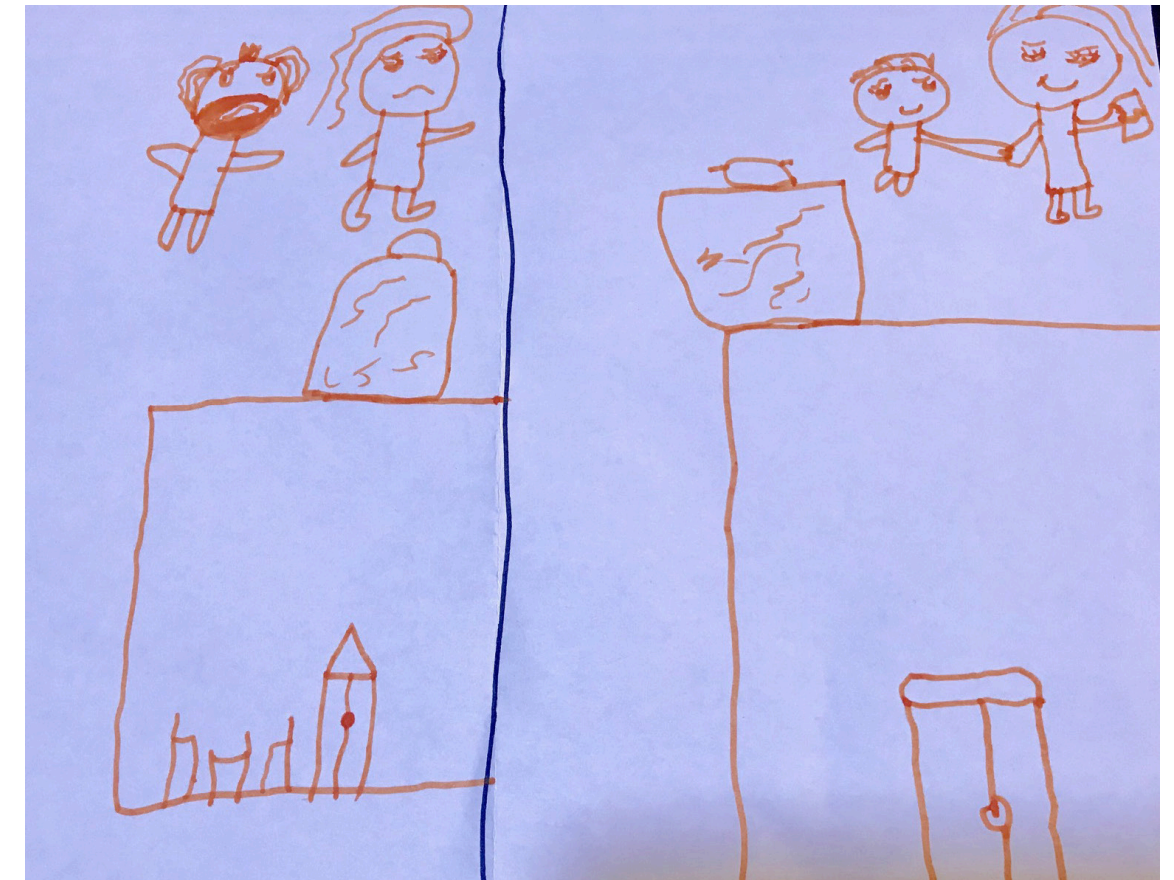


Immediate, and temporary psychological and financial relief

As described above, the OFC does not provide economic benefits to refugee households beyond the OFC contract period. However, the evaluation found that the OFC does temporarily improve a household's socio-economic situation. This is because the period, during which the household is relieved from paying rent, provides some immediate financial relief and enables families to include meat in their diet, and to pay for medical care (in one case for surgery), clothes, heating during winter, transportation and school supplies, which the family could not afford otherwise.²⁵ As such, the OFC contributed to, or temporarily reduced, the psychological stress associated with not knowing and not having a plan for how to pay the rent at the end of the month; this according to all refugees participating in focus group discussions.

The children interviewed confirmed that rent-related financial stress – or relief of stress – affected refugee children also. This was because the children tended to take responsibility for their parents' sense of stress and frustration, either seeking to comfort them or by abstaining from making requests for new clothes, toys or food that they would like to eat. The increased budget provides a much-needed financial relief which allows the parents to add additional food to the family's diet or to buy non-food items that children – and especially the girls – might want. At the same time, it relieves some of the psychological burn children feel, when watching their parents' frustration, anger or stress. As one girl explained: We start to feel stressed and sad when our parents are stressed and sad.

²⁵ See Annex I for an overview and summary of the quantitative data collected about the intervention's impact on households.



In the first picture my parents take a walk because they are so stressed from not knowing how to pay the rent. In the second picture my mom takes my brother to buy some toy. Girl describing how she experienced the situation before and after OFC.

Social capital and sense of safety

Recent research²⁶ suggests that social capital is one of the key resources at refugees' disposal, by which they navigate and manage the experience and challenge of protracted displacement.

The evaluation finds that staying in one place for twelve months contributes to building refugees' social capital and to building relationships not only with other refugee families staying in the same property (in 'cases where several families inhabited the same property') but also with the landlord and with other community members in the neighbourhood. The 'social capital' and personal relationships built during the OFC period is sustained even after refugee households leave the OFC, according to refugees interviewed.

'The landlord's wife used to help me find a job, and transportation was easier to the factories we work in. People knew us better so we were able to find more opportunities'

Female refugee, FGD, February 2018

²⁶ Clingendael Research Institute, March 2018; The untapped resource: Protecting and leveraging refugee social capital in protracted displacement

The establishment of social relationships (social capital) seemed to be particularly important for female refugees, as they felt safe to leave their children to care for themselves when the relationships with the landlord or with neighbours or other refugees in the property were positive. Social relationships with landlords and neighbours were also instrumental in improving livelihoods from finding jobs, or coping with crisis, through to borrowing money or seeking assistance in situations when the family faced a social event (funeral, marriage... etc.) or a medical crisis.

'When we turn on the stove we can actually feel the heat'

Male refugee, FGD, February 2018

The informants gave examples, in the focus groups, of how social networks had helped them cope with their situation, including inviting refugees to their houses, lending refugee households' money, giving refugees a ride for free or paying for unexpected, extra costs such as medical costs or the costs of a celebration or funeral.

However, close relationships with the landlords do risk placing some refugees in a dependency or 'patron-client relationship with the landlord and can lead to abuse. Some refugee informants mentioned that landlords would retaliate if the refugees refused to do as they were told by the landlord, e.g., by cutting off the electricity and water if a household member refused to work for them at a very low salary, or they simply threatened to evict them.

Staying in a property with other families, or even members of the extended family, was considered problematic by many informants, especially the female household members, who were unable to maintain their privacy in situations where bathroom and kitchens were shared with male representatives of other households. This not only prevented the female household members from unveiling, but also prevented them from staying in the house without the presence of other, male representatives from their own household.

Female-headed households seem to be particularly vulnerable to abuse, as their bargaining power with male landlords was less than that of men. Several female heads of households, who were interviewed, mentioned their concerns over landlords who 'charged whatever they wanted' for electricity and water.

Physical shelter and a sense of dignity

The opportunity to stay in a housing unit that was closed with windows and that protected the family from the rain and cold weather was mentioned as another, vital added value of the OFC modality. The fact that the provided shelters had doors and windows, to protect the family during winter, enabled families to stay warm(warmer). Not having to sleep directly on the ground and living in a closed house also revealed the concerns of women and children about finding a snake beneath the mattress. Both factors contributed to a sense of dignity and safety according to the adults and children interviewed.

4.2.2. Key drivers

There is no doubt that providing shelter, free of charge, has been a key driver in refugee households' feeling of immediate relief, protection and dignity. It also offered them the possibility to pay for other vital expenditures, such as medication and food, and to slightly

improve their nutrition by adding meat and vegetables to their diet. Refugees were also able to pay for hygiene and personal well-being and for expenditures related to children's schooling, during the rent-free period.

However, the benefits are limited to the period of the intervention itself, and refugee households seem to resort to less positive coping strategies soon after the rent-free period finishes. The one exception to this is the building of social capital (relationships with landlords and neighbours). For most, these relationships are sustained even after the OFC has expired.

These positive relationships with landlords and neighbours cannot be taken for granted. The evaluation finds that the ICLA team's close follow-up with refugees, the building of trust, attempts to harmonise expectations between refugee families and landlords, clarify written agreements and misunderstandings and resolve conflicts over the use of utilities (water, electricity, solid waste disposals etc.) seem to have been a key driver for the establishment of a positive relationship between Landlords and refugee households.

Hygiene sessions do seem – at least to some extent – to have benefitted to positive relationships with landlords and neighbours, at least to the extent that it has contributed to make refugee households adopt a more responsibly use of water and waste disposal, thereby reducing a source of frustration and potential tension. Several informants interviewed mentioned that they found the hygiene sessions irrelevant, however, as information shared was 'common knowledge'. Others appreciated the information provided, especially how to use chlorine to clean the water and hygiene in relation to infant care. Feedback regarding the information and the hygiene kits provided do suggest that a 'one-size-fits all' approach should be replaced by information and support tailored to individual needs.



The drawing to the right: before we joined OFC we had no heating during winter, rain poured through the ceiling and snakes would come to our house. The drawing on the left: the ceiling is water proof and the building is closed. Boy describing how he experiences the OFC intervention

4.2.3. Key barriers

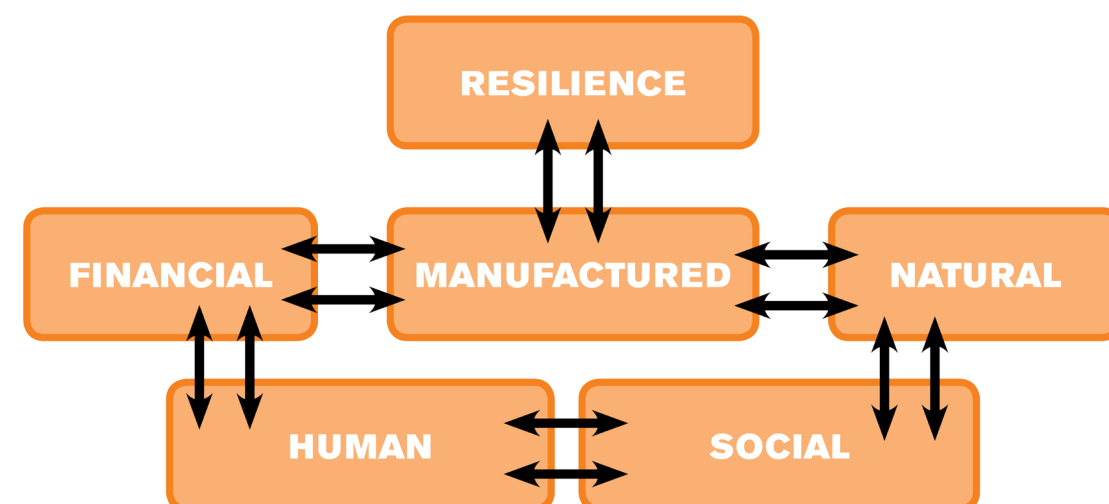
The intervention's ignorance of the key preconditions for resilience

Although the OFC did contribute to providing temporary financial relief and the improvement of the refugees' economic situation as well as sometimes helping refugees to adopt more positive coping strategies, the OFC did not contribute to sustaining positive coping strategies or improving refugee households' resilience as envisaged in the intervention's original Theory of Change (see annex II). The evaluation team finds that the fact that the intervention ignored some of the key preconditions for 'resilience' and socioeconomic improvement is a main reason (or barrier to) for this. In general terms, 'resilience' refers to 'the ability of individuals, households, communities, to withstand crises, recover from them, and adapt to better withstand them'. Resilience is usually closely linked to factors pertaining to the context and to individual capabilities specific to the person or group in question.

Factors affecting resilience include five specific 'capitals'²⁷, or 'social' and 'behavioural' factors²⁸:

- Natural capital: Such as access to or control over water and land.
- Manufactured capital: Such as access to 'production tools' (a car, a sewing machine, agricultural tools), or a house.
- Financial capital: Such as cash or shares.
- Human capital: Such as life skills; technical capacities; health; ability to adapt, or engage, in behaviours that promote cooperation and mutual support; ability to manage money and preserve motivation and plan; self-efficacy regarding work; parenting or participating in community affairs.
- Social capital: such as relationships and trust and support from relatives, peers and other actors in one's network.

Figure 4: The five 'capitals' of resilience



²⁷ Clingendael Research Institute, March 2018; The untapped resource: Protecting and leveraging refugee social capital in protracted displacement

²⁸ Hunter, Working hard and working well, a practical guide to performance management, 2013

The five capitals are intrinsically linked and interdependent. Human capital, in the form of technical skills and good health, is – for instance – a key determinant of building financial capital (making savings), while social capital, in the form of networks and contacts, may be the factor that determines whether one can capitalise on the knowledge of others, and get a job. Possessing human and social capital is often a precondition to obtaining or strengthening manufactured, natural and financial capital, in situations where the latter capitals are weak or non-existing.

NRC's intervention addresses refugee's manufactured capital, as it provides them with a (transitional) housing solution. It addresses the refugees' human capital also – although to a limited extent –, as it strengthens refugees' knowledge and skills about preventing communicable diseases and their ability to engage in encounters with authorities to protect their rights and entitlements, obtain civil documentation, legal stay and housing rights.

However, other crucial factors, relevant to the refugee's human capital, remain unaddressed, such as the skills, attitudes and knowledge that affect how well a refugee family uses the given twelve-month rent-free period to build resilience and to develop and sustain (more) positive coping strategies over time.

