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# Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security

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# Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security



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## Mass Displacement and Human Security in Lebanon: A Risks Analysis of the Syrian Civil War's Effects on Lebanese Society

Antea Enna\*

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### ABSTRACT

*Mass displacement in the Middle East has a major impact on civil society and constitutes a destabilizing factor from security, social, and economic perspectives. The massive refugee flow from Syria has repercussions in neighbouring countries. Lebanon is one of the main destinations for refugees and has the world's highest density of refugees, many of whom are extremely vulnerable. Meanwhile, Lebanon has historically been characterized by a difficult interfaith dialogue and structural political instability. Mass migration from Syria has produced small tensions, violations, disputes, and/or limited conflicts that involve rival armed groups, political parties, and militants, and human security has been undermined in multiple ways on both sides. A specific Conflict Risk Reduction strategy is needed to minimize these destabilizing effects and prevent possible tensions between host community members and displaced population groups. Unlike more traditional approaches, this kind of strategy considers the main destabilizing factors, identifies risks, and involves direct, multidimensional interventions by NGOs and international organizations to enhance human security at all levels.*

**Keywords:** *Conflict Risk Reduction, Mass Displacement, Human Security, Syrian Crisis, Lebanon*

**Biographical Note:** *Antea is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan.*

## Introduction

The Middle East region has been regarded as a potential conflict zone for the last 50 years, due to continuous conflicts, social and economic instability, and a very labile geostrategic balance. The large number of Middle Eastern countries involved in the different crisis flows that have emerged during this period highlights the weak equilibrium of the region, and it has influenced neighbouring countries at many levels as they face internal economic and social challenges and conflicts.<sup>1</sup>

The Middle East's most recent and greatest crisis, the Syrian civil war, has had notable repercussions beyond the country's borders because of the massive exodus of Syrians to neighbouring countries. Lebanon is one of the countries most affected, and it has experienced considerable economic and social stress, as well as serious security implications related to the crisis that has resulted from the civil war's spillover.

Lebanon was already a fragile state, due to its complex, consociational and confessional political system, in which institutions are unable to assure basic state functions such as security, politics, and welfare,<sup>2</sup> and so it is necessary to approach the Syrian crisis and its impact in Lebanon from a different point of view. The Syrian crisis has produced a series of covariate risks, which arise from hazards that tend to affect entire communities and deplete livelihood levels both for host communities and refugees. Literature on the concept of human security, as it relates to refugees, tends to focus on the role of displaced populations as both the consequence and cause of conflict and instability, because their influx increases problems in host countries and undermines economic and social processes.<sup>3</sup> Assuming that the risk of exacerbating pre-existent internal tensions and new inter-communitarian conflicts is high – and taking into account security risk areas in the political, social, and economic domains – it is possible to proceed with a comprehensive risk analysis. This article starts the development of a Conflict Risk Reduction Management strategy, the main goal of which is to ensure and enhance human security while reducing the risks of conflict.

This article uses the definition of human security developed by the United Nations,<sup>4</sup> which focuses on the principle that fundamental freedoms should be protected and constitute the “essence of life”. This principle stresses attention to human life and the environment that surrounds it, and it aims to protect people from a variety of threats classified in terms of three macro-levels, which refer to economic, civil, and political wellbeing. These three spheres of human life will be taken into account in this study and will be brought together

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<sup>1</sup> The largest example of this type of regional spillover is the Palestinian diaspora of 1948, and like the subsequent flows generated by various conflicts involving the Israeli army and Palestinian resistance groups, it impacted on the social and economic spheres of neighbouring countries. For example, it contributed to the Egyptian economic crisis which pushed many people to migrate to Jordan where they became a low-skilled labour force and destabilized the labour market, and the Iraqi presence in many Middle Eastern countries, due to Iraq's difficult socio-political circumstances.

<sup>2</sup> This article uses the definition and assessment indicators for “Fragile States” formulated by the LSE Crisis States Research Centre – see “The Crisis States Network”, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/conflict-and-civil-society/past-programmes/crisis-states-network> (Accessed 22 February 2020) – and those reported by the Fragile State Index developed by the non-profit organisation Fund for Peace at “Country Data”, <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/country-data/> (Accessed 19 May 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Gil Loescher, Gil, *Blaming the Victim*, 46-53.

<sup>4</sup> For a specific definition and a complete overview, see Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now* and the Human Security Unit's *Human Security in Theory and Practice*.



through the specific framework of Conflict Risk Reduction, which treats socio-economic impacts as risks and considers possible conflict-producing variables. An approach based on human security is needed that takes into account these risk factors and adopts a “sustainable livelihood”<sup>5</sup> approach concerning unstable situations where threats of violence and resultant vulnerabilities are high. From this perspective, specific action aimed both at strengthening dialogue between communities at social and economic levels and at creating less dependence on aid can generate a positive environment that can help overcome the sources of tensions and conflict.

