Syrian Refugees' Access to Education in Lebanon: Obstacles to Implementation

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ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, an estimated 11 million Syrians have fled their homes. The conflict within Syria dramatically increased population flows to neighboring countries, especially Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon. Of these, Lebanon hosts the largest per capita number of Syrian refugees with over 1 million Syrians living in Lebanon as refugees as of June 2017. This thesis asks why Syrian refugee children in Lebanon have limited access to education. Given that over half of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon are school-aged children, the main question behind this research is: what factors explain the low enrollment rate of Syrian refugees in schools in Lebanon? Though the Lebanese Ministry of Education issued a memorandum instructing all public schools to allow Syrians to enroll, approximately 250,000 school-age Syrian refugees were out of school during the 2015-2016 school year. Why is this? Based on a local case study of dynamics impacting refugees within the Bekaa governorate of Lebanon, I find that Syrian refugees do not suffer from a lack of international attention or even an overall lack of aid. Instead, actors at the local level, particularly an unofficial authority known as the Shawish, most heavily influence Syrian refugees, their access to aid, and their access to education.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of Syria's civil war, an estimated 11 million Syrian people have fled their homes as refugees. Many of these people went to neighboring countries, including Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon. Of these, Lebanon hosts the largest per capita number of Syrian refugees, where at least one in every four people was a Syrian refugee as of June 2017. Furthermore, over half of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon are school-aged children and many children have limited access to education. This thesis explores the factors that contribute to the low school enrollment rate of Syrian refugees in Lebenon. By focusing on the dynamics impacting refugees in one area of Lebanon, I find that the biggest obstacle for Syrian refugees' access to education is not a lack of international attention or even an overall lack of aid. Instead, I find that authorities at the local level, specifically an unoffoicial authority known at the Shawish, most heavily influence Syrian refugees, their access to aid, and their access to education.

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To the thousands, a few of which I have come to know well through tutoring, sharing tea, conversation, and life, I dedicate this work to you. I hope that it is a step forward in making a brighter tomorrow for you, your children, and all those to come.

To God be the glory.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, an estimated 11 million Syrians have fled

their homes. The conflict within Syria dramatically increased population flows to neighboring

countries, especially Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon. Of these, Lebanon hosts the largest per capita

number of Syrian refugees with over 1 million Syrians living in Lebanon as refugees as of June

30, 2017.[1] This thesis asks why Syrian refugee children in Lebanon have limited access to

education. Based on a local case study of dynamics impacting refugees within the Bekaa

governorate, I find that Syrian refugees do not suffer from a lack of international attention or

even an overall lack of aid. Instead, actors at the local level, particularly an unofficial authority

known as the Shawish, most heavily influence Syrian refugees, their access to aid, and their

access to education.

Research Question

The influx of refugees in Lebanon is so large that now one in every four people in

Lebanon is a refugee, the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world.[2] The most

vulnerable of these are women and children, comprising the majority of those fleeing Syria, with

over half of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon being under the age of eighteen.[3] Syrians fleeing to

Lebanon face immense challenges, including lack of access to services, shelter, education, and

employment. Due to the fact that Lebanon hosts the largest per-capita population of refugees in

the world, over half of which are school-aged children, the main question behind this research is:

what factors explain the low enrollment rate of Syrian refugees in schools in Lebanon? Though

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[1] UNHCR, "Syria Regional Response Plan," June 30, 2017,
http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122.
[2] European Commission, "Lebanon: Syria Crisis," March 2017,
https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/lebanon_syrian_crisis_en.pdf.
[3] Charles, Lorraine and Kate Denman, "Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: the Plight of Women
and Children," Journal of International Women's Studies, December 2013,
https://search.proquest.com/docview/1500397773?pq-origsite=gscholar.

the Lebanese Ministry of Education issued a memorandum instructing all public schools to allow Syrians to enroll, approximately 250,000 school-age Syrian refugees were out of school during the 2015-2016 school year. Why is this?

Significance of the Question

The question of Syrian refugees' access to education in Lebanon is important because refugees need to receive an education that will be recognized by authorities upon returning home or pursuing higher education and employment elsewhere. UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Maria Calivis, said, "The biggest problem for a Syrian child in Lebanon is, no doubt, education."[4] According to international law, all children have a legal right to free and compulsory primary education. Furthermore, education is essential for not only protecting children during displacement but also for promoting future engagement in resettlement societies or, ideally, countries of origin.[5] Education is foundational to any individual's future ability to thrive economically and socially. Children who do not receive formal education are more likely to become marginalized and, therefore, become more vulnerable targets for radicalization.[6] Given the gravity of the refugee situation in Lebanon, where one in every four people is a refugee and over half are under the age of eighteen, and given that there is not an opportunity in the foreseeable future for Syrians to return to Syria, it is vital that Syrian refugees, and especially children, are provided for and afforded protection that addresses pressing needs, including education.

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[4] Azar, Miriam, "Bringing learning to Syrian refugee children in Lebanon," UNICEF, January 10, 2014, https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/lebanon_71753.html.

[5] Janmyr, Maja, "The Legal Status of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, March 2016, https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/publications/Documents/working_papers/20160331_Maja_Janmyr.pdf.

[6] Watkins, Kevin and Steven A. Zyck, "Living on Hope, Hoping for Education," London: Overseas Development Institute, 2014, www.odi.org/publications/8829-syria-refugee-education-crisis-hope.

This research will contribute to understanding the obstacles faced by Syrian refugees trying to access education in the Bekaa governorate in Lebanon. Inadequate funding is most frequently cited as the main roadblock to providing education to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. A recent report released by Human Rights Watch reveals that millions of dollars in school aid for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey has gone "missing."[7] The report traces funding pledged by donors at a conference in London in February of 2016 to education in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan and ultimately found discrepancies between the funds pledged and the amount reaching refugees in 2016. Beyond the inconsistency identified through aid reporting, there is also an inconsistency in public education policy implementation for Syrians in Lebanon. Though the Lebanese Ministry of Education issued a memorandum instructing all public schools to allow Syrians to enroll, individual school directors have continued to implement additional enrollment requirements for Syrians such as fees and extra documentation.[8]

Thus, in addition to the lack of transparency in flows of funding resources, there is a clear disconnect between policy at the national level and implementation at the regional and local levels. The case study in this thesis regarding Syrian refugees' access to education in the Bekaa governorate of Lebanon connects prominent yet disjointed themes related to the current situation faced by Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Lebanon's consociational democracy is a unique system of sectarian based patronage that operates largely at the local level. Lebanon's system of government is further explained in Chapter Two. Moreover, this research bridges the literature regarding refugee education with its significance to the overarching trends in local, national, and international responses to refugee crises.

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[7] "Syrian Refugee Children's Uncertain School Aid." Human Rights Watch. September 14, 2017.
https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/14/syrian-refugee-childrens-uncertain-school-aid.
[8] Khawaja, Bassam. "Growing Up Without an Education" Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon." Human Rights Watch. July 19, 2016.

Major Findings

Due to the fact that the national government of Lebanon does not recognize refugees nor have a comprehensive plan to accommodate and provide for the large number of refugees in Lebanon, local governments and international aids groups have tried to fill the void. Specific to the Bekaa region is the Shawish: an informal local authority that exploits the most vulnerable Syrian refugees living in informal tented settlements across Bekaa. The Shawish have control over shelter, aid, livelihood, and access to education for refugees. Since the Lebanese government does not allow refugee camps, the refugees in Bekaa live in informal tented settlements run by a Shawish. Prior to the influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the Shawish managed a system of Syrian migrant laborers. The Shawish use their relationship with landowners to exploit Syrian refugees living in the tented settlements by forcing children to work and charging refugees high rent and fees to live in the settlements. Without formal recognition from the Lebanese government as refugees or even legal residents, Syrian refugees in Bekaa are left at the mercy of the exploitative Shawish.

Methodology and Limitations

This thesis employs an in-depth case study of Syrian refugees' access to education in the Bekaa governorate of Lebanon. Bekaa was chosen due to its proximity to Syria, the high number of Syrian refugees residing there, and because, of the eight governorates in Lebanon, Bekaa has the lowest school enrolment rates but the highest number of Syrian refugees. The 2016 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees reported that 70% of school-age children in Bekaa were not attending school.[9] Why are so many refugee children still out of school almost seven years into this refugee crisis? Is a lack of resources from the national government to blame for

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[9] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon*, data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=201&country=122&region=90.

low enrollment rates among refugees or are there other factors hindering refugees' access to education? Given the fact that there is a delicately balanced sectarian government in Lebanon, I initially wondered if Syrians' access to education was influenced by sectarian divisions. However, after further research of the national policy context and the Bekaa case, it seems that local level dynamics in Lebanon affect access to schooling but it is not necessarily the sectarian dynamic that keeps refugees from getting an education.

To explore these questions and the local level influences on Syrian refugees, I use reports from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Bank, the International Labor Organization, Human Rights Watch, and a number of other non-governmental organizations working in Lebanon. Additionally, I use articles from news agencies in the region such as The Daily Star, The National News Agency Lebanon, and Al Jazeera to supplement the lack of first hand interviews in this research. These news sources provide interviews with refugees in Bekaa as well as NGO affiliates and local authorities.