Alarmingly, focus group discussions with beneficiaries revealed, that none of the participants had used the twelve-month rent-free period as a 'free mental space' where they could plan and prepare themselves for the future. Feedback from the participants of the focus groups indicated that this lack of planning was linked to a perception that 'our future lies in Syria' and 'as long as we are not in Syria, we cannot plan for anything'. When asked about plans, several replied that they had a dream to go abroad but that they didn't have specific plans. A few mentioned that they would like to stay in Lebanon or to go back to Syria, but in both cases, they indicated they would depend on the support of international agencies.

Several mentioned that they had benefitted from several different OFC modalities and praised NRC's modality for being of a better quality than other OFCs. This may indicate that refugees' coping strategies may be to rely on external support and 'surfing between OFC modalities' which – in all cases – remains transitional.

'When we lived in the OFC facility we didn't think of any other solution except a renewal of the contract. We hoped for God to solve the problem'.

Female refugee household member, North Lebanon

Insufficient management of expectations, follow-up of complaints and requests for extensions

Feedback from the refugees and the landlords alike suggested that there was insufficient follow-up on, and an absence of clear answers about, whether refugees could extend their OFC accommodation or whether landlord could have a second upgrade. This contributed to frustration, passivity and an inability to plan. Some refugees (and landlords) have been waiting for answers for months. In the meantime, refugees may reside in the property without a clear agreement with the owner and agreed on between the landlord and the refugee household without interference from NRC. Some don't pay rent (to the frustration of the landlords), whereas others try to pay.

NRC shelter team explained that they invested significant time and effort into explaining the modality's content and conditions to the refugee households, suggesting discrepancies between messages communicated by NRC and messages received. Time and resources did not allow the evaluation team to clarify any discrepancies between messages communicated and messages received. However, a 'denial of facts' is a common and scientifically proved psychological reaction, in situations where people are unable to cope with a situation. The team cannot exclude that within a context of fear and exhausted coping resources, messages from the shelter team about a likely termination of the OFC modality may have been received with 'denial'.

Despite this, the feedback does suggest that accessibility to the shelter and technical team and communication about the criteria for upgrades and extensions could be strengthened further. Several refugees (and landlords) indicated that they had tried to call the OFC hotline, about both possible extensions of the contract and technical issues (or issues related to disputes). Most landlords reported that they were unable to speak with anyone, as the phone was never answered.

Other landlords complained about what they considered to be a lack of transparency about, and unclear criteria for, upgrades. Furthermore, landlords complained that there was no 'handing back' of the property to the landlords, once the OFC had ended. The evaluation team is concerned that the insufficient dialogue with some landlords (other landlords interviewed were pleased by the cooperation) or responses to their requests and inquiries may have reduced the landlords' motivation to make their properties available for NRC and thus, the refugees. If this is so, this may represent yet another obstacle for refugees to planning ahead.

4.3 Intervention's impact on the low-income housing market (and economy)

4.3.1 Findings

Evaluation questions

- Has the OFC increased the availability of minimum standard housing for vulnerable and lower income groups?
- In what way has the intervention affected landlords' incentives to host, and attitudes towards refugees

The intervention's contribution to the local economy

The evaluation found the intervention contributing positively to local economy in two ways:

First, the intervention contributes to increasing the potential tax base in areas where municipalities collect house tax (Bekaa Valley). Landlords, whose properties are upgraded to a standard where they are habitable (stage A, B or C), must pay housing tax, which is assessed on the property's location, size and standard. However, this is only the case when the property is occupied. This situation may reduce landlords' inclination to rent the housing unit after the termination of the OFC. Notwithstanding this, the upgrading of houses does contribute to increasing the potential tax base of the local municipalities.

Some municipalities, such as Aamayer in Wadi Khaled do not collect housing tax or service fees. These municipalities were only established in 2012, before which they were governed by local tribes. Therefore, the communities are not used to paying taxes or fees to the

municipalities and doing so is considered 'culturally inappropriate'. This is particularly true within a context where local community members feel that the refugees who are settled in the area are financially supported by the UN and other agencies, while they are not.

Second, landlords who receive a grant to upgrade their property, from NRC, all reported that they contracted local contractors (plumbers, electricians, aluminium workers carpenters etc.) to do the job. Contractors are either local Syrians, or Lebanese contractors and their Syrian employees. Most Lebanese enterprises hire Syrian workers for the low-paid, unskilled jobs, particularly in the construction sector, in agriculture or in the transportation sector, which traditionally have had a high percentage of Syrian workers. Contractors consider this necessity to keep their companies competitive. The hired Syrians generally receive a lower salary than that of Lebanese workers. Accommodation (for themselves and their family) may be added in to the remuneration and some extra support in case of social events, such as a funeral or a wedding, according to the contractors that the team spoke to during the evaluation.

The intervention's contribution to the low-income housing market

The evaluation team was unable to verify the intervention's contribution to an increased availability of minimum standard housing for vulnerable and lower-income groups, including Lebanese low-income households, as the match between supply and demand remains uncertain. There are several reasons for this:

First, approximately 75 % of properties upgraded by NRC are upgraded to Level One. A Level One upgrade equals a housing unit that is closed and which includes doors, windows, electricity, cold water, bathrooms and sewage. Walls and floors remain without plastering and tiles. According to landlords interviewed, this is a basic standard, which Lebanese families are unlikely to accept – at least in the rural areas – or ask for.

Second, according to the conducted focus groups, landlords enrol in the OFC modality for a variety of reasons and renting properties to low-income families for a longer period is not the major one. There is, in other words, no guarantee that an investment in an OFC facility equals an investment into low-income housing in the future.

Rather, the landlords who were interviewed during the focus groups discussions consider the OFC modality an opportunity to finish properties under construction faster than if they had to finance and complete the construction alone. Many – or most – plan to give the property to a son and his wife, once the son marries. Renting to Syrian refugees is thus an interim solution that serves the double purpose of 'wanting to help' and wanting to finish one's own property. This was particularly evident in Wadi Khaled, in Northern Lebanon, where landlords were hosting refugees in unsafe constructions even before NRC provided the OFC modality. Some of them did so because the hosted family was related to another, Lebanese, family member. Here, NRC's support became a contribution to 'help landlords help refugees' and – at the same time – a contribution to the construction of a property for another family member. Similar accounts were given in other locations, except for Ghazze in the Bekaa Valley, where landlords had decided to invest in the construction of new properties, without prior coordination with NRC, hoping however, that NRC would contribute to upgrading the houses.

Third, prices for renting an apartment may be too high for Lebanese low-income families to pay and apartment may be so big that Lebanese families don't demand them. Landlords who were interviewed for the evaluation (Bekaa) stated that – if fully upgraded to Level 3 – they would rent their properties (several rooms, kitchen and bathroom) – at a monthly fee of USD 300 or more depending on the size and location of the property. This is only USD 120 less than the minimum monthly wage of a Lebanese worker.

Figure 5: A kitchen in a housing unit, upgraded to Level 1



Kitchen in an apartment upgraded to 'level 1: The apartment is closed with windows and doors, basic requirements for electricity and water is provided

Oxfam and the American University of Beirut conducted a study, in 2015²⁹, which established a lower poverty line, for Lebanon, of USD 2.40/person/day and an upper poverty line of USD 4.00/person/day. Using these poverty lines as a guide, 28.6% of Lebanese households were found to be poor and of these, 8% were considered extremely poor or below the lower poverty line. Using these calculations, a household of two adults and four children would potentially have a minimum income of USD 432 and a maximum of USD 720 per month, which – for households in the upper end of the scale – might be enough to rent a fully upgraded housing unit (in the Bekaa valley), but barely enough for families at the lower end of the scale. While the Oxfam study's calculation applied to the country in general, it is worth noting that disparities between the Governorates in Lebanon are glaring. Bekaa, South Lebanon and North Lebanon are the most deprived governorates in the country and Mount Lebanon and Beirut the least deprived. Therefore, one is more likely to find more households at the lower level of the poverty scale in an area such as Bekaa and Northern Lebanon, where NRC's intervention is concentrated, than in Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

Fourth, while the Lebanese may consider renting as an accommodation option in some locations, this may not be the case in others. In Wadi Khaled no-one rents a house, according to landlords interviewed. Everyone builds their own house. Therefore, the demand for rented accommodation can hardly be generalised to Lebanon and depends on local customs as well as the cost of apartments for rent. The notion that 'renting is unacceptable in rural areas'

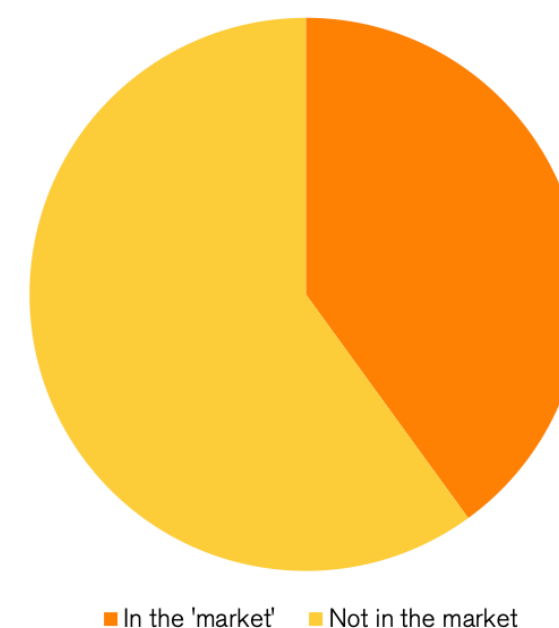
29 Poverty, Inequality and Social Protection in Lebanon, 2015

may be under pressure, however, not least from the many OFC modalities introduced to host Syrian refugees, including NRC's. It is possible; therefore, that perceptions towards renting may change over time.

However, for the time being, it is not surprising that none of the landlords interviewed for the evaluation had signed contracts with tenants of Lebanese origin, so far. Some did not because they were still part of the OFC and their housing units were still occupied by Syrian refugees. Others did not because the Syrian family that originally benefitted from the OFC modality was still renting – or staying for free - in the modality. The latter situation was most common in Wadi Khaled, where the community seems to consider hosting refugees a moral and humanitarian obligation, founded in the historically close relationship between Syrian and Lebanese tribes in the area as well as the fact that many Lebanese have married Syrians and are now hosting the relatives of the Syrian spouse.³⁰

NRC's own data³¹ paints a similar, although slightly more positive, picture of the 'rentability' of properties that have been upgraded by NRC, at least in terms of refugees' ability to rent a property. According to these data, 64 out of the 155 surveyed properties were occupied by households paying rent; either by households who had decided to stay after their OFC contract had expired (twenty-seven) or by another Syrian family (thirty-five). Two units were rented by a Lebanese and an Egyptian family who were paying rent.

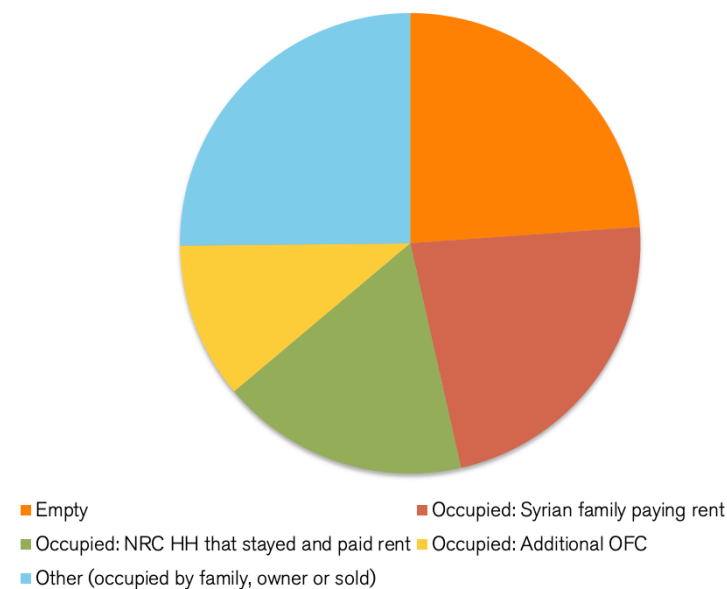
Figure 6: Percentage of OFCS in the market



Out of the owners who stated that their property was empty, only 16 % explained this with an inability to find tenants, despite their wanting to do so. The vast majority indicated 'other' as the main reason, while others, again, states that they wished to use the property for themselves or other family members.

30 The Mukhtar interviewed in Wadi Khaled estimates that 20% of all refugee families hosted in Wadi Khaled are hosted by relatives.
31 NRC outcome monitoring, Landlords, June 2018

Figure 7: Use of housing units post OFC contract



The intervention's impact on landlords' incentives to host and their attitudes towards refugees

The evaluation finds that the intervention has had an impact on landlords' incentives to host refugees and, to a lesser degree, a positive impact on their attitudes towards refugees. However, contextual differences, not least the historical, cultural, tribal and marital bonds which prevailed between Syrians and Lebanese before the crisis, determine how – and how much – the intervention has affected landlords' incentives and attitudes.

Wadi Khaled, which has seen its population double since 2011 (hosting approximately 50,000 refugees) may illustrate the point: The pre-crisis tribal and marital relationships between the Lebanese in Wadi Khaled and the Syrians across the border has led to a situation where up to 20% of refugees are hosted by relatives who are married to a Lebanese and who lived in Wadi Khaled before the crisis. For these host families, hosting refugees is first and foremost a familial, moral and humanitarian obligation, rooted in the familial bonds between the host family and the refugee household. It is therefore not surprising that these families hosted refugees even before NRC introduced the OFC modality. These landlords considered the OFC modality a support that 'helped them help' the refugees' families they hosted but not a motivating factor.