In the light of this theoretical framework, this paper will explore three different destabilization levels and examine the impact of massive migration flow on both refugees and host communities by focusing on a Lebanese case study; it will also emphasize human security threats and analyse the risks of conflict related to individual hazards.

For the purpose of this research, a qualitative approach was used. A review of the literature on refugees was conducted, and Lebanese social, political, and economic issues, as well as human security issues, were analysed. This study compares different polls and surveys on threat perception carried out by different international organizations and NGOs from 2011 onwards, and it also considers a variety of relevant programme and project reports. The analysis includes comprehensive programmes such as the *Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2017-2018* developed in response to the Syrian crisis (3RP) by the United Nations (UN) and the *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020* (LCRP), designed by the UN and the Lebanese government. The consideration of documents and reports produced by different levels of actors, including international, national, and local stakeholders, will enhance the construction of a complete framework that encompasses the full range of threats to security and contextualizes them in terms of the perspectives of both refugees and the host community; the plan also recognizes that improvements at the political and socio-economic levels are still in progress. The theoretical model that underpins the strategy takes into consideration general theories and inter-sectoral studies on a range of relevant topics.

### **The roots of political destabilization**

The roots and risks of political destabilization reside in both the Lebanese nation-building process and the country’s historical background, which is characterized by civil war, difficult inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue, and the effects produced by the presence of the Palestinian diaspora. Religious and ethnic pluralism shaped the Lebanese nation-building process after independence in 1943. The government operated on the assessment that its religious diversity was an asset; but religious and social disintegration have also meant that the Lebanese political landscape now features fragmented institutions. The country’s history has featured sectarian conflicts over power, involving different parties and actors who have sought a more representative political system. The current system’s complexity, the conflict it generates, and the high risk of its disintegration have brought Lebanon to a chronic level of instability, and there is no political capacity to deliver or ensure basic state functions such as security, political stability, and welfare.

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<sup>5</sup> For an exhaustive definition of “sustainable livelihood”, see Feinstein International Centre at Tufts University <http://famine.tufts.edu>.

There have been a number of different conflicts and crises in Lebanon's recent past, including the 1958 crisis, the civil war (1975-1990), conflicts with Israel, the Syrian occupation between 1976 and 2005, and different conflicts with the Palestinian refugee community. These crises, together with deep social divisions, prevented a real post-war reconstruction and the development of any strong and effective strategy capable of guaranteeing political stability. As a result, those political parties that gained supporters' trust over time assumed some state functions and also began to act as a reference point for the population's security concerns.<sup>6</sup>

The social destabilization that arose from the Palestinian migration flows that began in 1948 aggravated social fragmentation and fostered a great aversion to Palestinian refugees, which gave rise to a restrictive policy towards displaced people.<sup>7</sup> The repressive line adopted by the government, an incapacity to absorb the Palestinian refugees, and their segregation in refugee camps, together with the consequent struggle between host communities and Palestinians, led to a shared resentment and negative perceptions about displaced people/refugees, who were seen as direct and indirect security threats. To this day, there are several restrictions that affect economic, social, and civilian integration for Palestinians who reside in Lebanon, and Palestinian refugees from Syria today face the same difficulties.

This socio-political background, combined with Lebanon's prior experience of diasporas, has formed the basis of the Lebanese government's approach to the contemporary Syrian crisis. At the beginning of the Syrian civil war, it seemed likely that its impact on the Lebanese political scenario would involve a short-term and contained migration phenomenon, so the open-door policy foreseen by the "Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination",<sup>8</sup> signed by the Lebanese and Syrian governments, was the main strategy adopted by Lebanon as part of its national dialogue framework. According to the Baadba Declaration,<sup>9</sup> adopted by all Lebanese political parties in 2012, Lebanon dissociates itself from all regional and international conflicts, a decision attributed to the

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<sup>6</sup> An International Alert Survey on citizen's perception of security institutions reports that the fragmented and sectarian system has undermined the population's trust in Lebanese state security institutions. Carmen Geha, *Citizens' Perceptions of Security Institutions in Lebanon*.

<sup>7</sup> Lebanon is not part of the 1951 Geneva Convention, and so it does not apply a legal definition of "refugee", which creates a grey area between "alien", "displaced", and "refugee" statuses. The country filled the gap by instituting an inter-institutional committee in charge of adjudicating "political asylum requests". Lebanon, alongside other non-contracting countries, also signed a "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) with UN institutions in 2003 and, though this has never been applied, it was renewed in 2016 to deal with the Syrian crisis. For full details of the renewed MOU, see Library of Congress, "Refugee Law and Policy: Lebanon", <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugee-law/lebanon.php> (Accessed 19 May 2019).