The two main limitations on this research are the lack of specific local level data and the lack of first hand interviews. There was little available data regarding the number of Syrian refugee children in Bekaa or of the specific number enrolled in and not enrolled in school. However, to compensate for the lack of data regarding school enrollment, data regarding child labor shows the number of children employed versus in school and reinforces the complications with aid and reporting at the local level. The second limitation is the lack of firsthand field interviews. Though the research draws on interviews done in other studies, interviews with refugees, NGOs, or a Shawish would strengthen the conclusions made in this thesis.

Key Concept

The term "refugee" used throughout this thesis follows the definition put forth in the

1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The 1951 Refugee Convention states under

Article 1(A)2, that the term "refugee" applies to anyone who:

> …owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion,
>
> nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the
>
> country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail
>
> himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being
>
> outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable
>
> or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.[10]

In summary, refugees can be defined by three characteristics. First, they are outside their country

of origin or former residence. Second, they are no longer under the protection of that country due

to fear of persecution. Third, this fear of persecution stems from an affiliation with a certain

racial, religious, political, or social affiliation.

This research project will contribute to understanding the obstacles faced by Syrian

refugees trying to access education in the Bekaa governorate of Lebanon. Chapter Two explores

the current literature regarding refugee education, the education system in Lebanon, and

Lebanon's consociational system of government. The literature shows that public funds are

disproportionately allocated throughout Lebanon, oftentimes based on religious affiliation. With

this, the literature highlights obvious geographic disparity in the allocation of public funds which

impacts the quality and number of schools throughout the country. Chapter Three addresses

Lebanon's overall response to Syrian refugees via policy and international attention. This chapter

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[10] Giacca, Gilles. "International Refugee Law." *Rule of Law In Armed Conflicts Project*. Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.

provides a framework for the discussion of refugees within Lebanon and access to education for refugee children, as the country is home to many refugees yet Lebanon does not officially recognize refugees nor the protections that refugees are afforded under international law. Chapter Four delves into the Bekaa case study and the situation for Syrian refugees in the region. This chapter homes in on an area of Lebanon with the highest number of refugees but also the most vulnerable. Chapter Five concludes the project with a discussion of implications of this research for both Lebanon and the international community in responding to refugee situations.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The case of Syrian refugees in Lebanon presents a number of dueling dynamics. In order to understand these dynamics, it is important to consider the function of the government of Lebanon and how it operates relative to and outside of responding to refugees. Since this thesis explores refugee education within Lebanon, it is similarly important to consider refugee education as a field in which refugees, NGOs, governments, and other actors engage. The goal of this chapter is to consider the literature related to both Lebanon's confessional system of government as well as refugee education and its importance. The chapter is divided into two sections to explore both the literature regarding refugee education as well as Lebanon's confessional system of government. The first section explores the literature surrounding refugee education in order to more deeply understand the larger field of refugee education and its implications for refugees in Lebanon. The second section moves into the literature regarding Lebanon's confessional system of government and how it functions. This second section will also discuss the education system in place within Lebanon in order to contextualize the situation that Syrians enter when coming to Lebanon.

Refugee Education

The Development of Refugee Education as a Field

In the early formative stages of refugee education, it became apparent that a systematic approach to education was needed, one that served populations rather than select individuals (Bush & Salterelli 2000). Prior to World War II, schools for children were established during emergencies by organizations such as Save the Children, but the provision of education became more common after the war. The political dynamics of the Cold War resulted in the growing refugee populations across the world and the horrors of both World War I and II affirmed the

importance and power of education. It is during this post-war era that refugee education has its roots. Conflicts in Afghanistan, Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, parts of the former Soviet Union and, in particular, the 1994 Rwandan genocide brought about new understandings of the role of education in conflict during crisis.

Refugee education has been woven into international instruments and the changing understandings of the purposes of education (Dryden-Peterson 2011). Article 22 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees says that the signatory states "shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education…[and] treatment as favorable as possible...with respect to education other than elementary education" (UNHCR 2010). However, the right to education among those party to the Convention has varied based on laws, policies, and practices in each national context throughout history. For example, since 1975 refugee children from Burundi, Rwanda, and Zaire residing in Tanzania were integrated into Tanzania's national education system even though they were later relocated to camps (Obura 2003). Though a state might be party to an international convention, the national refugee policies within the state, especially those related to services such as education, change over time.

The focus of UNHCR, the United Nations organization mandated to protect refugees, has also undergone a number of changes in its refugee response policies since its origins. The first major shift was UNHCR's approach to intervention in refugee situations. Following an influx of refugees in the 1980s, encampment policies became the preference of host governments as well as UNHCR in order to simplify distribution of humanitarian assistance and organize an eventual return for the refugees (Verdirame & Harrell-Bond 2005). Since the refugee camp became the primary source of assistance, refugee children attended separate UNHCR-run and funded schools

rather than those within the host country. However, Verdirame and Harrell-Bond contend that the refugee camp structure is a "rights violation in itself" and refugee camps are "legal anomalies because they are under the effective control of humanitarian agencies, even though they are on a state's sovereign soil" (Kagan 2005).

The second shift in UNHCR's focus came with the institutionalization of a rights-based framework under the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC affirmed that children have a right to education on numerous levels. In her report about the impacts of conflict on children, Graca Machel maintains that the right to education is one of the main rights denied to many children in conflict situations. She argues that denying this right has a number of negative impacts for children and for their families (Machel 1996). However, many donors did not initially see education as a priority in humanitarian responses, making it more difficult to secure adequate funding for education programs (Kirk 2006). For example, Clark-Kazak wrote about a refugee-student organized demonstration in Uganda that occurred after a UNHCR representative said that a donor thought that refugees should contribute to education programming through school fees. Many people who could not afford the school fees wrote letters to UNHCR and the government of Uganda asking for the elimination of the fees (Clark-Kazak 2010). However, the Ugandan government ultimately did not have the authority to lift the fees since it was a UNHCR-run school.

The example from Uganda illustrates the tension between rights guaranteed to refugees by international convention, those guaranteed by states, and the implementation of refugee rights policy. Loescher attributes this tension to the fact that UNHCR remains dependent on donor governments for financial support and on the host governments for permission to operate within its borders (Loescher 2001). This tension between international rights and state implementation

is further explained by Somers and Roberts, as they argue that "rights" exist at "multiple registers" defined as normative aspirations and codification and doctrines (Somers & Roberts 2008). Normative aspirations are within individuals and institutions, such as UNHCR, via their mandate to protect refugees. Codification and doctrine come in global conventions as well as national policies. The crossover between state, UNHCR, and NGO policies and practices prevents smooth policy implementation for both refugees and acting agents.

The third shift in the focus of UNHCR was a result of changing expectations for education among refugees as well as the people in the host countries. While education was initially coordinated primarily at the state and national levels, it has increasingly become a "global good," coordinated by numerous actors at the local, national, and international levels (Chelpi-den Hamer, Fresia, & Lanoue 2010). It was not just the curriculum aspect of education that became important but the psychological impact of trauma and displacement on children. The work of Save the Children and UNICEF with groups of refugee boys from southern Sudan showed that schooling was an integral part of psychosocial healing for the children (Swedish Save the Children 1999). Similarly, education responses in Rwanda following the 1994 genocide helped form a mass outreach to children and prepare teachers for understanding the impact of trauma (Aguilar & Richmond 1998). However, refugees continue to face a number of barriers to education despite the growing international support for education for refugees, the international frameworks established to protect education, and the mandate of UNHCR to protect refugee rights.

Barriers to Education

Education is one of the highest priorities of refugee communities, however, refugees encounter numerous barriers when attempting to access education. Access to education is a basic

human right that is linked to poverty reduction, stability, economic growth, and better lives for children and their communities. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes compulsory primary education as a universal entitlement and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirms the right of all children to free and compulsory primary education and to available and accessible secondary education (United Nations 1989, Article 28). However, UNICEF reported that lack of physical space in schools, language barriers, lack of transportation, registration requirements, expenses, and bullying are commonly cited as barriers to education for refugees (UNICEF 2013).

According to UNHCR, education is not only a fundamental human right established through international treaties, but also an essential part of the rehabilitation of refugee children. With education serving a vital role in the restoration of the social and emotional health of refugee children, the educator and the school environment are important in facilitating the socialization and acclimation of the children. Schooling provides a means for children and their families to settle into a new life and become part of their new community. However, the quality of students' experiences in school impacts how well the children adapt (Candappa & Egharevba 2002). Teachers without sufficient training in understanding the traumatic experiences of refugee children frequently overlook the efforts of students' and their families to succeed. Such misunderstandings can easily lead to discrimination and prejudice, inflicting an increased pressure on students to respond not only the new culture and language but also the negative and hostile attitudes of others (McBrien 2005).

In addition to challenges in access to education, there are a number of challenges associated with providing education to refugees, including: how children integrate into classrooms and schools; education certification processes; how limitations on employment for

refugees promotes child labor or marriage, hindering education, and how schools and teachers navigate the psychological needs of refugees. Shelly Culbertson and Louay Constant suggest seven models of providing education for refugees (Culbertson & Constant 2015). The first model integrates refugees into public schools with citizens of the host country. Canada, the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom are among states that adhere to this model of integrating refugees into the established schools within the country. Research about refugee education usually finds that refugee children acquire language skills much faster than their parents, especially when the refugee children are in schools with children of the host country (Hooper, Zong, Capps, & Fix 2016). The other six models propose separating refugees from citizens: refugee schools in camps, second shift schools for refugees, community schools run by refugees, UNICEF or UNHCR schools, education by religious groups, and other alternative educational programs (Culbertson & Constant 2015).