However, in other parts of Lebanon, the OFC may have been a direct incentive for landlords to host refugee households. This is the case, for instance, in Ghazze in the Bekaa Valley, where NRC's investment in unfinished housing constructions seemed to encourage private investors (including landlords already enrolled in the programme) to take out bank loans and to invest in the construction of unfinished buildings. This was done in the hope – or calculation – that NRC would step in to finish the construction through the OFC modality. However, NRC never made any such promises, and this led to detrimental financial consequences for the house owners; who, today, are left with unfinished buildings and bank loans they cannot pay back.

Land owners who were interviewed in Bar Elias, and in the Bekaa Valley, mentioned that

the OFC was the direct motivation for their hosting refugee households. At the onset, their motivation was driven purely by 'the business opportunity' and the opportunity to complete an unfinished construction faster and with external financial (NRC) support. However, this motivation changed as landlords got to know the refugee households. Thus, business-driven motivation was mixed with a humanitarian concern and a wish to help. Several informants gave examples where they had allowed refugee households to stay in the housing unit free of charge for some months after the OFC contract had expired and said that they had developed a friendship with the family or that they had lent the family money.

Not all landlords' attitudes towards refugees were equally positive. Some interviewed landlords mentioned that refugee households could be noisy, would steal electricity, had excessive water consumption or acted irresponsibly towards the property they lived in. Because of the latter, landlords had to invest additional funds in the property to bring it up to the standard it had, when the family moved into the housing unit.

The interviewed refugees also confirmed this portrayal of a relationship which could be strained, at times. The vast majority seem to have enjoyed a very positive relationship, where the landlord was very supportive, others spoke about landlords yelling at them, cutting off the electricity or evicting refugees in violation of the contract. Total eviction cases in Bekaa and North are 8 out of 1947, according to NRCs data base – a far lower percentage than the number of focus group participants who raised complaints. A reason for this discrepancy might be that informants interviewed may have felt a direct incentive to participate in the interviews as it gave them an opportunity to raise their complaint.

4.3.2. Key drivers

The Intervention's 'mutual benefits' approach

The evaluation team finds that the intervention's ability to mobilise resources in local communities, hosting refugees, is a vital asset and driver which – although not part of the evaluation's focus per se – is a major achievement and should be a source for inspiration for future interventions. Through the OFC modality's mutual benefits approach, NRC has managed to mobilise 'manufactured capital' (housing units available in host communities) and to make it available for refugees, based on a principle of 'renovation of properties for free rental'. As such, NRC created a situation that was mutually beneficial for homeowners as well as for refugees and NRC itself: homeowners got a renovation or upgrade of their housing units faster and cheaper than if they would have had they completed the building themselves. For a total amount of EUR 1,500 NRC could create a cost-efficient accommodation solution of a much higher quality than if NRC had had to establish accommodation for the same amount from scratch.

Furthermore, the 'mutual benefits' approach has had a positive impact on the local economy for both Lebanese and Syrian workers. Landlords have used local contractors to upgrade their properties and contributed to building social capital and relationships between Syrian refugees and Lebanese landlords and neighbours.

Despite the modality's limitations, the evaluation team finds that the principle of 'mutual benefit' is of vital importance and worth further exploration in the future. This is particularly so, within contexts of protracted crises and temporariness, where the hospitality and resources of host communities are at risk of exhaustion, and where – as in the Syrian, Lebanese border areas, it may be difficult to make a sharp distinction between one ethnic or national group and another, based only on the colour of, or name in, a passport.

4.3.3. Key barriers

The cooperation with landlords: Instrumentalism or a genuine partnership?

Evaluation questions

- How has the intervention impacted the host community negatively or positively, including local authorities?

Despite the introduced mutual benefit approach, the evaluation team finds that landlords are first and foremost considered 'instruments' in the aim to provide accommodation for refugees. They are not considered as equal partners and beneficiaries, with whom NRC could/should explore the opportunities for further cooperation and community response to a crisis situation. However, the landlords we interviewed did seem to consider themselves as such and do play a key role as 'small scale investors' with the housing market.

The fact that landlords are considered instruments to achieve a higher goal (housing for refugees) rather than beneficiaries – or partners in housing and community coping with a refugee crisis – seems to contribute to a situation where communication with landlords is under-prioritised. Landlords feel poorly informed about the criteria for a second upgrade and the status of requests. Some also felt that the selection criteria were not transparent. This may contribute to situations where under-informed landlords engage in risky investments, without prior coordination with NRC and with the personal and economic consequences that this entails. It also may discourage landlords from 'volunteering' their properties to NRC in the medium- to longer term.

Figure 8: Kitchen, Upgrade Level 2/3



Kitchen in an apartment upgraded to level 3/2: Walls and floors have tiles, wash infrastructure is improved.

The latter is particularly true when NRC does not complete the renovation of housing units, up to 'Grade 3', which includes plastering, tiles, wall paint and other 'finishes', and when it practices a communication and follow-up with landlords, which some landlords consider insufficient and not transparent. Some of the interviewed landlords complained that the criteria for a second upgrade (to Grade 2/3) remained blurred and that they had had to wait several months for answers to applications or for requests for support.

Inflation of market prices on the rental market?

Feedback from the interviewed refugees suggests that the 'upgrading for occupancy free of charge' approach contributes to inflation in the rental accommodation market, as the value of a renovation/upgrade exceeds the average monthly rental of a housing unit of Grade One standard. The evaluation team was unable to verify this information, because other factors, such as the need for 'post-occupancy' renovation to 'bring a housing unit back up to its original standard (i.e., before it was occupied by a refugee household) must also be taken into consideration. The information is a matter of concern, however, which; if true, may hamper access to housing for low income households, Syrian and Lebanese alike.

The fact that all the costs of renovation are paid 'up front', i.e., before the refugee household moves into the housing unit, may reduce the incentives of landlords, acting in 'bad faith', to be accountable for their contractual obligations with NRC - to host the refugee household to the entire period of twelve months.

4.4. The intervention's impact on host communities

4.4.1. Findings

'When the family left I had to pay for two pick-up trucks to remove the trash they had left'.

Landlord, FGD, Bakaa, August 2018

The distribution of properties, renovated by landlords and financed by NRC, differs greatly from one area to another. For instance, NRC has paid for the upgrade of approximately 200 houses in each of the municipalities of Bar Elias, Baalbek, Ghazze and Saadnayel, in the Bekaa Valley, within the past two years, whereas only five, six and seven properties were upgraded in Mdoukha, Qaraoun and Jfita, respectively. There are several reasons for this, including coordination with other humanitarian organisations.

More than 600 and 110 properties have been renovated in Aamayer and Awade, respectively, in the past two years, whereas close to 400 and 250 have been renovated in Bhannine and in El Minie in Wadi Khaled. The average number of properties renovated per location is approximately ninety.

Feedback from refugees, community members, mayors and mukhtars, who were interviewed for the evaluation, suggests that 'numbers matter'. The more refugees there are in a locality, the more pressure on the local infrastructure, such as electricity, roads, sewage, water and solid waste and the more noise there is as well as competition for scarce jobs and other livelihood opportunities. Therefore, it is not surprising that all the interviewed mayors answered that NRC and other international agencies' interventions have affected the host communities negatively, because of an increased demand and an overextension of the existing infrastructure, which – even before the Syrian crisis and the large influx of refugees - was already overstretched.

Feedback from community members, and from formal and informal decision makers also indicates that NRC and other donors' unilateral focus on refugees' needs, rather than the needs of the entire community (Lebanese and Syrians alike) have contributed to frustration. This is particularly so among poor Lebanese citizens who are competing for the same unskilled and skilled jobs as the Syrians. The fact that many Syrians receive food coupons from the UN was further considered 'unfair' competition, as this enabled Syrians to offer their labour or services at a lower price than a Lebanese worker could afford to.

Several of the interviewed mayors and mukhtars complained that the cooperation with NRC was very sporadic and that their involvement in planning and decision-making concerning the selection of properties and community support projects had been very limited. They considered this a 'missed opportunity' for both NRC and for the communities at large, to ensure that NRC's investment into the communities was relevant and owned by the community itself.

However, some mayors also pointed to the positive attention and donor aid that their municipality has been able to attract, in the wake of the influx of refugees. In Bar Elias, the mayor praised the building of a solid waste recycling plant that employs more than 100 Syrian refugees, (Lebanese workers considered the job unacceptable) and the building of a hospital which, when completed, will provide 400 jobs for medical and support staff. The mayor in Aamayer also praised international donors' investment in solid waste and sewage systems which 'they would not have got, had it not been for the refugees.

The evaluation team was not able to verify whether NRC-funded community support projects' influence host communities at large, neither in terms of their impact on infrastructure, nor in terms of community members' attitudes towards refugees. This is not surprising given the massive weight of other contributing factors, external to NRC's sphere of influence, which include the scope of infrastructure challenges in affected municipalities, the number of refugees hosted inside Lebanon and Lebanese community members' general feeling of being 'neglected' by the international community. NRC's community support projects remain limited in comparison to these elements.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that community support projects have no impact or that they are irrelevant. The results of NRC's own outcome monitoring³² show a major improvement in environmental conditions, vector reduction, improved cleanliness, reduced odours, and improvement in the efficiency and safety of waste collection, in communities in Northern Lebanon, where dumpsters have been provided. A cleaner environment in the targeted areas seems to have contributed to a decrease in tension among neighbours, regarding solid waste; a reduction in uncollected waste and improved cleanliness, i.e., among community members benefitting directly from the intervention.

4.4.2 Key drivers

The evaluation finds that the 'private' accommodation offered through landlords, the ICLA services and the water/hygiene sessions all contribute to preventing or reducing the conflicts related to potential prejudices, waste management and water use among those directly affected. In other words, the positive influence is mostly limited to the close neighbourhood, i.e., the immediate neighbours and community members with whom solid waste disposals, water and electricity is shared, and not to the 'local community' at large.

In addition, the shelter modality contributes to strengthening landlords' positive attitudes towards refugee households – at least in cases where landlords and refugees get along well. As described in Sections 5.1 and 5.2, this leads to situations where landlords and other

immediate neighbours may become part of the refugee households' social capital and could be instrumental in lending money, making connections and giving advice.

However, some landlords did raise concerns about refugee households' behaviour and cited refugees acting irresponsibly and damaging the property. They said some households are noisy, stay up late at night and throw waste outside the garbage bins, all behaviours that may contribute to negative perceptions about refugees.

The evaluation further finds that the ICLA component's focus on counselling, information and conflict resolution measurements as well as frequent follow-ups and dialogue with landlords and refugee families is instrumental in preventing or reducing conflicts between refugee households, neighbours and landlords – and thus in building or maintaining social capital.

The ICLA follow-up contributes to conflict reduction and to a reduction in evictions, when refugees behave as 'good citizens'. Hygiene contributes to conflict prevention also, as tensions are reduced when refugees tidy up and use water responsibly.

4.4.3 Key barriers

Coordination and cooperation with key municipality actors

The evaluation team finds that the interventions' limited coordination and cooperation with host communities and municipality representatives represents a major barrier – or at least a lost opportunity – to the intervention's ability to (further) influence communities positively.

Mukhtars and mayors, who were interviewed, complained about a lack of involvement in planning and implementing initiatives. Many were unaware of the community support projects that had been implemented or the number of properties that had been upgraded by NRC. Several stressed that closer cooperation would enable NRC to capitalise on community leaders' local knowledge, local network and contacts as well as their ability to mobilise community support for interventions supporting the entire community (CSPs).

However, experience and lessons learnt, among other elements, in a context where a 'participatory budgeting' approach has been applied, suggest that closer cooperation and coordination with community actors contributes to:

- Enhancing the donors' understanding of the local context
- Increasing the relevance of the intervention
- Strengthening social capital and cooperation between the local actors involved – the latter is particularly important if both host community members and Syrian refugees are involved
- Strengthening ownership among all the actors involved in the planning and implementation, often leading to beneficiaries engaging more strongly in voluntarily protecting the intervention/investment against looting and engaging in maintenance.

The sharp distinction between Syrian refugees and Lebanese community members

Historical, socio-economic, marital and cultural factors may undermine the relevance of a sharp distinction between 'Syrians' and 'Lebanese' in the areas of Lebanon that border Syria. In addition, the fact that international agencies have adopted a 'Syrian refugee only' approach, rather than a 'communities in need of support' approach does seem to have contributed to raising tensions and causing frustrations, particularly among Lebanese who are struggling to find a job and to support their families, in exactly the same ways that Syrian refugees are struggling.

32 NRC, May, 2018 Consolidated Analysis of FGD & KII for dumpsters distribution CSP in the North

Many refugee families in Lebanon are living in substandard housing such as informal tented settlements, with multiple other families without means to insulate homes and escape from the harrowing winter that descends on the region. NRC has provided an emergency response to affected populations to meet critical and urgent needs by distributing necessary items such as timber, plastic sheets, mattresses and blankets. Photo: NRC



5. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Strengthen the interventions' positive impact on refugees' social capital and potential further, to 'build' human capital.

The evaluation finds that the OFC temporarily supports refugee household's manufactured capital and supports the maintenance and enhancement of refugees' social capital on a longer-term basis. The latter is one of the key resources available to refugees to manage the challenge of protracted displacement. However, the evaluation team finds that there is still scope for NRC to enhance the interventions' support for the maintenance and enhancement of refugees' social capital, as well as the human capital (motivation, self-perception, interpersonal skills, planning skills and proactiveness) that helps refugees build and maintain their social capital and improve their resilience.

The evaluation team consider investments in refugees' social and human capital a 'safe investment' that is relatively 'resilient' to contextual changes, including a scenario where refugees return to Syria, as the skills acquired are highly relevant and applicable in any setting. A focus on social and human capital would hopefully lead to refugees making better informed consensus led decisions about returning to Syria, further the reality is that many families will likely not be returning to their place of origin, and therefore will require these skills even after returning to Syria.