In addition to these models for providing education to refugees, there are three general conceptual approaches within the field of refugee education in emergencies (Burde 2005). The first is the humanitarian approach, which encompasses UNHCR's present institutional approach to education. This approach holds education as one piece of a more rapid response framework, seeking to provide immediate protection to children and prevent human rights violations. This approach rarely involves collaboration with host governments. The second approach is the human rights approach, emphasizing education as a foundational human right. Furthermore, this approach defines education as a right that provides "skills that people need to reach their full potential and to exercise their rights, such as the right to life and health" (INEE 2010). However, education only fulfills this promise if it is "high quality," by being available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable (Tomasevski 2001). The last approach is the developmental approach,

which positions education as a long-term investment for the host society and the lack of quality education as a crisis in itself, hindering development. This approach is most commonly expressed by refugee students and parents, who focus on immediate access to quality education with the understanding that education builds into societal advancement (Dryden-Peterson 2011).

Tony Walters and Kim LeBlanc discuss three paradoxes that are problematic for the appropriate development of refugee education programs. The first is that the international refugee relief regime forms a "pseudo-state" in creating curriculum (Waters & Leblanc 2005). For example, when in their home country students usually take classes about the history of their country, but an in-depth study of a country's history is more relevant in higher education than for students at the primary or secondary level. When temporary schools are established in refugee camps, however, the agency running the camp establishes a curriculum for refugees that is likely much different than what would be taught in a standard school in either the host or home country. The second paradox is the way that education is connected to political judgements regarding values that are not well defined in refugee populations. Refugees do not have a place of belonging as citizens and the notion of "government" protecting and maintaining that belonging is tainted. The school system within a state defines those belonging and those excluded from membership in the modern state and molds the minds of the pupils to do so as well. The third paradox is that schooling and education are connected to broader issues about individual and economic development that are seemingly unclear for refugees (Waters & Leblanc 2005). Education gives young people not only skills, but also a hope for their future, be it seeking higher education or a specific career path, which can be monumental for refugees as their concept of future might be dismal due to their previous experiences (Rahmi 2001).

Obstacles for Refugee Education in Lebanon

Despite efforts made by the Lebanese government and other NGO actors, refugees in Lebanon continue to face obstacles to public education. When Syrians first arrived in Lebanon in 2011, there was little access to education beyond informal and emergency schools run by NGOs. The Ministry of Education in Lebanon attempted to assist Syrian refugee children by issuing a memorandum instructing all public schools in Lebanon to enroll Syrians regardless of their legal status (Charles & Denman 2013). Expanding access via memorandum has proven insufficient to overcome more prominent obstacles to access to formal education for Syrians in Lebanon. One such obstacle is the physical capacity to accommodate high numbers of Syrians. In 2014, the Lebanese government implemented a second shift of schooling in the afternoon, which resulted in increased costs for schools, including for teacher salaries and administrative costs (Charles & Denman 2013). In addition to increased costs, the same teachers cover both the first and second shifts, resulting in overextended and exhausted staff.

Another obstacle is the curriculum and language of instruction in Lebanese schools. Arabic is the national language of Syria and Lebanon, but the Lebanese education system operates in Arabic, English, and French, with most of the schools teaching in French or English. Lebanese schools teach subject areas such as math and science in French or English, while Syrian schools usually teach such subjects in Arabic (Breen 2015). Lebanese students learn two to three languages by the end of secondary school but foreign language education was limited in Syrian public schools, resulting in little prior foreign language instruction for students in Syria before the onset of the civil war (Abu-Amsha 2014).

Beyond institutional limitations, social stigma and discrimination further inhibit the full access of Syrians to education in Lebanon. The rapid influx of Syrians in Lebanon fostered a

strong resentment towards the refugee population and resulted in frequent reports from Syrian students of verbal or physical abuse in schools. This environment of hostility leaves Syrian parents reluctant to send their children to school (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin 2015). In an effort to alleviate resentment as well as pressure from the large population of refugees, Lebanon announced a plan to waive tuition and book fees for Lebanese and refugee children alike (Charles & Denman 2015). Still, these new waiver policies do not solve the issue of overcrowding and teacher stamina within schools, and only 30 percent of Lebanese children attend public schools themselves. Furthermore, the attitude of the Lebanese government that positions refugees as temporary guests hinders integration opportunities for Syrians into Lebanese schools and society (IRIN 2017).

Government in Lebanon

Consociational Democracy

The attitude of the Lebanese government towards Syrian refugees can be understood through an evaluation of Lebanon as a consociational democracy. Michel Hudson identified the main elements of Lebanon's political system as: a particularistic mosaic society, an authoritarian and hierarchical family structure, religious institutions that are politically influenced, power dispersed in religious sects, foreign influence in politics, a feudalistic structure, and a territory just smaller than Connecticut with five well-defined regions (Hudson 1968). Arend Lijphart refers to this political system as consociational democracy. Also called power sharing, both consociational democracy and power sharing refer to a political system marked by fragmented political culture that is governed through democratic rules overseen by a group of elites (Lijphart 2008). The elites in consociational democracies come from each major community and work to maintain leadership over their respective groups. Lijphart says that elites need the "ability to

recognize the dangers inherent in a fragmented system" so that they can "forge appropriate solutions for the demands of the subcultures" (Lijphart 1968).

Many scholars agree with Lijphart's approach and regard the behavior of the elite as a main pillar of democracy in Lebanon. Dekmejian highlights the role of the National Pact in solidifying the network of elites and maintaining stability in Lebanon since 1943 (Dekmejian 1978). In recognizing the dangers of a fragmented system, as Lijphart noted, Lebanon used the National Pact to establish that the president of Lebanon would always be a Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the parliament a Shiite Muslim. This allows the three most prominent confessional groups to have guaranteed representation under the law (Friedman 1989). With Christianity and Islam being the two main religions in Lebanon, these two were further divided based on theology, political orientation, and organizational structure so that no subgroup could gain the majority (Jabbra & Jabbra 1978).

However, the breakdown of the system comes from factors other than a subgroup gaining a majority. For example, decision making is oftentimes carried out through bargaining among the elites and making informal deals. During times of crises, disarray occurs among the elites, resulting in informal conflict management or political immobilism (Dekmejian 1978). Leaders are more concerned with the interests of their own community than cooperation across cleavages. Unlike the parties of Western democracies, the Lebanese parties are "ideological groupings, primarily interested in gaining converts to their various causes" (Suleiman 1967). Lebanese political parties do not represent the interests of the population and have little influence on policy. The weakness of the parties reinforces the balance of power that Lijphart emphasized for maintaining the consociational system.

One of the main outcomes of the consociational arrangement in Lebanon is a low priority on issues facing the entire country such as economic growth, public accountability, and representation of local populations. For example, since 2015 there has been an ongoing garbage crisis wherein the Lebanese government has been unable to provide garbage collection services. Additionally, in 2016 the youth unemployment rate was 21.27%, more than three times the overall unemployment rate of 6.78% (Loo & Magaziner 2017). Another issue facing Lebanon is the influx of Syrian refugees. Since the Lebanese citizens themselves cannot rely on the government to provide services as basic as stable electricity, the provision of resources to refugees comes into question.

Government Response to Refugees

Tamirace Fakhoury argues that Lebanon's response to Syrian displacement mirrors its own style of governance through weak institutionalism, competing political strategies, and informal elite transactions (Fakhoury 2017). She points out that much of the refugee assistance and protection functions for refugees in Lebanon has been delegated to domestic and international nonstate actors. Lebanon is responding to refugees in a way, as Fakhoury says, that is quite similar to how Lebanon responds to its own people. Similarly, Alexander Betts, Ali Ali, and Fulya Memisoglu found a distinct sub-national variation in refugee policy implementation at the municipal level in Lebanon. In territories run by Shia Hezbollah, restrictions on Syrians were harshly implemented. Betts, Ali, and Memisoglu explain that this is likely due to Hezbollah's relationship with the Assad regime in Syria and the fact that most of the refugees were Sunni. The Sunni areas were found to be the most tolerant of Syrians. In addition to shared religious beliefs, many Sunni areas, such as Tripoli and parts of Beirut, already had long-standing networks between Lebanon and Syria for employment. The Christian areas have had a more

mixed response. The more wealthy Syrians were able to move to the wealthy Christian areas instead of remaining in the informal settlements of other regions (Betts, Ali & Memisoglu 2017). The literature reflects an apparent difference in the regional responses in Lebanon to Syrian refugees as well as the general allocation of funding and resources. Since over half of the refugees in Lebanon are school-aged, under eighteen, the following section explores the literature regarding education in Lebanon in order to contextualize the situation Syrian refugees enter when seeking education in Lebanon.

Education in Lebanon

Though there is an established structure for public education in Lebanon, it exhibits a number of problems. The education structure in Lebanon not only impacts refugees' access to education but also access for Lebanese nationals. The discussion here explains how sectarian influences exist within the government as well as the allocation of funds and overall structure of the education system in Lebanon. The first part of this section gives an overview of the structure of the public education system in Lebanon. The following sections introduce critiques of the system's shortcomings based on the literature regarding public education in Lebanon and, specifically, the impact of the 1975 civil war and confessional schools.