Lessons learnt from other parts of the work show that a refugee's (or any beneficiary's) perception about his or her own situation, and their motivation and ability to plan, play a critical role in how proactive that person is (or can be) in changing their situation or in alleviating their key challenges - even in very difficult circumstances and protracted crises. This included the perception that 'I can contribute to shaping my situation' and that 'I don't have to wait for external actors to assist me'. This could be through the production of honey, knitting, growing rooftop tomatoes or volunteering in the local community.

Therefore, it is recommended that the OFC includes a life skills and livelihood component to the OFC modality, in order to avoid fostering dependency and the creation of coping strategies that rely on donor support. NRC is further recommended to consider a participatory and community-based planning, design and implementation tools and approaches as part of future interventions. These will create a conducive environment for safeguarding and increasing participants' social and human capital:

This may – for instance – entail future interventions that:

- Work systematically to engage host communities and refugees in area based programming and participatory processes, including needs' analyses, the design of community support projects that target local community needs, fundraising and the implementation of, and reflection on, lessons learnt. Experiences and lessons learnt from other parts of the world show that such approaches support the maintenance and strengthening of social capital, ownership and relevance of interventions of all actors involved³³ and do reduce communities' reliance on external support.
- Make the proposed livelihood and life-skills component compulsory for families who sign an OFC contract. This may help to create a situation where households benefitting from the shelter component can plan for their accommodation and livelihood when they leave the facility, after one year.

³³ Approaches similar to those applied in 'participatory budgeting' may be relevant to explore and tailor for a protracted crisis setting

Recommendation 2: Strengthen management of refugee households' expectations and requests

To avoid a situation where refugees wait several months for a decision about whether to extend their OFC, or one where they deny the fact that the OFC contract is going to expire, the evaluation team recommends that NRC strengthens their follow-up and communication with the refugees about the possibilities for an extension of their OFC contract. It is important that NRC provides information about the possibilities/likelihood of an extension – or about when NRC can provide that information, so that landlords and refugees are able to make informed and timely choices about whether the family should leave the property, negotiate a private rental agreement with the landlord or wait for a likely extension. Strengthening communication and follow-up can be integrated into a life skills component, where refugees are encouraged and supported in formulating alternative solutions to the OFC.

Recommendation 3: Enhance landlords' incentives to honour their contractual obligations by combining the OFC with a 'reduced rent' modality

Some refugees complained that certain landlords deliberately violate their contractual obligations and evict refugees before time and without a (valid) reason. Although this happens in only 1-3 % of managed cases, NRC might consider combining the current modality of payment 'up front', i.e., immediately after the property has been upgraded, with the 'reduced rent' modality, whereby landlords are paid a monthly fee for hosting refugees. Combining the two modalities will still provide landlords with funds for renovations/upgrading but will tie a remaining/additional payment to the number of months the landlord actually hosts the refugee within a twelve-month period.

Recommendation 4: Establish a feedback and complaint mechanism

It is recommended that NRC strengthens its feedback and complaint mechanism so landlords and refugees experience that it is easy to access NRC with concerns and complaints and that answers are given within a limited amount of time. This will strengthen the intervention's accountability to landlords' and the refugees perceived transparency of the modality. The feedback and complaint mechanism may also include an opportunity for landlords and refugees to file complaints or submit suggestions which NRC will process within a clearly-defined deadline. Furthermore, the mechanism could provide opportunities for landlords and refugees to meet with NRC representatives to discuss concerns of mutual interest, to provide feedback and to receive information about the modality, NRC's opportunities and plans to renovate additional properties in the future, as well as their selection criteria for new OFCs.

Recommendation 5: Further strengthen the 'mutual benefit' approach and reliance on/support for the use of the communities' own resources in dealing with the refugee crisis.

The 'mutual benefit' approach introduced with the OFC modality and in cooperation with landlords is – in the opinion of the evaluation team – one of the OFC modality's strongest assets. However, the team also finds that the approach could be explored further and developed, in order to mobilise and maintain the landlords and the community's resources and 'voluntarism', in communities hosting large number of refugees. This would be particularly valuable, if NRC were to adopt an area-based focus, rather than a refugee-based focus, in future interventions as reflected in the Lebanon Crisis response Plan from 2019 (see section 5.3, below).

This entails that NRC work to define specific questions and issues, such as:

- How do we perceive landlords – as 'instruments' or as equal partners, or as both?
- What does our perception of landlords mean to the way we communicate and cooperate with them?

- What can be done to stimulate positive 'voluntarism' and contributions from landlords and other community members further, when dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis inside Lebanon and to strengthen the entire community's ability to cope, in a protracted crisis?

Recommendation 6: Conduct a market assessment of supply and demand factors affecting low-income housing opportunities and possible modalities for affordable housing for low-income families.

The evaluation's own data collection and the feed-back from landlords and external informants suggest that numerous factors, external to the focus of an intervention (initially aimed to provide accommodation to Syrian refugees) affect the housing opportunities for low-income Lebanese families. These include current tax exceptions for empty housing units (according to Ministry of Social Affairs), the non-availability of housing in rural and semi-urban areas that are at a standard that poor Lebanese families would actually want, practices and perceptions about rental accommodation which differ greatly between urban, semi-urban and rural settings, and the landlords' motivation to make their properties available for the rental market. For these reasons, it would be wrong to assume that a landlord's periodic rental (OFC) from a Syrian family in Northern Lebanon or the Bekaa Valley would automatically motivate the same landlord to rent to Lebanese families later on. In fact, many landlords consider their property an investment in accommodation for their children, children's spouses and future grandchildren.

If NRC and back-donors wish to strengthen access to housing for Lebanese low-income families', it is recommended that NRC and the donors assess the legal, economic, socio-economic and cultural factors that affect poor Lebanese households' demand for rented accommodation. This assessment should also examine these families' ability to pay and the legal and financial factors and models that may affect investors' (including landlords') motivation to invest in 'social housing' models.

Recommendation 7: Continue upgrading and using properties that have been vacated, after a Level 1 upgrade, to Grade 2/3.

NRC's statistical material suggests that most upgraded properties are vacated immediately before, or a few months after, the OFC expires. Furthermore, feedback from landlords suggests that many landlords remain interested in continuing their cooperation with NRC, if occupancy free of charge is exchanged for a Level 2/3 upgrade. Building on the principle of 'mutual benefit', promoting interventions for 'the whole society' and recognising that 'building social and human capital takes time' it is therefore recommended that NRC prioritises future upgrades to level two upgrades of existing properties, and that it fills properties that are currently vacant before enrolling new landlords and properties in the modality.

Recommendation 8: Advocate for a change in housing taxes, to strengthen landlords' incentives to rent empty housing units and /or for a housing policy that stimulates investment in affordable housing, particularly in larger city centres such as Beirut and Tripoli.

Whereas this may be outside the mandate of NRC, back donors with an interest in low-income housing for poor, Lebanese families may consider exploring the Lebanese housing sector in more detail and might advocate for policy changes and incentives that may affect the Lebanese market for affordable housing for low-income housing.

Recommendation 9: Adopt an 'area' or community-based approach to supporting Syrian refugees and Lebanese in need in line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.³⁴

The Syrian crisis affects everybody in the Lebanese regions bordering Syria. The colour of one's passport is no guarantee of national identity or affiliation, as described in previous sections. At the same time, the border areas comprise landlords, mayors, mukhtars and other community actors who are ready to contribute with houses, knowledge, ideas and networks, if they are involved and if interventions are shaped based on a principle of mutual benefits. To capitalise on the interest and resources, municipalities and community members have to contribute with solutions – even temporary – in recognition of the fact that border identity and affiliation is not a given and that sharp distinctions between Syrians and Lebanese – at least in some locations – are poorly placed. It is recommended that NRC adopts an area-based approach, with a major focus on strengthening the local communities or municipalities' resilience and their ability to cope with the doubling, or more, of their populations, even in situations that may be temporary for 'a long period of time'. Applying participatory planning approaches, such as 'participatory budgeting' for CSP projects, may be one way to do so (See recommendation 1). A participatory budgeting approach to CSPs would entail that community members and refugees, in the same neighbourhood, work together to identify and prioritise the most urgent WASH needs; develop proposals; apply for additional funding elsewhere and take responsibility for the contracting and monitoring of the implementation. Such an approach would not only solve a WASH need, but it would also contribute to building social relationships between the actors involved; to strengthening their ability to plan, fundraise and implement projects; contribute to strengthening the ownership and relevance of implemented interventions and pave the way for a situation where the community will be able to plan and lead such processes on their own – even after NRC has left the area. NRC may also consider linking such an approach to an exit strategy, where communities' capacity to address issues and challenges on their own is strengthened before NRC leaves the area.

Recommendation 10: Draw on positive experiences and lessons-learnt from NRC's UDOC approach

NRC's 'urban displacement outside camps' (UDOC) approach was initially launched to respond to the challenges related to answering the needs of refugees and the communities hosting them, including but not limited to:

- How to ensure relevant support for host communities and host families?
- How to work toward durable solutions that bridge humanitarian and developmental assistance, from the onset of a response?
- How to identify common criteria to prioritise aid provisioning outside camps?

Responding to these challenges, the UDOC approach already reflects NRC's efforts to strengthen cooperation and to enter into partnerships with local municipalities and groups of local stakeholders such as community-based organisations, to:

- Identify needs based on the perceived needs of the host communities' and the refugees
- Strengthen the capabilities of host communities and municipalities to address urgent needs or needs that cannot be met by NRC or other international agencies
- Promote the ownership and – ultimately – sustainability of NRC's intervention.

As such, UDOC represents a move towards a more developmental, participatory and empowerment-oriented approach to NRC's response to the refugee crises which seems highly relevant in the Lebanese context. Therefore, it is recommended that NRC draws on the lessons-learnt from the UDOC approach when moving towards areas/neighbourhood approaches and engaging in relationships of closer cooperation with municipalities.

³⁴ See also the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus



6. Conclusions

Lebanon and the hosting of Syrian refugees, a protracted humanitarian crisis? The protracted crisis that Lebanon faces requires increased support to stabilise host communities, with a view to transitioning interventions from short-term responses to refugees' immediate needs to sustainable longer-term interventions that embrace the needs of refugees and the local communities.

This impact evaluation of NRC's 'Occupancy Free of Charge' modality is, in some ways, a symptom of an evolving recognition of and desire for a 'shift in focus'; from short-term responses to longer-term interventions and developmental impact.

Much has changed, since the OFC modality was first launched, in 2012. The modality was planned in a political context that embraced Syrian refugees, in a way that left a slightly wider space for them to find livelihood opportunities than today. At that time, the widespread expectation was that Syrian refugees would be able to return to Syria in a foreseeable future. Today, seven years later, we know better. No-one can tell when the conflict will end, or what Syrian families will return to, if the conflict ends. In the meantime, the Lebanese population's hospitality is being drained, as problems of water, electricity, sewage and solid waste grow, and livelihood opportunities are few for Syrians and poor Lebanese families alike.

In many ways, NRC's OFC modality reflects a 'typical' humanitarian response, with a key focus on alleviating refugees' urgent needs for shelter, protection against diseases and preservation of basic rights. Yet, the questions to be answered in this evaluation were, by and large, 'developmental' and 'long-term' in nature.

Is it 'fair' to judge a humanitarian intervention by its ability to create sustainable solutions? Is this the same as judging a fish by its ability to breathe outside water? The evaluation team would answer 'Yes, it is 'fair', because the OFC modality's theory of change/rationale is inherently 'developmental' in its assumption that occupancy free of charge will lead to more positive coping strategies and resilience. Secondly, the need to transition interventions from short-term responses to refugees' immediate needs to sustainable longer-term interventions makes it relevant to explore the links between short-term and longer-term interventions, through the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, and how the latter may build on the former.

6.1. Main findings

This evaluation finds that a short term-intervention such as the OFC does provide immediate relief, both financially and mentally, to families whose resources are strained. In addition, the modality contributes to maintaining, or even strengthening, the social/relational capital that is so important for refugees (and anyone else) when coping with new or difficult environments.

However, the modality provided no, or limited, support for refugees' attempts (if any) to find longer-term solutions or (more) sustainable coping strategies, in a situation where they are 'stuck' in Lebanon for an indefinite period of time. 'Praying to God' and hoping for the best or 'surfing' between different OFC modalities were the closest the evaluation team got to an articulation of coping. Neither are sustainable, let alone reliable.

The evaluation also finds that, although CSP projects provide immediate and sustainable infrastructure solutions to those directly targeted, the modality provides little support for communities and community infrastructure on a broader scale. The size of CSP investments does little to affect the tensions arising from 'overcrowding, competition for jobs and the annoyance caused by litter, and lack of water or sewage. CSPs do hold the potential to

affect community tensions positively, however. This would be true, if CSPs were planned and implemented with a high degree of involvement of community members, refugees, mayors and mukhtars. Similar projects, elsewhere, have demonstrated that participatory processes of joint planning contribute to building social capital between the groups involved, strengthen mutual understanding and give ownership to the projects implemented.

Last, but not least, the evaluation finds that there are resources in the Lebanese communities, who are prepared to participate in solving the pending problems related to infrastructure, housing and co-existence, if this be done in a spirit of reciprocity and partnership. The mukhtars and mayors interviewed by the team offered their knowledge and networks in support of interventions. Landlords made their properties available for refugee households; sometimes out of profit motives, sometimes out of moral and family concerns. Sometimes such concerns were turned into a humanitarian wish to 'help', as landlords got to know the refugee families living next door.

6.2. Proposed way forward

So, what could a solution be, if the challenge faced is to transition interventions from short-term responses to refugees' immediate needs to sustainable longer-term interventions? This evaluation suggests that the short answer is the 'active participation' and 'empowerment' of those directly affected by the problems.

Active participation and empowerment may start with international actors reflecting on the way refugees, communities and the role of humanitarian and international actors are perceived and ask:

- Are refugees perceived as merely passive recipients of support or as agents of change in their own lives – even if this is at the small-scale level of growing tomatoes on the roof top or keeping a beehive.
- Are local communities merely instruments in support that targets refugees or are they partners in a change that benefits the entire community, for as long as they are hosting refugees?
- Are international agencies 'providers of aid' or 'facilitators of a change' that refugees and community members are ultimately responsible for themselves.

The way these questions are answered will affect how foreign agencies' interventions support local communities', on a day-to-day level, in their efforts to respond to joint problems, the answers will affect how international agencies contribute to strengthening or maintaining the social and human capital that is so vital for poor people, when other resources are exhausted and more sustainable livelihood solutions are not to be found. This is especially so, when these solutions are to be found while refugees continue to struggle to make a living in Lebanon, and when they go back to Syria to build a new livelihood from scratch.

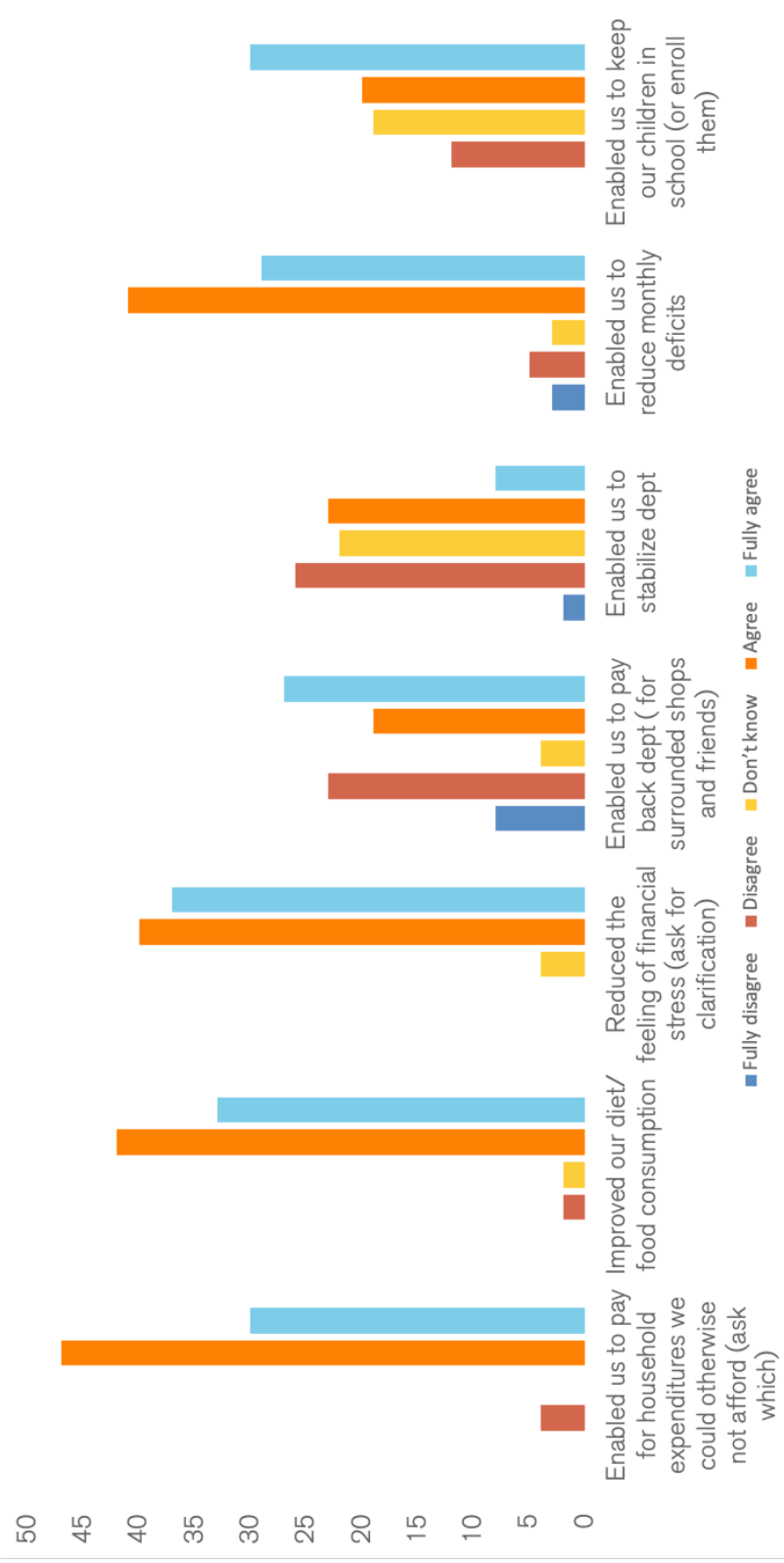


The NRC's Shelter, WASH and ICLA teams were present in the field to assess the needs of the Syrian refugees in three informal tents settlements in South Lebanon. These sites were flooded and the tents were damaged. Families were not able to sleep; they had to leave their shelter. The NRC field teams were active on the ground to distribute core relief items: shelter kits (mainly wooden timbers and tarpaulin), blankets and mattresses. Photo: NRC

7. ANNEXES

Annex I Focus Group Discussions with households findings, August 2018³⁵

Figure 9: The benefits of not paying rent³⁷



³⁵ See the inception report for a full account of survey tools used

³⁷ Sample size: 81 informants, male and female representatives of refugee households

Figure 10: The benefits of a twelve-month 'grazing' period

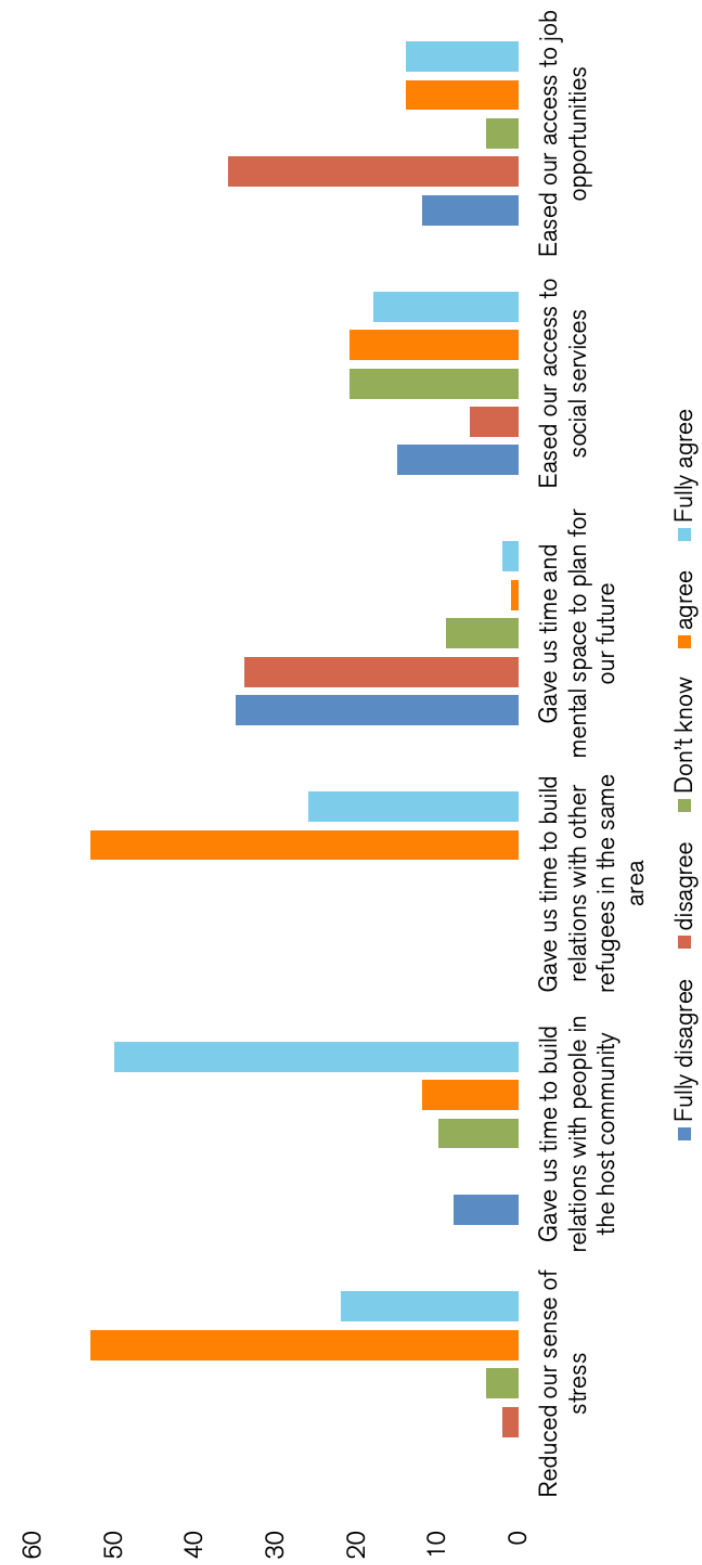


Figure 11: The economic benefits, post OFC (%)

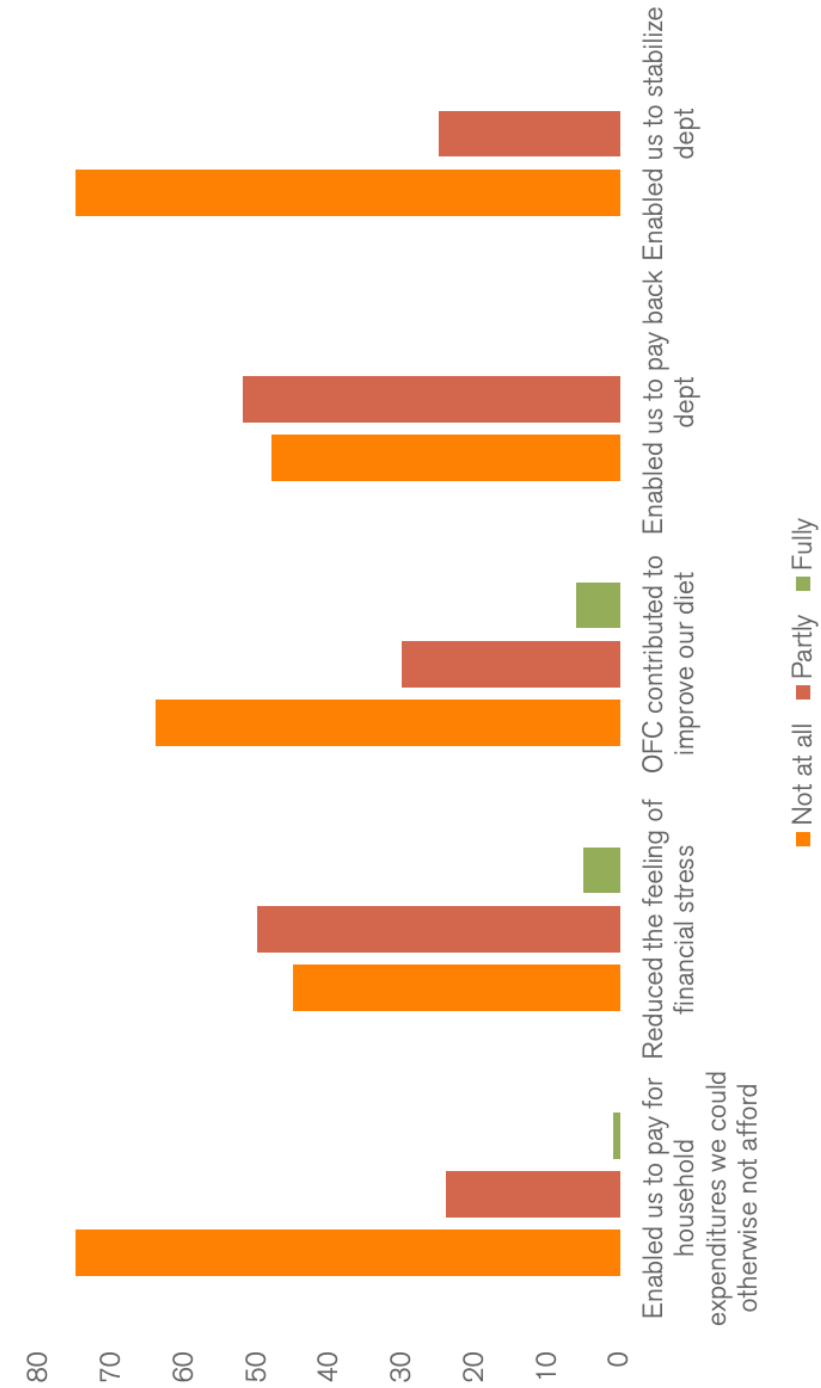
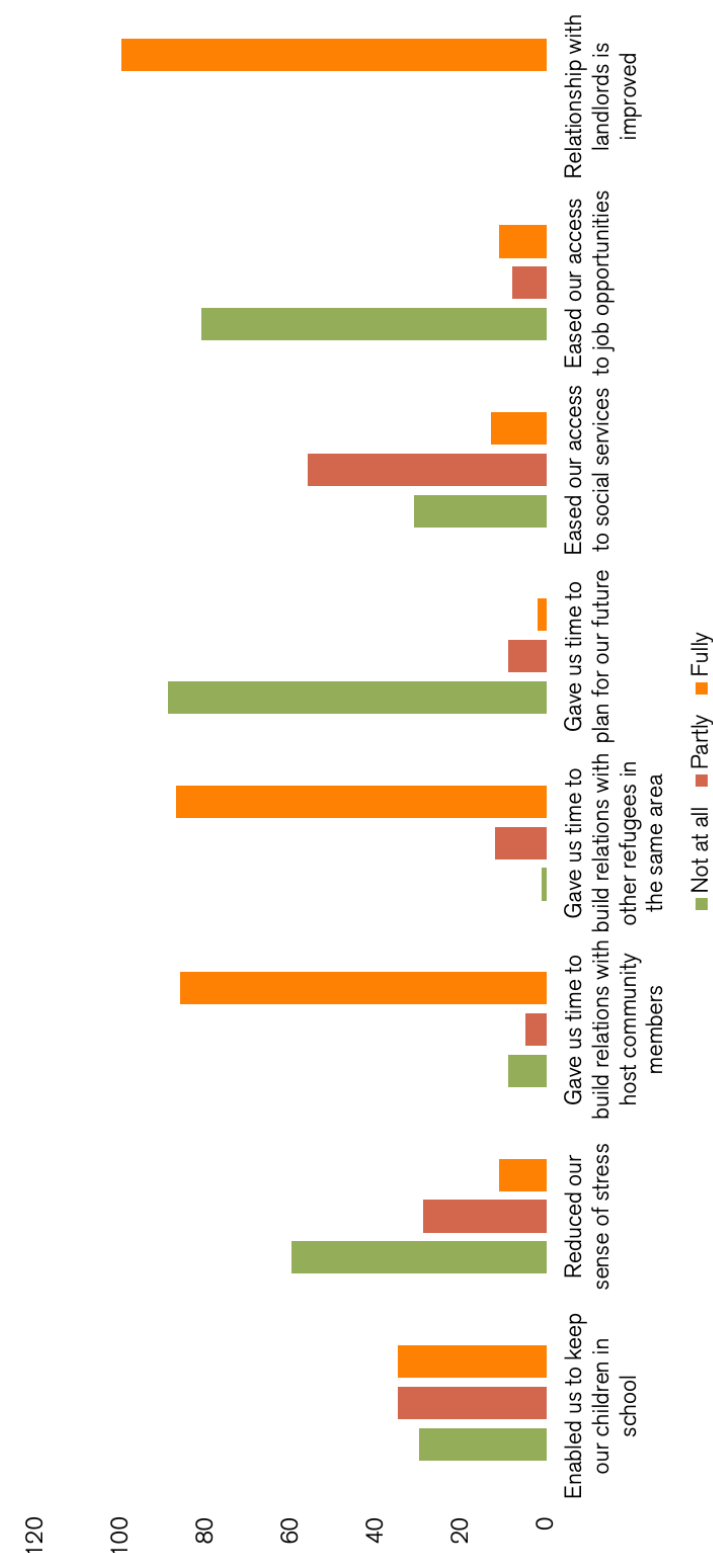