Overview of Public Education in Lebanon

The Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) oversees the public and private sectors of education in Lebanon at the national level. There are three types of schools in Lebanon: public schools, subsidized private schools, and tuition-based private schools. Within the public sphere, MEHE provides education from the pre-primary stage all the way to higher education (MEHE 2011). In each of Lebanon's eight governorates, MEHE has regional

departments tasked with the administration of the public school system in their governorate (REACH & UNHCR, 2014).

Education in Lebanon has four successive stages, beginning with primary elementary education. In the primary stage, elementary education is similar to first through sixth grade in the United States (Shuayb 2014). This is for children from ages six to twelve and provides foundational literacy and numeracy skills. The intermediate stage includes grades seven to nine and children ages twelve to fifteen. At this level, the national curriculum mandates that schools teach math and science in Arabic, English, or French (BEMO 2014). At the end of the intermediate/middle stage, students take an exam in order to move on to the next level. The third stage is secondary education, grades ten to twelve, and ends when students are age 17 to 18. The secondary education stage has three tracks: general, technical, and mechanical vocational training. Each branch has a specialty in humanities, economics, and sciences. At the end of students' secondary education, they take the Lebanese baccalaureate exams which are necessary for pursuing higher education, or the fourth stage (BEMO 2014).

The 1975 Civil War and Confessional Schools

The evolution of public education in Lebanon was profoundly impacted by the Lebanese civil war, which lasted from 1975 to 1990. Tschuy says that one of the key causes of the war was instability with the sectarian balance in Lebanon. Part of this instability resulted from an influx of Palestinian Sunni refugees, causing Christians in Lebanon to fear being overpowered (Tschuy 1997). Helen Tannous further explains that in the 1970s and 1980s, there were around 75 active militias in Lebanon. The weak central government could not contain the militias and basic services, such as water and electricity, were only available through the militias (Tannous 1997). People rallied closer to their confessional communities, deepening societal divisions and adding

to hostilities. During this time, schools tried to use a national curriculum emphasizing a unified national history and civic education but students' links to religion only became stronger. In fact, for many unemployed youth, education was no longer a priority and they instead joined militias to learn about defending their towns and families (Tannous 1997).

The war also served as a catalyst for the separation of the state and the public school system, as private education filled the gap left by the lack of government-provided education during the war period. However, some scholars argue that the Lebanese education system contributed to the 1975 civil war because there was a lack of government oversight and no national curriculum to help unify the country prior to the war (Beckett 1996; Tannous 1997). After the war, reforming the education system was a political priority. The Lebanese government created a framework for education with several goals, including: universal compulsory education at the elementary level, academic freedom in universities, protection of private schools with greater curriculum oversight, and a curriculum that would "promote national belonging and integration...and unity of textbooks in history and civics" (Inati 1999).

Even with this new framework, Lebanon has struggled to provide quality public education and many Lebanese students attend private confessional schools. A number of private confessional schools in Lebanon have expressed a political agenda and influence political socialization of students (Messarra 2004). Abouchedid, Nasser, and Van Blommestein show that students in confessional schools continue to be exposed to differing patterns of political socialization along ethno-religious lines (Abouchedid 2002). They studied seven history textbooks from different ethno-religious schools and conducted interviews with the history teachers. One of their findings was that there were different interpretations of Lebanon's creation under the French Mandate in 1920 and of whether Lebanon is an Arab state. On the other hand,

some schools have strict policies regarding political indoctrination. For example, Hariri Schools, funded by the Hariri Foundation, are Sunni majority schools that forbid teachers from talking about politics (Cervan 2011). Regardless, a majority of the private schools in Lebanon are run by religious communities and operate without government oversight (Shuyab 2007). With a lack of religious diversity among students and teachers in schools, there is not an environment to foster good and open-minded relationships between students of different religious backgrounds.

Religious communities establish private schools out of a fear that children will question traditional practices and religious authority if they are in a free-thinking diverse environment. Macedo explains that it is for this reason that private religious schools in Lebanon usually rely on teachings that reinforce the acceptance of tradition and authority (Macedo 1990). On the other hand, public schools in Lebanon are more influenced by the demography of the location of the school. Public schools in predominantly Muslim towns are run by Muslim principals and teachers with Muslim students, while public schools in Christian areas mainly have Christian students (Baytiyeh 2016). Socialization of students from different backgrounds promotes mutual respect and acceptance and those that are segregated inhibit social unity (Heyneman 2003).

Furthermore, public schools in Lebanon suffer from a lack of resources and adequate funding. Salti and Chaaban found that the Lebanese education system suffers from a misappropriation of government funding, allocating funds based on sectarian considerations instead of the need in an area (Salti & Chaaban 2010). In fact, financial resources being allocated based on sects dates back to the Ottoman empire when the Shia, unrecognized by the Ottomans, were the "poorest and least literate sect" (Shuayb 2012). With these sectarian divides also comes regional disparities in educational attainment based on the socio-economic development of the region. Frayha found that illiteracy rates are higher in the more deprived areas such as Bekaa

(14.45%) and South Lebanon (12.25%) and urban areas see better educational attainment results (Frayha 2009).

Conclusion

  Despite attempted reforms, the education system in Lebanon has not promoted social unity of the Lebanese society but instead has reinforced social instability and sectarian tension. The literature shows that there is an obvious divide not only in the system of education in Lebanon but also the allocation of resources throughout the country. Given that Lebanon experienced a strain on its education system during the civil war and implemented reforms, this raises the question of how Lebanon is responding to the influx of Syrian refugees, with over half being children. Though not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, Lebanon is party to numerous international conventions relating to education and children's rights, so, what measures is Lebanon taking to address the needs of Syrian refugee children? Furthermore, the presence of Syrian refugees stresses an already strained Lebanon with varying impacts across the eight governorates of Lebanon. With a majority of Syrian refugees residing across the rural Bekaa governorate of Lebanon, this research uses Bekaa as a case study of Syrian refugees' access to education in Lebanon. The Bekaa case study illustrates the forces at the local level that impact refugees' access to education as well as other services. The following chapter addresses Lebanon's overall response to Syrian refugees followed by Chapter 4 which delves into the Bekaa case study.

Chapter Three: Lebanese Response to Syrian Refugees

The connection between the general refugee policy and that of refugee education lies in the fact that over half of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon are under the age of eighteen, a school-aged demographic. The policies of the Lebanese government play a critical role in the provision of education and other services for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Lebanon has responded in a number of different ways to Syrian refugees since 2012, with no shortage of international attention to the burgeoning refugee situation within its borders. While Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it has taken steps towards inclusive policies for providing education to Syrian refugees. The following chapter expands upon Lebanon's general refugee policies as well as its policies on making education accessible for refugees.

Lebanese Refugee Policy

Lebanon hosts the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world, with one in every four people in Lebanon is a refugee.[11] Despite this large number of refugees, Lebanon is among those states that have not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees nor the 1967 Protocol; Lebanon has also not adopted any domestic legislation defining the legal status of refugees.[12] Syrian refugees in Lebanon are not regarded as refugees but as foreigners or migrant workers. In September 2003, the Lebanese Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish procedures for processing cases of asylum seekers applying for refugee status with a UNHCR Office and gave UNHCR responsibility for determining refugee status.

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[11] European Commission, "Lebanon: Syria Crisis," March 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/lebanon_syrian_crisis_en.pdf.

[12] Saliba, Issam, "Refugee Law and Policy: Lebanon," Library of Congress, March 2016, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugee-law/lebanon.php.

The MOU provides for the issuance of temporary residence permits to asylum seekers who register with UNHCR for a period of three months with the possibility of extension to six or nine months. Under the terms of the MOU, refugees are to be resettled in a third country with the assistance of UNHCR before the expiration of their temporary residence permits. The MOU has received criticism from human rights organizations for adopting a Lebanese notion on refugees that considers refugees security threats and legitimizes Lebanon not being an asylum country.[13] Furthermore, the MOU does not mention crucial refugee protection norms such as non-refoulement, the international principle that forbids a country from returning an asylum seeker to a county in which they are in danger of persecution.

Given the weakness of the initial 2003 MOU, UNHCR has sought new ways to formally regulate its relationship with the Lebanese government. In 2011, UNHCR presented a proposal for a new MOU to the Lebanese government. The new draft addressed gaps in protection from the 2003 MOU and included issues such as: non-refoulement, refugee status determination, registration, and the right of refugees to work. The draft was rejected by the Lebanese government with points of contention being the use of terms such as "refugee," since Lebanon does not recognize refugees, and the discussion of refugees' right to work.[14] This rejection means that there is no legal mandate supporting the work of UNHCR in Lebanon, leaving the organization more sensitive to government interference.

Between 2012 and 2014, the number of refugees in Lebanon increased rapidly with host communities, civil society networks, and UNHCR as the primary providers for Syrian refugees with little involvement from the Lebanese government. Table 1.1 shows the number of registered

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[13] World Refugee Survey 2009, http://www.refugees.org/resources/refugee-warehousing/archived-world-refugeesurveys/2009-wrs-country-updates/lebanon.html.

[14] Turner, Lewis, "Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees: Security, Class and the Labour Market in Lebanon and Jordan," Mediterranean Politics 20, no. 3 (2015): 1–19.

Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon each year from 2011 to 2016. From 2013 to 2014, UNHCR registered an average of 47,000 refugees per month. In April of 2014 the Lebanese government took steps to try to control the presence of Syrians in Lebanon.[15] The Council of Ministers adopted a policy on Syrian displacement intended to decrease the number of Syrians in Lebanon by limiting Syrians' access to Lebanese territory and encouraging their return to Syria. This policy had detrimental impacts on the refugees already in Lebanon as many were left living "illegally" in the country under marginalized conditions.[16] Since refugees do not have legal residency rights in Lebanon, Syrian refugees face a higher risk of arrest, inability to register marriages and births, and makes it harder for refugees to send their children to school.[17]

Table 1: Number of Registered Syrian Refugees by Year	
Year	Number of Registered Syrian Refugees
2011	124
2012	126,939
2013	851,284
2014	1,147,494
2015	1,062,690
2016	1,005,503

Source: UNHCR Population Statistics database: http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/time_series

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[15] Daily Star, "Bassil: Refugees Threaten Lebanon's Existence," *Daily Star,* 28 September 2013, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Sep-28/232887-bassil-refugees-threaten-lebanons-existence.ashx.

[16] Janmyr, Maja, "Precarity in Exile: The Legal Status of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," Refugee Survey Quarterly 35, no. 4 (2016): 58–78.

[17] UNICEF, UNHCR & WFP, "The Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR-2017)," 2017,https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/61312#_ga=2.114549774.868173999.1516043317-848675705.1516043317.

Lebanese Policy Regarding Refugee Education

Legal Basis for Refugee Education

Although Lebanon is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention nor the 1967 Protocol, it is party to numerous international treaties that uphold the rights of children to access education without discrimination, including: the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).[18] The CRC and ICESCR both state that primary education shall be "compulsory and available free to all" and secondary education "shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means."[19] The Convention on the Rights of the Child says that states:

> ...shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties.[20]

As previously discussed, Lebanon does not consider itself an asylum country and delegates refugee status determinations to UNHCR, shifting the responsibility from the state to the international agency. Furthermore, since Lebanon is also party to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention Against Discrimination in Education, Lebanon is obligated to provide foreign nationals residing within

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[18] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), "Status of Ratification, Interactive Dashboard," indicators.ohchr.org.

[19] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), adopted December 16, 1966, G.A. Res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 49, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), 993 U.N.T.S. 3, entered into force January 3, 1976, ratified by Lebanon on November 3, 1972, arts. 13, 28.

[20] Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted November 20, 1989, G.A. Res. 44/25, annex, 44 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 167, U.N. Doc. A/44/49 (1989), entered into force September 2, 1990, ratified by Lebanon on May 14, 1991, art. 28.

its territory the same access to education as is given to Lebanese citizens and dissolve administrative practices that allow discrimination in education.[21]

Reaching All Children with Education (RACE)

Lebanon had an open border policy when Syrians began to enter the country in 2011. Lebanon and Syria have a long history of labor migration, with many Syrians maintaining networks within Lebanon that allowed them to access public schools. Up until 2013, the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) was mostly hands-off regarding education for refugees, but international and local NGOs provided informal education throughout Lebanon. In 2013, the Lebanese government decided to act and lead the educational response. By May of 2014, the MEHE launched an official policy framework for the Syrian refugee crisis called Reaching All Children with Education (RACE).
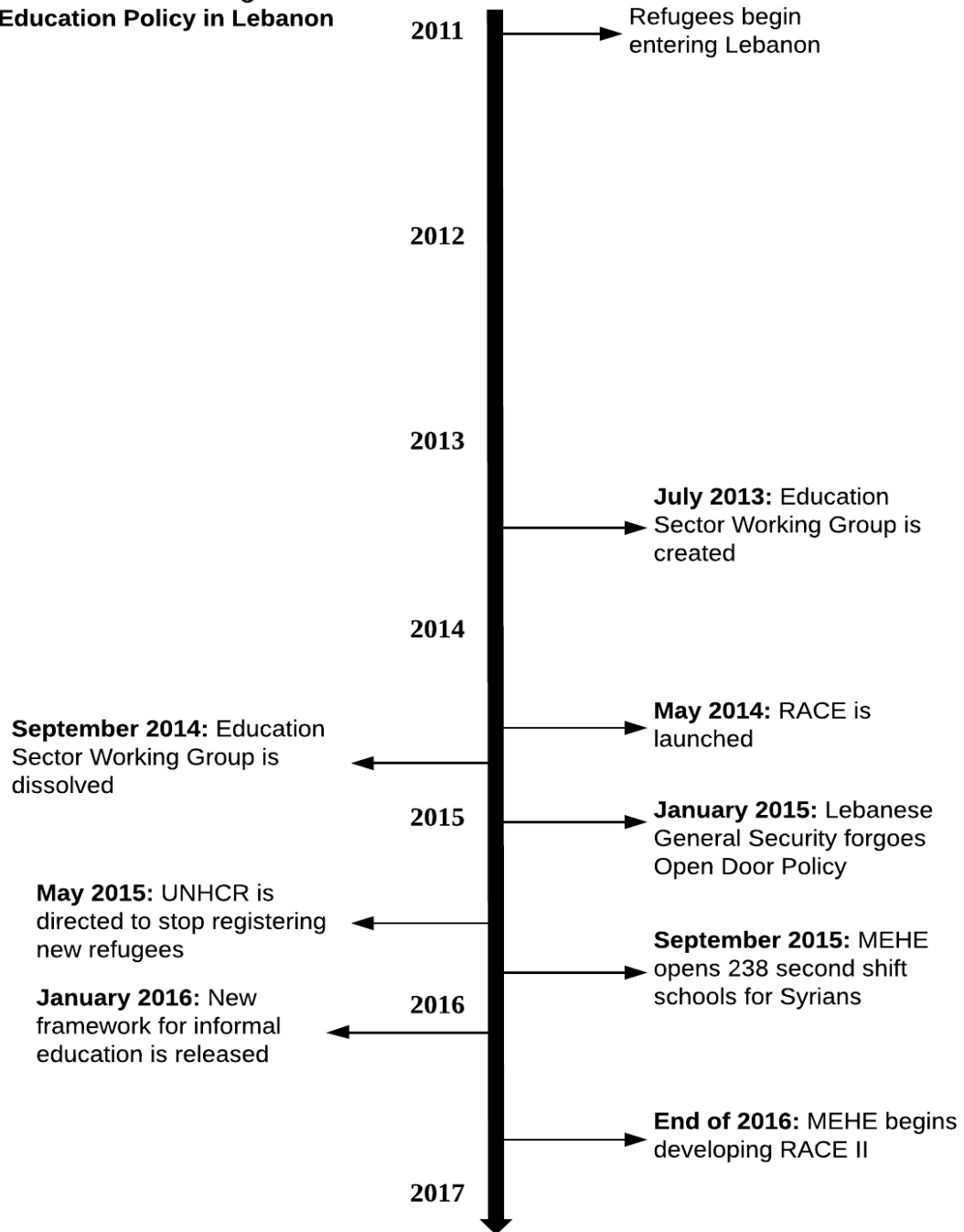
RACE is a three year program structured around three pillars: access, quality, and systems strengthening. At the beginning, RACE aimed to enroll 200,000 Syrian refugee children in formal schools and provide foreign-language training to another 200,000.[22] The goal of RACE was to expand the capacity of the existing schools rather than create a separate system for Syrians. Under this model, MEHE implemented second shifts in public schools to accommodate refugee students. The second shifts were exclusively for Syrian refugees and gave current public school teachers the option to teach in second shifts for additional pay. While the teachers in Lebanese public schools must be Lebanese nationals, teachers in NGO-run informal education programs can be Syrian and without official teaching certificates, as long as they have

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[21] UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Convention against Discrimination in Education, (1960), adopted December 14, 1960, entered into force May 22, 1962, art 3.
[22] El-Ghali, H.A., Ghalayini, N. and Ismail G., "Responding to Crisis: Syrian Refugee Education in Lebanon," 2016, Beirut: AUB Policy Institute, https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/publications/Documents/policy_memos/2015-2016/20160406_responding_to_crisis.pdf.

permission to work in Lebanon.

**Timeline of Refugee
Education Policy in Lebanon**

2011 — Refugees begin entering Lebanon

2012

2013

July 2013: Education Sector Working Group is created

2014

September 2014: Education Sector Working Group is dissolved

May 2014: RACE is launched

2015

January 2015: Lebanese General Security forgoes Open Door Policy

May 2015: UNHCR is directed to stop registering new refugees

September 2015: MEHE opens 238 second shift schools for Syrians

January 2016: New framework for informal education is released

2016

End of 2016: MEHE begins developing RACE II

2017

Created by the author with information from Buckner, Elizabeth, Dominique Spencer, and Jihae Cha, "Between Policy and Practice: The Education of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," Journal of Refugee Studies, 2017. doi:10.1093/jrs/fex027.

Prior to the introduction of RACE, a number of civil society actors provided informal education through catch-up classes and language support. Some NGOs operated full schools in communities where second shift schools were far away or would not allow Syrians to enroll because of community resistance. In 2014, MEHE dissolved the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) and told all NGOs to suspend their education activity until new guidelines were set. Two years later, in 2016, MEHE released a new framework for informal education that requires informal education programs to serve only as a bridge to the formal sector.[23] The new framework placed MEHE in a place of oversight of informal education programs and outlines how these programs are to be developed, delivered, and monitored by MEHE.