Figure 12: Social and other benefits, post OFC (%)



Annex II Terms of Reference

NRC OCCUPANCY FREE OF CHARGE (OFC) PROGRAMME – Lebanon

Country: Lebanon Duration: June through September 2018 Reporting to: Chair of the Evaluation Steering Committee

BACKGROUND ON THE CONTEXT

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is a non-governmental humanitarian organisation with 60 years of experience in helping create a safer and more dignified life for refugees and internally displaced people. NRC advocates for the rights of displaced populations and helps within the shelter, education, emergency food security, legal assistance, and water, sanitation and hygiene sectors. We aim to provide high quality and innovative technical solutions to daily challenges of life in displacement that also offer protection.

NRC has worked in Lebanon since 2006 and has offices located in Beirut, Tyre, Tal Abbas and Zahle. NRC provides humanitarian aid to refugees from Syria, Palestine, and vulnerable Lebanese communities. This assistance includes education, shelter, community management and coordination, water and sanitation, and information, counselling and legal assistance services. NRC also engages in advocacy with the Lebanese government and donors to expand and safeguard refugee rights and protection.

Seven years into the Syrian conflict, the Government of Lebanon (GoL) estimates that the country hosts 1.5 million Syrians who have fled the conflict in Syria (including 997,905 million Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR1), along with 34,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), 35,000 Lebanese returnees, and a pre-existing population of more than 277,985 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (PRL).

While Lebanon opened its borders to civilians fleeing conflict at the beginning of the Syrian crisis, it has become increasingly difficult to enter the country and to maintain legal stay. Obtaining civil documentation continues to be difficult and costly for many displaced persons from Syria, and issues related to legal residency further compound their vulnerability. The obstacles that displaced Syrians continue to face in obtaining legal residency, particularly for those who fall outside of the fee waiver categories, impact their mobility, access to essential services and put them at risk of detention and exploitation.

The pressure on the housing market means that the most vulnerable among Lebanese and Syrians have limited access to affordable and adequate shelter: 53 per cent of displaced Syrians live in substandard shelter conditions with four per cent of all shelters ranked as being in dangerous condition. Overcrowding among displaced Syrians has slightly increased – from 22 per cent in 2016 to 23 per cent in 2017 – and is as high as 46 per cent among Palestinian refugees from Syria, with high numbers of persons displaced from Syria resorting to substandard dwellings in urban centres.

The growing prevalence of evictions is resulting in multiple protection challenges for displaced persons. Against the backdrop of growing tensions in municipalities and host communities, acceptance by host communities and local authorities of displaced people relocating within Lebanon due to evictions is becoming increasingly challenging. Vulnerable populations are migrating towards poor urban areas where living conditions have significantly deteriorated, with rents increasing alongside an increased pressure on the provision of basic services such as water, energy, sanitation and solid waste collection in addition to social stability challenges.

One of the consequences of the lack of access to water and sanitation services is the prevalence of water-borne diseases such as brucellosis, dysentery, viral hepatitis A and an increase in cases of skin rashes and lice. It is estimated that poor urban neighbourhoods and Palestinian Refugee camps now host a larger proportion than ever before of displaced Syrians. The move to urban areas makes it harder for organisations to assist displaced Syrians: as people in need are more dispersed and difficult to identify and locate, in addition to the shortage of partners with experience in urban responses.

NRC's Occupancy Free of Charge Programme

Under project LBFM1608 (KfW - Phase 1: April 2016 to December 2017), NRC has aimed to improve the capacity of local communities in Northern Lebanon and the Bekaa to host refugees and to provide minimum standard housing, ensuring security of tenure, allowing vulnerable refugee households to enjoy their right to adequate housing, through the implementation of the integrated 'Occupancy Free of Charge' (OFC) modality encompassing WASH, Shelter and Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) and implementing Community Support Projects (CSP).

During the implementation of Phase 1, NRC upgraded a total of 3,454 Housing Units (HUs), housing approximately 2,763 households (HHs), or approximately 12,638 individuals who also received materials, training and awareness sessions related to safe hygiene practices and information, counselling and legal assistance on legal issues. NRC also implemented three CSPs addressing multiple municipalities and issues. The first CSP entailed provision of solid waste dumpsters to three municipalities and one union of municipalities in Benine-Kroum Arab & Wadi Khalid respectively. The second CSP, consisting of drilling and equipping a borehole in Deir Ammar, Minieh, North. The rehabilitation of 6 sections of the rainwater drainage canals in in Bar Elias, Bekaa Valley was the third CSP.

The OFC approach is ostensibly a rent-free shelter intervention, securing 12-months of occupancy for vulnerable refugee households, in accommodation meeting or exceeding minimum standards, in exchange for a conditional financial investment provided to Lebanese landlords to upgrade their properties. The types of accommodation under OFC are either unfinished houses or unfinished apartment buildings and should meet NRC eligibility criteria.

OFC is aimed at building resilience and addressing protection risks, reducing negative coping strategies and the potential for secondary displacement. It is hoped that through the provision of 12-months of rent-free occupancy - during which hygiene promotion sessions and ICLA services are provided to the households - that the benefits to vulnerable households would include the stabilisation of household economy, improved beneficiary health, understanding of rights, the promotion of school attendance and a reduction of social tension through an integrated programme going far beyond just providing a 'roof over their heads'. In addition, the implementation of community support projects has a long-term outcome to alleviate the pressure on current basic services which in turn can reduce social tension. And the information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA) services aim to identify protection concerns related to housing rights, with a specific focus on security of tenure, as well as legal residency and civil documentation, and the interconnectedness of these rights, as well as providing collaborative dispute resolution (CDR) to address housing disputes.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION AND INTENDED USE

The main purpose of this evaluation is to provide NRC with evidence-based information about the impact of the OFC programme and recommendations for future implementation.

In addition, the evaluation should strengthen accountability to beneficiaries and donors. NRC will be the primary user of the evaluation.

Scope of Work and Lines of Enquiry: The evaluation will cover the OFC programme spanning from April 2016 to June 2018.

Lines of enquiry: The evaluation will explore the following areas:

Impact – the focus will be on both the intended and unintended positive and negative results of the OFC programme (long-term impact; outcomes), considering internal and external factors. In this instance, the evaluation will look at the effects of the programming on both the household after the OFC period as well as the situation of the housing units post OFC programme end.

3.1 Impact One: The Impact on the households Post-OFC

3.1.a Main research questions

- To which extent has the social-economic situation of households stabilised and improved and what impact resulted? And did this impact persist beyond the OFC period? ■ Has OFC built/strengthened the resilience of beneficiary household post-OFC?
- Possible areas of focus: (but not limited to the below2):
- Shelter: Why are some beneficiaries staying in the housing units provided by NRC after the OFC ends while others are moving out of the housing units? What coping strategies are both resorting to post OFC?
- ICLA: How did the households use the knowledge and information acquired during OFC period to negotiate their shelter arrangements after OFC period ended?
- Education: How has access to education improved post-OFC?
- Social Capital: How did the households benefit from the social network developed during OFC period?

3.2 Impact Two: The Impact on the Low-Income Housing Market

3.2.a Main research question

- Has OFC increased the availability of minimum standard housing for vulnerable and lower income groups?
- Note that NRC will provide analysis of its internal data on this as well as secondary data and information available; the ask of the evaluator/s is to contextualise this with respect to communication with host community stakeholders (landlords, municipalities, etc), external factors and other findings throughout the project.

3.3 Impact Three: The Impact of OFC on the Host Community

3.3.a Main research question

- How has OFC negatively or positively impacted the host community, including local authorities?

Possible areas of focus:

- Has the OFC project reduced tensions between refugee and host community and positively influenced host community acceptance of refugee communities?
- Has the OFC project positively influenced the availability and sustainability of required municipal and social services (within the communities hosting OFCs)?

4. METHODOLOGY

To answer the evaluation questions, NRC would like the consultant/s to submit a study design and methodology which focuses on participatory, qualitative methods, to complement the available quantitative data gathered through our M&E system. In particular, we are seeking a consultant/s experienced in participatory evaluations and with demonstrable experience of qualitative evaluations. As a minimum, the methodology should include: ■ A desk review of key documents, including analysis of existing quantitative data. The M&E data collected includes information about the landlords (gender, place of residence, number of properties contracted with NRC ...), about their properties (location, standard, etc) and about refugee households (number of members, reasons for moving out, current location ...). The consultant/s is asked to measure the relationship between the variables in the landlord and property profiles and the decision of refugee households to stay in the property or move out after OFC period ends or before it ends.

Semi-structured interviews with key project informants, and methods to seek the views and perceptions of the targeted communities and key stakeholders.

Additional quantitative data collection might be needed to support existing quantitative data; this will be assessed with the evaluator.

Concerning refugee household target population, NRC is interested in measuring the impact of the programme on around 1,000 refugee households who stayed in the property for more than nine months after the OFC period started and who have, as of May 2018, stopped benefitting from OFC for at least six months. The population includes KfW and non-KfW beneficiaries and is spread out in four governorates: Akkar, North, Bekaa and Baalback-Hermel. Around 20% of the households benefitted from an extension of the OFC from 12 months to 24 months and will be considered a separate group from those who only benefitted from one OFC of 12-14 months only.

5. EVALUATION FOLLOW UP AND LEARNING

The result of this evaluation will be followed by a workshop for the shelter, ICLA and WASH teams in country, to review recommendations and plan the way forward for future programmes. The results of the evaluation will be shared with KfW.

NRC follows up all evaluations with a management response and the implementation of requisite actions are subsequently tracked. This will include the documentation of key learning, which will be shared with relevant country, regional and head office colleagues.

Key findings will be reported to NRC's senior management team in Oslo. The evaluation will also be published on ALNAP.

6. EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

The views expressed in the report shall be the independent and candid professional opinion of the consultant/s. The evaluation will be guided by the following ethical considerations:

- Openness - of information given, to the highest possible degree to all involved parties

- Public access to the results when there is no special considerations against this
- Broad participation - the relevant parties should be involved where possible
- Reliability and independence - the evaluation should be conducted so that findings and conclusions are correct and trustworthy

7. COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE EVALUATION

A Steering Committee and Reference Group have been established for this evaluation.

The Steering Committee will oversee administration and overall coordination, including monitoring progress of the evaluation. The main functions of the Steering Committee will be:

- to establish the Terms of Reference of the evaluation;
- select external consultant(s);
- review and comment on the inception report and approve the proposed evaluation strategy;
- review and comment on the draft evaluation report;
- establish a dissemination and utilisation strategy.
- The main functions of the Reference Group are:
 - to facilitate the gathering of data necessary for the evaluation;
 - to participate in the validation of evaluation findings, and to ensure that they are factually accurate;
 - to contribute to the management response;
 - to act on the relevant recommendations.

8. DELIVERABLES AND REPORTING DEADLINES

The consultant/s will submit three reports and two presentations:

Inception report: Following the desk review involving review of quantitative data findings and prior to beginning fieldwork, the consultant will produce an inception report. This report will detail a draft work plan with a summary of the primary information needs, the methodology to be used, and a work plan/schedule for field visits and major deadlines, within the date ranges suitable to NRC with respect to methodology, the consultant needs to provide a description of how data will be collected and a sampling framework, data sources, and drafts of suggested data collection tools such as questionnaires and interview guides, preferably against the research questions (not generically stated). Once the report is finalised and accepted by NRC's Steering Committee, the consultant must submit a request for any change in strategy or approach to, and receive authorisation of same by the Steering Committee. First draft inception report is due by COB Monday 13 July and final version submitted no later than COB Monday 20 July.

Draft evaluation report: A draft evaluation report needs to be submitted to the Evaluation Steering Committee no later than COB Wednesday 23 August and feedback will be provided to the evaluator by COB Thursday 6 September. The evaluation report must follow NRC's standard template for evaluation reports, which will be shared with the evaluator at the beginning of the consultancy.

Final evaluation report: The final evaluation is due COB Tuesday 18 September to the Steering Committee.

Presentation to NRC and relevant partners & stakeholders on draft findings is planned for 10th of August 2018 after field work is completed – for use in the workshop with programme team members (SC and RG members and beyond).

All material collected and produced in the undertaking of the evaluation process shall be submitted to the Chair of the Evaluation Steering Committee prior to the termination of the contract.

The language used for the deliverables will be English.

9. TIMEFRAME & BUDGET

Proposals should present a budget for the number of expected working days over the entire period, and all related costs (including flights, visas, insurance coverage). The accommodation and transportation during fieldwork will be arranged by NRC.

The evaluation is scheduled to start in the final week of June with desk work; fieldwork is projected to begin on 26 July depending on the availability of the evaluator. The draft evaluation report should be submitted by 23 August, with the final report due on 18 September.

The consultant/s are expected to provide a suggested timeline and work plan for the evaluation based on these scheduling parameters and in keeping with the scope of the evaluation questions and criteria. In event of serious problems or delays, the consultant/s should inform the Steering Committee immediately. Any significant changes to timetables need to be approved by the Steering Committee in advance.

10. EVALUATION CONSULTANT

NRC seeks expressions of interest from companies, with the following skills/qualifications and expertise:

- Sound and proven experience in conducting evaluations based on OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, particularly utilisation and learning focused evaluations
- Extensive experience of theories of change and how they can be used to carry out evaluations
- Expertise in participatory qualitative data collection techniques
- Experience of conducting similar evaluations
- Demonstrated understanding of shelter program activities
- Necessary Skills:
 - Fluency in written and spoken English is required; Arabic highly desirable
 - Prior experience in the Middle East, preferred
 - Proven experience of managing evaluations of humanitarian projects
 - Experience of designing qualitative data collection methods and of managing participatory and learning focused evaluations
 - Excellent team work and communication skills, flexibility and good organisational skills

11. APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

Application deadline: Close of day 13 June.

Interview dates: between 20 and 22 June.

Bids must include the following:

- Cover letter: stating candidate/s skill and experience for the consultancy (max 1 page)
- Outline of evaluation framework and methods, proposed timeframe, work plan and budget (max 3 pages; bids over limit will be automatically excluded).
- CV of proposed individual/s and a maximum of two pieces of evidence of similar evaluation carried out previously (abbreviated is adequate though we may ask for more text if what is submitted is not indicative of work performed).

Submit completed bids to lb.procurement1@nrc.no by COB 13 June.

Annex III Results framework and ToC

The objectives of the OFC modality were:

- Increased availability of minimum standard housing for vulnerable households at affordable costs including defined Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) periods
- Improved security of tenure/lease for vulnerable refugee households and landlords and enforcement of legal rights of refugees
- Reduced strain on overstretched public infrastructure in communities with high refugee caseload

The intervention was further guided by the theory of change/rationale that:

- If landlords in host communities are supported financially to upgrade housing units for refugees – on the condition that they provide certain -months rent-free occupancy for vulnerable refugee households,
- If communities/municipalities hosting refugees receive support to rehabilitate or increase/improve the performance of water supply infrastructure and solid waste management in local communities and
- if refugees receive sufficient and reliable information, legal aid and counselling on housing rights and livelihood issues,
- If refugees receive hygiene promotion sessions,

Then will vulnerable refugee households grow social networks and build social capital which will enable them to adapt (more) positive coping strategies, build resilience and be less vulnerable to the risk of secondary displacement?

It is hoped that through the provision of certain --months of rent-free occupancy - during which hygiene promotion sessions and ICLA services are provided to the households - that the benefits to vulnerable households would include the stabilisation of household economy, improved beneficiary health, understanding of rights, the promotion of school attendance and a reduction of social tension through an integrated programme going far beyond just providing a 'roof over their heads'

This is so, because the twelve months' rent-free accommodation, in combination with the information, legal aid (relative to housing rights) and counselling and the hygiene promotion sessions provided for vulnerable refugee families, will reduce the immediate stress and pressure on families, contribute to a temporary stabilisation of the household economy and enable parents/heads of households to plan and develop more sustainable coping strategies for accommodation and income generation for the time ahead. Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA) services will further contribute to identifying and solving protection concerns, related to housing rights, with a specific focus on security of tenure, as well as legal residency and civil documentation. In addition, hygiene promotion sessions will improve the hygiene practices of the household and lead to reduction in health-related expenditures as well as improve solid waste management at household level which in turn will improve the refugees acceptance by the host community.

Community support projects will further contribute to reducing the social tensions and disputes arising from pressure on exacerbated shared WASH resources, in areas where many refugees have settled and will contribute to strengthening municipalities' ability to respond to and accept hosting refugees, as the implementation of CSPs will have a long-term outcome to alleviate the pressure on current basic services.

In line with this rationale, the intervention comprised the following components:

A) Rehabilitation of Sub-standard Buildings

Under the modality supported by KfW Phase one, NRC has upgraded a total of 3,547 Housing Units (HU), during the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2018, providing housing to approximately 13,120 vulnerable individuals. 72% of the units were substandard properties, brought up to (or above) minimum standards, thereby increasing the Lebanese housing stock. NRC has entered into agreements with private landlords who have committed to upgrade housing facilities, on the condition that they make occupancy available for refugee households, free of charge (OFC) for a period of twelve months.

B) Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance.

The project has supported Syrian refugees benefitting from the OFC programme, and other refugees residing in the project's areas of intervention, through the provisioning of essential legal services related to civil documentation and legal residency, as well as by following up on their security of tenure throughout and beyond the OFC period. By the end of the project, NRC had provided information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA) services to 12,475 refugees and 540 landlords. Activities included:

- Information services – providing generic information on access to essential services (such as health, education and access to cash assistance), providing information to landlords and beneficiaries about their respective rights and obligations under the 'free of charge occupancy lease agreement', and information on HLP issues.
- Information sessions on housing issues, including use of template lease agreements; mobile legal clinics to provide legal assistance on housing issues, including CDR methods to resolve potential or actual disputes.
- Legal counselling – to provide customised advice and direction to empower beneficiaries to act to address their situation – for example, on access to essential services, status and registration, and disputes between landlords and tenants.
- Legal assistance – opening a case to provide support in assisting a beneficiary to obtain their rights, for example, negotiating the resolution of a dispute between a beneficiary and a landlord using collaborative dispute resolution, or supporting the registration of a marriage, to protect inheritance and divorce rights.

C) Hygiene promotion sessions

In the North, 7,967 refugees received hygiene-related services, including 1,780 hygiene kits (3,766 males and 4,201 females). 721 hygiene promotion sessions were facilitated with 1,969 individuals receiving at least one session (208 males and 1,761 females). Throughout the project, 942 children's kits were distributed, 311 baby kits, 267 lice kits and 37 toilet chairs.

In the Bekaa valley a total of 3,919 refugees received materials, training and awareness sessions related to hygiene improvement (including different hygiene and chlorination sessions which were delivered to households benefiting from the OFC modality) – with 868 hygiene kits and 872 dignity kits being distributed.

D) Community Support Projects (CSPs)

As part of its aim to strengthen the willingness and ability of Lebanese communities to host refugees, NRC has identified locations and modalities for community support projects

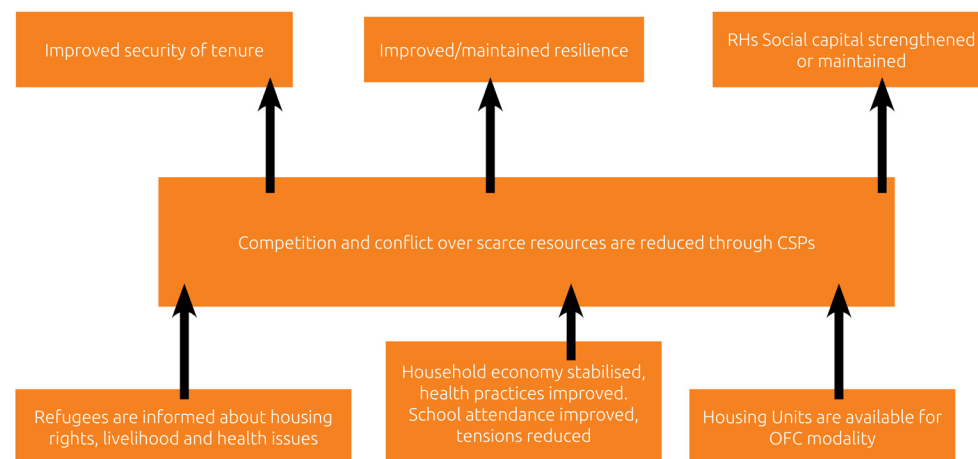
(CSPs) in areas where the population pressure, which Lebanon is under, has exacerbated shared WASH resources. This has had an impact on infrastructure, and has contributed to the degradation of basic municipal services.

In the Bekaa area, NRC has upgraded rainwater drainage canals in the Bar Elias municipality, benefiting 105,500 refugee and host community members. In the North, NRC worked to drill and equip one well in Deir Amar, serving Deir Amar as well as surrounding areas.

The borehole benefits 30,300 Lebanese and 15,000 Syrian beneficiaries. A second CSP, in North Lebanon, provided 800 solid waste dumpsters, helping one union of ten municipalities and three other municipalities in the Akkar region to improve their management of solid waste. This project benefits 111,000 individuals from both the host and refugee communities. NRC's selection criteria for CSPs, included the presence of Syrian refugee and other vulnerable communities, infrastructure needs, budget fit and cost efficiency.

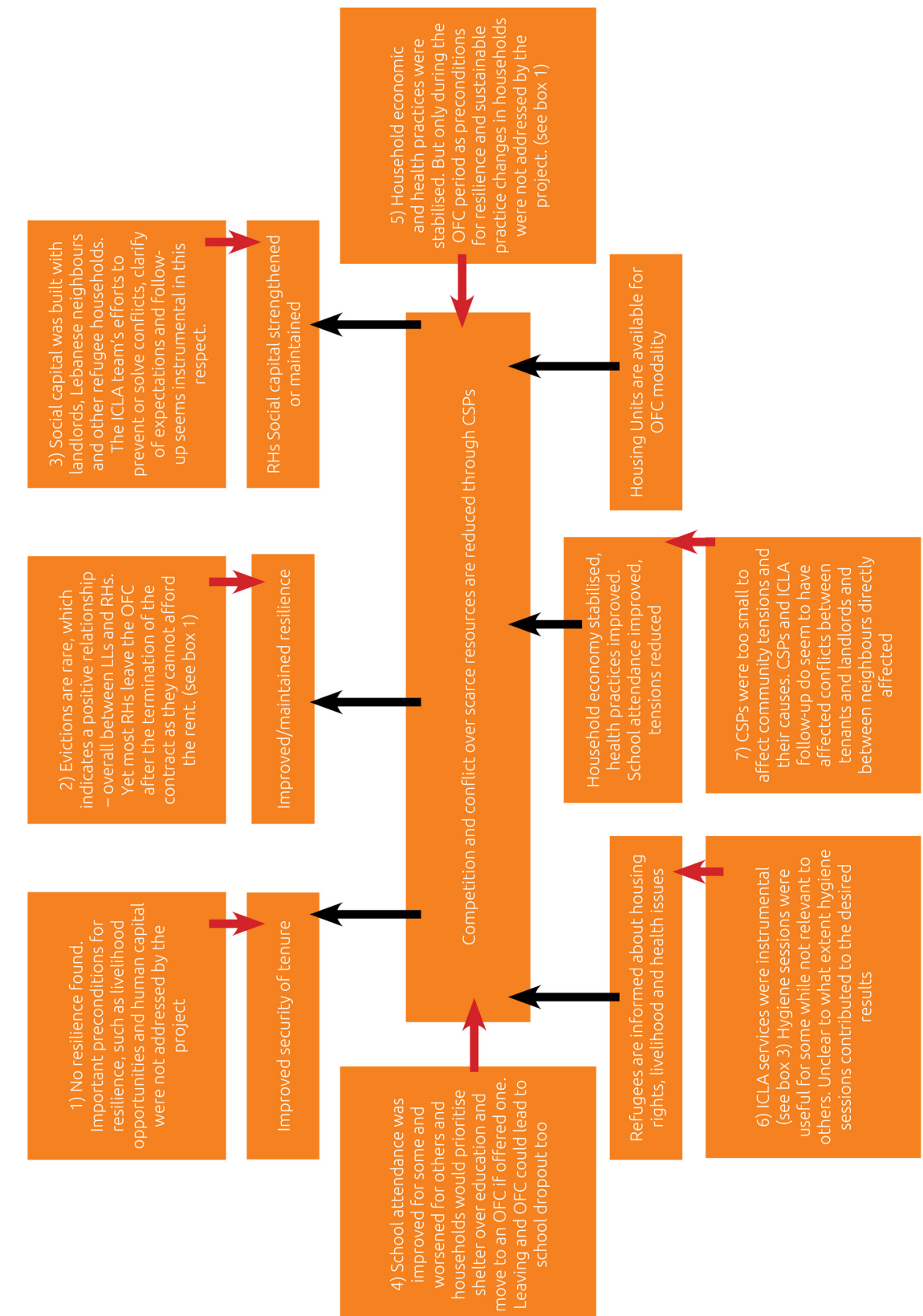
NRC OFC modality – ToC Graphical Outline