A possible explanation for this policy shift is the influence of international actors on national actors via normative pressures and monetary incentives. As previously explained, though Lebanon is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention nor the 1967 Protocol, Lebanon did ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and the Lebanese Constitution reinforces that domestic legislation must remain consistent with Lebanon's international obligations.[24] Using the CRC to advocate for refugee children's rights presents a children's rights lens as opposed to a refugee rights lens, meaning Lebanon is legally bound to address children's rights even if those children are refugees. Furthermore, some of the funding for RACE comes from international actors such as UNICEF and UNHCR. In 2015, international donors gave $61.3 million to MEHE and public schools in Lebanon, alongside money given to UNICEF which provides aid to MEHE and other NGO partners.[25] The increase in funds presented an

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[23] MEHE, "NFE Framework: Framework for Regularisation of Non-Formal Education in Lebanon," 2016, Beirut, Lebanon: Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
[24] Child Rights International Network (CRIN), "Lebanon: National Laws," 2012, https://www.crin.org/en/library/publications/lebanon-national-laws.
[25] UNDP, "Support to Lebanese Public Institutions: Under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015," http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/PISTbrochure2016forweb%20%281%29.pdf.

opportunity for the Lebanese government to strengthen an education structure that was weak prior to the influx of refugees.

Regional Variation in Protection and Services

The political and socio-economic situation of refugees in Lebanon varies between governorates and regions of Lebanon. With local and international NGO actors providing most of the services to refugees and local Lebanese populations, primary policy implementation is carried out by local political groups rather than the state apparatus.[26] Social Development Centers, run by the Ministry of Social Affairs, operate throughout Lebanon at various capacities with different levels of financial and human resources, with significant regional inequalities in access to public services.[27] Though the national government of Lebanon took steps towards policies to provide education for Syrian refugees, there is an apparent policy-practice gap.

Many of the national education policies are not fully implemented at the local level, resulting in higher number of out of school refugees. Of the eight governorates in Lebanon, Bekaa has the lowest school enrolment rates for refugees but the highest number of Syrian refugees. The following chapter explores the socioeconomic characteristics of the Bekaa governorate as well as the education system, the refugee situation, and refugees' access to education in Bekaa.

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[26] SNAP, October 10, 2013, Lebanon Baseline Information.
[27] World Bank, "Lebanon: Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict," September 20, 2013.
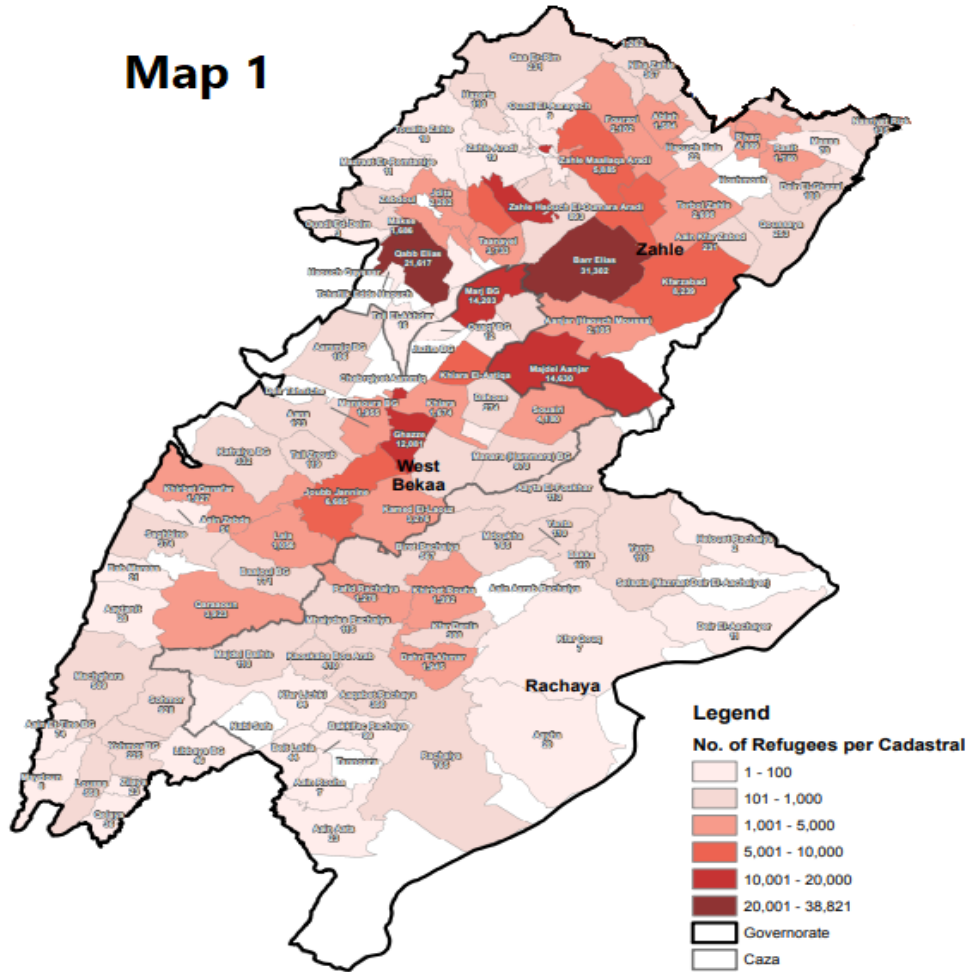
Chapter Four: Bekaa

In light of the previous chapters that discuss the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and their lack of legal status yet apparent right to education and aid, this chapter focuses on the situation of Syrian refugees in the Bekaa governorate of Lebanon. Since Lebanon as a whole is hosting the largest per capita number of refugees in the world, Lebanon is a very prominent recipient of both international attention and aid. Furthermore, within Lebanon, the Bekaa governorate of Lebanon is currently home to a population of the most impoverished and marginalized Syrian refugees in Lebanon.[28] Map 1 shows the distribution of Syrian refugees in Bekaa, with many refugees concentrated in the area surrounding Zahle.

This chapter addresses why refugees in Bekaa live in extreme poverty and face struggles in day to day life, including low school enrollment. If the number of Syrian refugees in Bekaa exceeded the capacity of the region in 2012, why has the situation for refugees in Bekaa not improved over the last six years, given the apparent need as well as the international attention?[29] If the most vulnerable refugees in Lebanon are concentrated in Bekaa, why is the international aid not filling enough of the gap to allow refugees to get an education? What is causing low school enrollment among refugees in Bekaa? This research explains that a semi-informal local level authority, the Shawish, has capitalized on the influx of Syrian refugees in the Bekaa governorate of Lebanon, resulting in more barriers for refugees accessing education as well as other basic humanitarian services.

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[28] Khairunissa Dhala, "Freezing Conditions, Forgotten Camps – Refugees from Syria in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley," Amnesty International E-MAGAZINE, 2012, Amnesty International.

[29] Al-Husayni, "Syrian Refugees Bring Lebanon's Bekaa Valley to Breaking Point - Al-Monitor"; الحسيني سامر السفير , , ; جريدة," استيعابهم على البقاع قدرات تتجاوز السوريين النازحين أعداد | الجدد للوافدين مخيمات وإقامة الرسمية المدارس لتحييد توجهات July 31, 2012, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/politics/2012/07/direction-to-exclude-public-scho.html.

Map 1

Legend
No. of Refugees per Cadastral
- 1 - 100
- 101 - 1,000
- 1,001 - 5,000
- 5,001 - 10,000
- 10,001 - 20,000
- 20,001 - 38,821
- Governorate
- Caza

Modified from UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Syria Refugee Response Lebanon: Bekaa & Baalbek-El Hermel Governorate - Syrian Refugees Registered by Cadastral Level (As of 30 November 2017)*, available at: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/61598

Background on Bekaa

The Bekaa governorate of Lebanon is a valley region located on the eastern edge of

Lebanon along the border of Syria. Bekaa has three administrative districts: Zahle, West Bekaa,

and Rashaya, which include over 85 municipalities. Bekaa also encompasses the largest official

border crossing between Syria and Lebanon in the Masnaa locality (See **Map 2**). Within Bekaa,

there is a mix of Christians, Sunnis, Shiites, and Druze, with no group holding a majority. Zahle

is the largest city in Bekaa and has a Catholic Christian majority. The surrounding villages, such

as Bar Elias and Majdal Anjar, are predominantly Sunni.[30]

Map 2
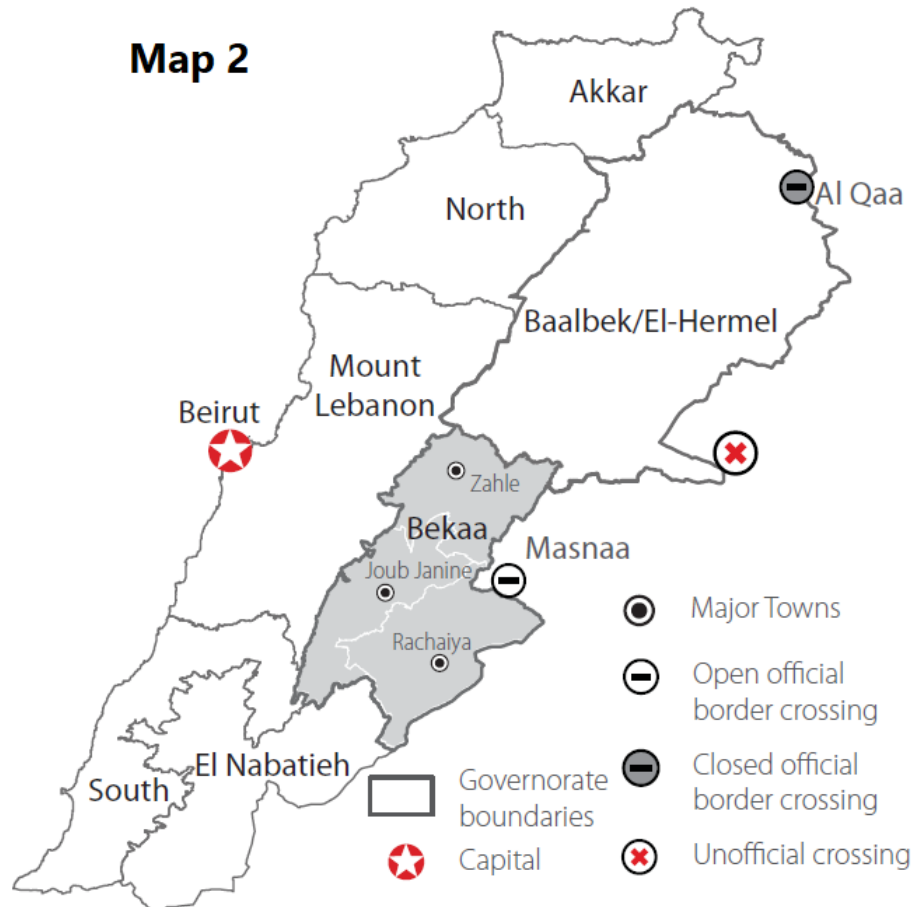
Modified from Inter-Agency Coordination, *Lebanon Bekaa Governorate Profile (June 2015)*, available at:

The highest local authority in Bekaa is the governor. The governor of Bekaa, along with

the Lebanese army, play a large role in managing the population of Syrian refugees, specifically

in enforcing residency requirements.[31] Additionally, the governor requires that the municipalities

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[30] Al-Masri, Muzna, and Zeina Abla. *The Burden of Scarce Opportunities: The Social Stability Context in Central and West Bekaa.* Report. March 2017.
[31] Al-Masri, Muzna, and Zeina Abla, 2017.

in Bekka regularly update databases with information regarding the refugees in their area and prohibit the establishment of additional informal tented refugee settlements. However, the municipalities of Bekaa are often hindered by political divisions as well as the pressure to address community needs and demands for services.

The economy of Bekaa is largely reliant on agricultural production. With 323 industrial companies in Bekaa, 43.02% are in the agro-food sector. Bekaa's fertile land and high soil quality make it an ideal area for agricultural, agro-food, dairy, and wine production investments. In addition to being home to 75% of Lebanon's cows, 45% of goats, and 35% of sheep, Bekaa also contains 50% of Lebanese wineries.[32] As a highly agricultural area, Bekaa has a long history of attracting unskilled Syrian workers. Since the early 1940s, Syrian migrants have widely participated in the agricultural workforce in Bekaa. The number of Syrian workers in Bekaa has fluctuated throughout the years depending on local and regional socio-political changes.

Syrian migrant workers that came to Bekaa prior to the 2011 uprisings in Syria found work through a person known colloquially as the "Shawish." Though Syrian migrants rarely received working permits, with many working in the country without official documentation or legal status, the Shawish made arrangements with farm owners to employ and house Syrian workers on the land. The Shawishes established personal contact with farm operators and made arrangements to not only employ migrant workers but also receive a portion of their pay. Once the conflict in Syria erupted and refugees began to cross into Lebanon, the Shawishes switched to managing informal refugee camps so that they could capitalize on the pool of cheap labor.[33]

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[32] "Bekaa Governorate," IDAL, accessed February 05, 2018, http://investinlebanon.gov.lb/en/lebanon_at_a_glance/invest_in_regions/bekaa_governorate.

[33] Cochrane, Paul, "Refugee crisis: Child Labour in agriculture on the rise in Lebanon," Our impact, their voice: Refugee crisis: Child Labour in agriculture on the rise in Lebanon, July 12, 2016, http://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/fs/WCMS_496725/lang--en/index.htm.

Refugees in Bekaa: Barriers to Education

When Syrian refugees initially entered Lebanon in 2012, meeting immediate humanitarian needs such as providing food, water, and shelter took precedence in the humanitarian response by various NGO groups. However, nearly six years later, needs that are essential for long-term and sustainable solutions for refugees, such as education, are at the forefront of providing for Syrian refugees in Bekaa. Accessing education and enrolling in schools are among the most pressing concerns for Syrian refugees in Bekaa. The Bekaa governorate received the highest number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, with around 365,555 Syrian refugees registered in Bekaa, resulting in a 67% population increase in the region over the last four years.[34] Syrian refugees continue to face a number of barriers to education in Bekaa, despite efforts by the Lebanese government and international actors to mitigate refugees' access to education.

Child Labor, Employment, and the Shawish

The most prominent reason for low school enrollment among Syrian refugees in Bekaa is that children seek out employment in order to support their families.[35] The Lebanese government has strict policies regarding adult refugees working, but many children in Bekaa, being cheaper to employ, more compliant than adults, and less likely to be stopped at a checkpoint, take to the fields to earn money. Sonia Khoury, the director of the RACE project at the MEHE, reported that 10,000 Lebanese students dropped out of school in 2015 along with the 77% of school-aged Syrians that were not enrolled. Khoury noted a correlation between the main harvest season in Lebanon and school attendance, saying that "2,000 to 3,000 [students] are absent during that

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[34] "Bekaa and Baalbek/Hermel Governorates," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, http://www.unocha.org/syrian-arab-republic/syria-crisis-regional-overview/lebanon-country-office/bekaa-and-baalbekhermel-g.

[35] Chulov, Martin, "Lebanon's Refugee Schools Provide Hope for Syria's Lost Generation," The Guardian, May 5, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/05/lebanon-refugee-schools-syria-lost-generation.

time," suggesting that failure to attend school may be associated with child labor.[36] Oftentimes, children have to travel farther to attend school than they do to work, adding another incentive for families to have their children work as they can stay closer to home. However, children do not always choose to work, as sometimes they are forced to work by the Shawish.

Since Lebanon does not allow permanent refugee camps, many Syrian refugees, especially in the rural Bekaa region, live in informal tented settlements run by a person known colloquially as the Shawish.[37] The Shawish serves as a mediary for local farm operators and workers, both allocating work and providing a place for workers to live. In most cases, the Shawish leases a plot of land from an owner or owns the land himself and charges refugees rent to set up tents on the land. Bekaa hosts 69% of all informal settlements, the highest concentration of informal settlements in the country. As previously mentioned, the Shawish began as a person arranging employment for migrant workers from Syria but switched to managing Syrian refugees following the influx of Syrian refugees in Bekaa. The Shawish does more than just collect rent from refugees. In a camp in Bar Elias, the Shawish did not allow children from his camp to go to a school that offered free education. Instead, the children were forced to attend a school that gave the Shawish a share of the school fees.[38] Several other reports involve instances in which the Shawish does not allow children to attend school at all so that he can send them to work.[39]

Since these settlements are not subject to regulation or oversight by the Lebanese government or international organizations, refugees are more susceptible to exploitation by the

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[36] Cochrane, 2016.

[37] Anderson, Sulome, "Syria's Refugee Children Have Lost All Hope," Foreign Policy, July 01, 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/29/syrias-refugee-children-have-lost-all-hope/.

[38] Malek Abu Kheir, "The Syrian camps shawish: A man of power and the one controlling the conditions of refugees," *The Peace Building In Lebanon*, June 12, 2016, http://www.lb.undp.org/content/dam/lebanon/docs/Governance/Publications/PEACE%20BUILDING%2012th%20web%20p12.pdf?download.

[39] Assi, Iman, Dorine Farah & Gemma Bennik, "Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016: Education Sector Plan," Ministry of Education and Higher Education & UNICEF, 2016.

Shawish.[40] In fact, one Shawish in the town of Saddnayel in Zahle, Bekaa said that part of his job

"is to be the eyes and ears of the [Lebanese] State Security agency."[41] In other words, refugees

are essentially required to pay rent to live in a refugee camp, sending children to work instead of

to school. Even with the introduction of second-shift schools in some areas of Bekaa, children

are either too tired from working to go to school or they still cannot afford the cost of school fees

and transportation. With Syrian refugee children in Bekaa working to pay rent, there is little, if

any, money left over to cover the cost of other necessities such as paying for residency renewal

or school fees.

Documentation and Fees

Many Syrian refugee families in Bekaa do not have the necessary income to send their

children to school. In January of 2015, the Lebanese government set new restrictions requiring

Syrians to pay $200 a year per adult for their residency permit and to sign a pledge not to work.[42]

A lack of official documentation has prohibited Syrian refugee children from enrolling in and

accessing school. As many as 90% of Syrians in Bekaa do not have legal residence and many

parents are afraid to send their children to school for fear of being caught and arrested because

they lack the required residency documentation and arrested.[43] This fear of arrest limits refugees'

mobility and impacts their overall access to basic services, primarily accessing schools.