Figure 1:



NRC OFC modality – ToC – evaluation findings

Figure 2:



Results Matrix Programme

Project goal: Improved capacities of local communities to host refugees and to provide minimum-standard housing at affordable costs with adequate security of tenure	
Summary	Module objective 1: Increased availability of minimum standard housing for vulnerable households at affordable costs including defined Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) periods
Success indicators	Indicator Name / Description: % of rehabilitated housing units are occupied by lower income / vulnerable population two years after the OFC period has ended (sample) ■ Target Value Year 2: 70% % of beneficiaries (module 1) benefitting from OFC period at 3 months ■ Target Value 3 months: 85% % of beneficiaries (module 1) benefitting from OFC period at 9 months ■ Target value 9 months: 80% % of beneficiaries (module 1) benefitting from OFC period of one year ■ Target value 12 months: 75% % of beneficiaries (module 1) with an OFC agreement showing clear terms and obligations of both parties. Reduced % of early move-outs Baseline value: Move-outs as % of NRC caseload (module 1) ■ Target value: > 20% decrease
Verification sources	Household visits ■ Shelter database ■ Project monitoring ■ KAP surveys ■ Individual household case studies ■ Focus groups with beneficiaries and homeowners, where appropriate
Assumptions / Risks	Syria and peaks of insecurity in Lebanon ■ GoL does not put further restrictions in place regarding legal status of refugees and work of international NGOs ■ No sudden surge of rental inflation ■ Sufficient home owners are interested in upgrading shelters rather than receiving cash income from rent ■ No voluntary move-outs due to external factors such as livelihood opportunities, family and social ties and access to services ■ Support by home owners and the wider host community to provide shelters and other assistance to refugees from Syria remains stable ■ Landlords, as well as refugees, have the same perception on what should be prioritised or which modality of intervention they should be selected for ■ For post-OFC period, economic situation of refugees does not deteriorate substantially and they are able to pay rent ■ Political instability does not jeopardise project implementation, such as surges of fighting inside

Summary	Module objective 2: Improved security of tenure/lease for vulnerable refugee households and landlords ■ Legal rights of refugees enforced
Success indicators	Indicator Name / Description: % of beneficiaries (module 1) who report continuing security of tenure after the OFC period, with a target of 75% of those beneficiaries who remain in the upgraded buildings for the full OFC period % of beneficiaries (module 2) who report having improved security of tenure as a result of NRC's legal aid and collaborative dispute resolution services (CDR) ■ Target values: 70 % of the sample
Verification sources	Project Monitoring ■ Randomised sample survey based on ICLA database ■ Case studies ■ Focus group discussions ■ HH Interviews
Assumptions / Risks	NRC has access to formal and informal justice mechanisms ■ Increasing tensions and conflict potential between refugee and host communities and therefore reduced willingness to host ■ GoL does not put further restrictions in place regarding legal status of refugees

Summary	Module objective 3: Reduced strain on overstretched public infrastructure in communities with high refugee caseload
Success indicators	Indicator Name / Description: Local community stakeholders from six communities report having improved public infrastructure and services ■ Target value: > 80 % of community stakeholders in each community No. of hh benefitting from additional services ■ Target value:76.500 beneficiaries (including beneficiaries of module 1 and 2) benefit from CSPs
Verification sources	Project monitoring ■ Focus group discussions ■ Engineering study
Assumptions / Risks	Municipalities maintain and operate structures established by CSPs ■ Municipalities not benefitting from CSPs do not cause problems and lower their willingness to host refugees

Summary	Module objective 4: Improved understanding by stakeholders of the overall low-cost housing situation in Lebanon and the scope of adequate response options, with a specific focus on the supply side of the housing market
Success indicators	Indicator Name / Description: Housing Study is widely shared and discussed in media and meetings ■ Recommendations of the pilot project evaluation are taken on board by NRC and others
Verification sources	Published documents ■ Meeting minutes ■ Discussion with shelter sector stakeholders (donors, NGOs, MOSA etc.)
Assumptions / Risks	Focus of the study may change somewhat due to MoSA intervention

Summary	Outputs – Module 1: 1.1. Up to 3.300 Housing units rehabilitated 1.2. At least 2.000 additional housing units brought onto the market (unoccupied) 1.3. Around 13.000 vulnerable refugees provided with Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) periods or cash for rent 1.4. Around 10.000 Refugees received materials, training and awareness sessions related to hygiene improvement 1.5. Short term local employment in host communities created 1.6. Up to 11.200 Refugees received information services, counselling, or legal assistance including collaborative dispute resolution services on Housing Land and Property (HLP) issues 1.7. Landlords received information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA) for collaborative dispute resolution (CDR) services on HLP issues
Success indicators	Target values: Between 10.900 and 11.900 people receive one-year OFC Between 1.900 and 2.200 beneficiaries receive second year OFC Between 3.200 and 3.509 units rehabilitated Between 2.000 and 2.209 housing units (62% of total) are rehabilitated at least to minimum standard) 1.200 – 1.320 housing units (40 38% of total) are rehabilitated above minimum standards Roughly 11.000 beneficiaries receive hygiene related services Short term employment opportunities (average 6 weeks) for x number of people created Between 10.900 and 11.900 refugees (module 1) received ICLA services and CDR No. of landlords (module 1) received CDR and HLP services
Verification sources	Shelter database ■ KAP surveys ■ Project monitoring
Assumptions / Risks	Assumptions / Risks regarding module objective: Sectarian clashes do not escalate and affect willingness of local population to host refugees ■ Households have sufficient resources/livelihood options to cover utility fees ■ Adequate number of appropriate unoccupied units are available in the geographic areas of intervention

Summary	Outputs – Module 2: 2.1. Refugees received information services, counselling, or legal assistance (ICLA) including collaborative dispute resolution (CDR) services on HLP issues 2.2. Landlords received information services, counselling, or legal assistance for collaborative dispute resolution (CDR) services on HLP issues
Success indicators	Target values: 4.000 refugees additional to module 1 beneficiaries ■ 1.000 landlords additional to module 1 beneficiaries
Verification sources	ICLA database ■ Case studies ■ Attendance records
Assumptions / Risks	Assumptions / Risks regarding module objective: Sectarian clashes do not escalate and affect willingness of local population to host refugees

Summary	Outputs – Module 3: 3.1. Public water / sewage and solid waste infrastructure and services in six communities improved
Success indicators	Target values: KM of sewage pipe built ■ No. of garbage trucks supplied ■ No. of hh connected to municipal water supply network
Verification sources	
Assumptions / Risks	Assumptions / Risks regarding module objective: Municipalities do actively support the timely implementation of measures Level of technical work is adequate and can be achieved with existing NGO capacity (managerial,

Summary	Outputs – Module 4: 4.1. Research #1 on low cost housing market carried out 4.2. Project Evaluation conducted 2.5 years after the beginning of the project
Success indicators	Target values: Housing study available in 2016 ■ Project Evaluation report available in 2018
Verification sources	Published documents
Assumptions / Risks	

Key activities	
(Key) activities in module 1 (input level) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake socio-economic household vulnerability assessments to identify beneficiary households Undertake rapid technical assessments of potential properties Development of BoQs for each HU Assessment of willingness and motivation of interested landlords Sign contracts with owners for agreed scope of rehabilitation work and/or cash for rent Upgrade of water supply systems at household levels in order to ensure minimum standards Emergency water trucking can be provided if households cannot afford the minimum water needs Water quality will be monitored and adapted water treatment solutions provided Safe excreta disposal solutions will be studied case by case to mitigate groundwater pollution and negative environmental impact of the project Hygiene promotion activities and provision of one-off hygiene kits Technical visits to monitor progress of rehabilitation, in order to provide subsequent payments on phased approach Ongoing monitoring visits by the social teams during the hosting period to ensure agreement is respected and intended beneficiary households are occupying the housing units Household visits to provide ICLA services Assessment of local employment generated Monitoring of rental prices in the low-cost housing markets in target areas 	Assumptions / Risks regarding main activities for all modules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security situation allows for continuation of implementation Communities and beneficiaries cooperate and participate in the project activities The targeted population is not displaced into other locations away from the project areas due to conflict Qualified staff continue to be available to implement works Building materials can be sourced locally as much as possible and distributed in a timely manner Price volatility does not impact on costs of contracts and increased transportation costs
(Key) activities in module 3 (input level) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of community service projects (CSPs) as do no harm measure (DNH), which could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of additional waste collection bins and trucks to host communities Improvement of water infrastructure storage and distribution Implementation of wastewater collection and treatment structures Provision of operational guidelines and maintenance procedures 	

Key activities	
(Key) activities in module 2 (input level) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing monitoring visits by the social teams during the hosting period to ensure agreement is respected and intended beneficiary households are occupying the housing units Household visits to provide ICLA services Information sessions on HLP issues, including use of template lease agreements; mobile legal clinics to provide legal assistance on HLP issues, including CDR methods to resolve potential or actual disputes Focus group discussions with refugee and host communities on housing situation; seminars and workshops on HLP matters; activities to build positive relationships between refugee and host communities to prevent evictions Establish referral mechanisms for high protection risk cases and access to services provided by other actors Establish access to cash assistance program of ECHO and UNHCR for project beneficiaries NRC helplines for the provision of information and advice on HLP matters and referrals Relevant stakeholders receive guidelines, advice and tools on HLP issues 	Assumptions / Risks regarding main activities for all modules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security situation allows for continuation of implementation Communities and beneficiaries cooperate and participate in the project activities The targeted population is not displaced into other locations away from the project areas due to conflict Qualified staff continue to be available to implement works Building materials can be sourced locally as much as possible and distributed in a timely manner Price volatility does not impact on costs of contracts and increased transportation costs
(Key) activities in module 4 (input level) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with key stakeholders, including shelter sector working group, KfW project managers, technical experts, relevant government ministries Contract consultants to conduct research Disseminate findings of research topics to all relevant stakeholders Further programming and advocacy activities to be defined pending research findings 	

ANNEX IV Team biographies

Malene Soenderskov: Malene is the director and founding partner of StrategyHouse. She is a political scientist with 15 years of experiences working as a consultant, advocacy programme director, human rights and community development advisor with and within international civil society organisations and Danish development organisations. Malene is specialised in Theory of Change Based evaluations, outcome harvesting and scale-based methodologies for qualitative data collection. Malene has worked in and with the Mena region for + 15 years and has an in-depth knowledge of and experiences with the NGO sector and civil society support in the region

Malene is a trainer, tutor and author of several miniguides and manuals on theory of change, outcome harvesting, qualitative data collection and results-based monitoring and reporting. Guides produced by Malene include:

- StrategyHouse.dk: Outcome harvesting or ToC – differences, similarities and synergies
- CISU (Civil Society in Development) – Theory of Change for Program Planning and Monitoring.
- StrategyHouse.dk Guideline to results based reporting
- StrategyHouse.dk: Baselines for Performance Measurement, a mini-guide.
- StrategyHouse.dk Measuring qualitative changes – an introduction to scales for performance measurement at project and program level.
- Recent assignments similar to the evaluation of NRCs OFC programme includes:
- Mid-term review of NRCs UDOC program in Gaza (2017),
- Evaluation of UNDPs/UN women's Access to Justice for Women and Juveniles in Gaza and on the West Bank, 2016
- Review of the Middle East Council of Churches Community Development Project in Refugee camps in Lebanon (2016/2017)
- Evaluation of Handicap International's work with CBOs representing people with disabilities in Egypt, Palestine and Jordan.

Malene was the team leader and ultimately responsible for the whole work and all deliverables; she was the contact person for the evaluation steering committee.

Omar Almajdalaw: has over 20 years of experience working on international donor-funded programs in multi-thematic areas and multicultural environments (Livelihood enhancement, Humanitarian Aid and recovery). Mr. Almajdalwi has intensive experience in designing, managing and evaluating large-scale programs and projects and partnerships with local organisations (grants-awarded NGOs and CBOs) in conflict and crises areas. Omar is specialised in post-crisis recovery interventions, including cash distribution, housing and community empowerment and organisation to promote resilience and strengthen communities' capabilities to respond to crisis situations. Omar is an excellent interviewer and facilitator of focus group discussions and qualitative data collection. Omar will be responsible for focus group discussions with beneficiaries.

ANNEX V Bibliography

- Clingendael Research Institute, March 2018; The untapped resource: Protecting and leveraging refugee social capital in protracted displacement.
- Hunter Ian, Working hard and working well, a practical guide to performance management, 2013
- Mouawad, Jamil: Lebanon's border areas in light of the Syrian war: New actors, old marginalisation, Research Project Report RSCAS/Middle East Directions 2018/03 March 2018 European University Institute Badia Fiesolana, March, 2018
- Mercy Corps, Successful Municipal Strategies to Respond to the Syria Refugee Crisis, 2013
- New York Times, December 2013, Lebanon Worries That Housing Will Make Syrian Refugees Stay
- NRC fact sheet: <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/fact-sheets/2017/lebanon/shelter.pdf>
- Oxfam: Poverty, Inequality and Social Protection in Lebanon, 2016, Nupur Kukrety, Independent Consultant, Oxfam and Issam Fares Institute of American University Beirut
- Oxfam, November 2013: Survey on the Livelihood of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.
- UNHCR: Lebanon Crisis response Plan 2017-2020
- World Bank: Good Jobs Needed: The Role of Macro, Investment, Education, Labor and Social Protection Policies ('Miles'), 2013
- World Bank Group and UNHCR, The Welfare of Syrian Refugees, Evidence from Jordan and Lebanon, 2016
- World Bank Strategic Assessment: A Capital Investment Plan For Lebanon- Investment Opportunities and Reforms, April 2018



NRC

NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

www.nrc.no

Norwegian Refugee Council
Postboks 148 Sentrum
0102 Oslo, Norway