Furthermore, since many adult refugees are unable to work but must pay for a residency permit,

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[40] Frangieh, Ghida, "Syrian Refugees in Limbo: Is Lebanon's Establishment of Camps the Answer?" *The Legal Agenda*, December 11, 2014, http://legal-agenda.com/en/article.php?id=3355.

[41] Ghaddar, Sima, "Lebanon Treats Refugees as a Security Probelm--and It Doesn't Work," The Century Foundaton, April 4, 2017, https://tcf.org/content/commentary/lebanon-treats-refugees-security-problem-doesnt-work/.

[42] Ciezadlo, Annia, "For Syrian Kids in Lebanon, School Is 'Like A Miracle'," *News Deeply*, July 26, 2016, https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2016/07/26/for-syrians-in-lebanon-school-is-like-a-miracle.

[43] Frangieh, Ghida, "Denying Syrian Refugees Status: Helping or Harming Lebanon?" *The Legal Agenda*, January 9, 2017, http://legal-agenda.com/en/article.php?id=3355.

rent to the Shawish, and other living expenses, children are left to provide for their families for basic survival.

Since the Lebanese government suspended all UNHCR registration processes for Syrian refugees in 2015, some Syrians in Lebanon are not officially registered with UNHCR. While UNHCR considers most Syrians in Lebanon to be refugees, they differentiate between those that are registered, unregistered, and 'recorded' refugees. Though the Lebanese government states that Syrian refugees can enroll in schools without proof of residence and without paying fees, school administrators enforce their own restrictions. This problem is especially rampant in Bekaa, with many refugees being at the mercy of a Shawish. Even when a school offers free classes, transportation can cost anywhere from $10 to $50 a month, a steep price for most Syrians as around 70% live below the Lebanese poverty line. Furthermore, should a child be close enough to walk to school, most Syrians feel unsafe allowing their children to walk to and from school, especially when attending second-shift classes that end after dark.[44] School administrators in Bekaa claim that they are not notified of decisions made by the Ministry of Education about enrolling Syrian students.[45] Whether these claims are true or not, there is an obvious gap in education policy at the national level and its implementation locally, with refugees bearing the brunt of the gap.

In addition to gaps in national and local policy, there is also a gap in the delivery of aid. The Shawish serves as a middleman between aid organizations and refugees. As many as seven aid workers from various organizations said that relief groups must go through the Shawish to register refugees. One aid worker said that the Shawish is known as being corrupt, blocking access between the aid organizations and the refugees and keeping money and aid items for

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[44] Ciezadlo, Annia, 2016.

[45] Al-Qadiri, Usama, "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Back to School Scramble," *Al-Akhbar*, September 4, 2012, http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/11731.

himself.[46] A Syrian mother of seven said that a Shawish demanded a $30 fee to expedite her registration with UNHCR--a process that is supposed to be free for refugees.[47] If refugees are not receiving aid, monetary assistance, nor proper registration, they are not only unable to work and go to school, but to find any sustainable means to live.

Conclusion

This case study of the Bekaa governorate of Lebanon illustrates the precarious position of Syrian refugees residing in the country, specifically children. First, though the Lebanese government as well as NGO groups have taken steps to provide education opportunities for Syrian refugees in Bekaa, many children are still unable to get an education. Since the refugees in the Bekaa region are among the poorest, at a base level they are unable to afford any extra cost associated with children going to school, be it registration fees, transportation, or other school costs. Even with opportunities for free education in some parts of Bekaa, many children must work to support their families, as adults are not permitted to work in Lebanon. Moreover, the authority of the Shawish further hinders children's access to education as the Shawish determines which, if any, school the children can attend or if they have to go to work.

The Shawish also has an influential role in the overall delivery of aid to Syrian refugees in Bekaa. It was found that the Shawish is often the go-between for NGO groups and refugees, giving the Shawish more power over the livelihoods of refugees. Although it is not clear whether the Shawish have specific religious ties, they are able to create and maintain networks among farmers in order to lease land and arrange employment for refugees. Lebanon does not allow for official refugee camps, yet in Bekaa the Shawishes establish settlements and charge refugees rent, with the result that refugees are losing access to protections they are guaranteed under

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[46] "Lebanon Syria Corruption," *Associated Press*, May 15, 2014. http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/Any/db34a5417945738cc5b15db4971d9ae3.
[47] Associated Press, 2014.

international law. Refugees are paying rent to live in unofficial refugee camps and, with adults being unable to legally work, children are not getting an education because they are forced, by a Shawish or circumstances, to work.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Syrian refugees in Lebanon face a number of barriers to education. Though the national government of Lebanon has taken steps towards an inclusive education policy for Syrian refugees, a number of actors at the local level institute their own policies. In the Bekaa region specifically, a rural region with the highest number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the greatest barrier to education is child labor and exploitation by a Shawish. Furthermore, dueling national policies regarding residency permits and employment for adult refugees hinder refugees' access to education, as many children must work to meet not only their families' basic needs but also the cost of paying for permits, school fees, and rent to the Shawish. Though there is not sufficient evidence to show that a Shawish is active in other governorates of Lebanon, Syrian refugees are nevertheless left without opportunities to build a sustainable life in Lebanon and continue to exist in precarious positions in Lebanon, without prospects for employment or imminent return to Syria.

This thesis shows that competing interests at the local levels heavily influence refugees' access to education despite national policies. The literature clearly shows the importance of education for refugees as a means of growth for future societies as well as for coping psychologically with trauma; however, as a consociational democracy, Lebanon has a weak central authority with sectarian divisions at each level of government. To compensate for the gap in education, NGOs offer non-formal education (NFE) and remedial classes to help students learn outside of formal public education. However, NFE cannot give students the certification they will need to pursue higher education, employment, education upon returning home, nor, in some cases, the proper documentation to enter public schools in Lebanon.

Though non-state actors, such as NGOs, help provide education outside of the public education system, MEHE enforces strict guidelines regarding non-formal education. One explanation for MEHE's move to control the non-formal sector is the competition for students and funding. For example, students might opt for non-formal education over formal public education because it is offered in their language, with other people they know, or because it is free. Should more students gravitate to non-formal education opportunities, MEHE will not meet enrollment goals put forth in their RACE plan and ultimately risk losing international funding. On the other hand, since the NFE sector is unregulated outside of MEHE's guidelines, education for refugees in the NFE space is diverse and inconsistent. Some NFE schools or programs might genuinely seek to provide the typical reading, writing, and arithmetic curriculum but others could serve as ideological hubs to recruit and train refugee children to fight or become radicalized.

This thesis also shows how gaps in policy implementation and the overall absence of national refugee policy allow for exploitation by informal actors. Though Lebanon does not officially recognize refugees and does not have inclusive national policies, actors at the local level are responding to the unavoidable presence of high volumes of Syrian refugees. The Shawish is part of a pre-existing labor migrant institution that was modified to address the influx of Syrian refugees, especially children. Having no official legal status or recognition as refugees in Lebanon, Syrians in Bekaa are left to rely on the Shawish and succumb to the exploitation they impose. Furthermore, the lack of national refugee policy in Lebanon forces aid organizations to liaise with local authorities without the explicit permission of the national government. The repercussions of this dynamic are evident in the Ministry of Education restricting the informal education sector as well as Lebanon's anti-camp policy.

With the majority of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, a country with the highest per capita number of refugees in the world, residing in Bekaa, more needs to be done to afford refugees the protections they are guaranteed—especially children accessing education. Nearly seven years after the outbreak of war in Syria, many children are growing up in refugee situations. It is no secret that Lebanon hosts a large number of refugees and a number of states and international actors have acknowledged the refugee situation in Lebanon. For example, in July of 2017, the United States pledged an extra $140 million to help Syrian refugees and their host communities in Lebanon. This total amounts to more than $4.5 billion in humanitarian assistance that the United States has given to Lebanon since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2012.[48]

However, this thesis shows how humanitarian assistance leaves gaps in affording actual protection to people in refugee situations. Syrians in Lebanon are not officially recognized and have particular restrictions on their legal residency and many continue to live in vulnerable positions. Without official recognition as refugees, Syrians in Lebanon are left without access to refugee protection and assistance. In Bekaa, we see that refugees live in informal settlements across the region run by a Shawish who often charges rent. Since adults are not allowed to work and employers favor hiring children, more children are seeking employment than education. Humanitarian aid can provide the essentials needed during immediate responses such as food, clothing, temporary shelter, but investing in long-term solutions, such as education and employment, is vital.

In conclusion, Syrian refugees in Lebanon face a number of barriers to not only education, but also access to basic services. The gravity of the refugee situation in Lebanon has attracted enough justified international attention that more refugees should be in school. Though

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[48] USAID, "United States Announces Additional Humanitarian Aid for Syria Crisis," September 21, 2015, https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/pressreleases/sep-21-2015-united-states-announces-additional-humanitarianaid-syria-crisis.

Lebanon is unique given the structure of the government at the national and local level, its structure and stance on refugees is not a secret. The agency of local actors, such as the Shawishes, is documented among news sources and NGO groups. If the stance of the United States is to support "the humanitarian needs" of refugees in Lebanon, or other countries of first asylum, as opposed to resettling them within the United States, education should be at the forefront of this mission so children are receiving the education they are guaranteed by international law. Educating refugee children not only helps them learn and cope with trauma but also develop the skills they need to either rebuild their home country or our future world.

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