<sup>8</sup> The Treaty established a free movement policy between the two countries in order to enhance economic cooperation in labour-intensive sectors such as construction and agriculture, where Syrians constituted an important and affordable source of labour. For this reason, Syrian migrants received special treatment and protected status, and this was highlighted by the 1994 Naturalisation Decree which aimed to foster social and family connections. United Nations, "Treaty Of Brotherhood, Cooperation And Coordination Between The Syrian Arab Republic And The Lebanese Republic", [http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/LB-SY\\_910522\\_TreatyBrotherhoodCooperationCoordination.pdf](http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/LB-SY_910522_TreatyBrotherhoodCooperationCoordination.pdf) (Accessed 19 May 2019).

<sup>9</sup> For the full text of the declaration, see UNGA Security Council, "The Situation in the Middle East", A/66/849-S/2012/477, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Lebanon%20S%202012%20477.pdf> (Accessed 19 May 2019).

country's policy of dialogue, which refers specifically to the importance of the right to human solidarity and does not cite the refugee issue.

The evolution of the crisis, and the political vacuum left by the change of government, together with internal pressures, changed the political parties' positions and their perception of direct and indirect threats. The involvement of Hezbollah in 2013 in the battle of al-Qusayr alongside the Syrian Arab Army and the presence and consequent influence of the Jabhat al-Nusra Front and Daesh in the North East area of Lebanon, which caused the intervention of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in Aarsal in 2014, made interior management a source of political contention within the divided Lebanese political arena. The security implications of the crisis were no longer regarded as an existential matter in political discussions but were instead seen, from a variety of different perspectives, to pose a real threat. In the view of the Sunni movement, this threat related to unsustainable social and cultural costs; from the Christian movement's position it related to unemployment, a higher cost of living, and insecurity; and, for Hezbollah, it constituted a management issue. The evident spillover of the Syrian civil war and the presence of destabilizing actors split the political arena into two groups, one of which supported the Syrian regime while the other backed the opposition forces. This division caused a sort of collapse in terms of security; in fact, suicide bombings and assassinations occurred which consistently involved civilian casualties. As Lebanon Support's "Conflictivity Index"<sup>10</sup> has shown, conflict intensity rose not only at the political level but also in response to informal refugee camps, especially in the northeast of the country. Conflict here involved civilians from both sides and escalated threats to security.

In 2015, the transformation of perceptions of the crisis pushed the government to adopt a restrictive approach that in fact increased segregation and imposed very strict criteria for entry to, and the renewal of permissions to stay in, Lebanon. The new formulation invited the UNHCR to suspend the official registration of refugees and it also imposed more criteria and expensive fees for the renewal of permissions to stay in the country. These moves increased general hostility towards the host population. Indeed, illegal status and the lack of residency renewal documents mean that unregistered refugees are not allowed to benefit from the services and protection guaranteed by UN agencies. On one hand, the new approach pushed refugees to turn to negative coping strategies in relation to employment, shelter, and healthcare, and this generated a more complex and unstable social environment due to the changed and competitive job market and social insecurity. On the other hand, the loss of legal status puts refugees at the risk of arrest, detention and abuses, as Human Rights Watch has reported,<sup>11</sup> and this undermines basic freedoms, such as liberty of movement, which the Human Rights Committee considers to be an "indispensable condition for the free development of a person".<sup>12</sup>

The host communities also perceive that their local and national communities are threatened by the incapability of the State and the Lebanese economy to absorb the massive influx of migrants and to guarantee services for all the people residing in the

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<sup>10</sup> Civil Society Knowledge Centre, "Conflict Analysis Project", [http://civilsociety-centre.org/cap/ci/armed\\_conflict](http://civilsociety-centre.org/cap/ci/armed_conflict) (Accessed 19 May 2019).

<sup>11</sup> The Human Rights Watch report "I Just Want to be Treated Like a Person" analyses all the abuses related to lack of status and takes into account the experiences of field workers and refugees.

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Committee, General Comment 27, Freedom of Movement (Art.12), U.N. Doc CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.9 (1999).

country. Host communities also perceive political risks in terms of instability, insecurity, and demographic balance, and cultural disruptions.

In addition to Syrian refugees, a considerable number of Palestinian refugees from Syria moved to Lebanon and became an added item in all the programmes and projects carried out by international and local organizations. They were recognized as a vulnerable cohort and a possible contributor to destabilization given the experience of existing tensions with Lebanese Palestinian communities.

The government's decision not to establish refugee camps was based on the tragic history of aggression against those communities, and particularly the killing of between 460 and 3,500 mostly Palestinians and Lebanese Shiite civilians by a Christian Lebanese right-wing party in Sabra and Shatila in 1982. Permanent camps are perceived as a source of insecurity for both refugees and the host community, partly because of their potential links to radicalization and armed conflict, but also because they are places where the most vulnerable individuals could be subjected to harassment, intimidation, and forced recruitment into militant groups. In addition, in the long term, refugee camps might turn into an important political base for the parties that support their construction. In this case, a decision such as the establishment of formal and recognized refugee camps can bolster the single political party which pushed for their establishment, providing them with a strong body of members to form the base of future election campaigns. Political perspectives, in a country with a very fragmented political system can be a further destabilizing factor inside the political arena and can unbalance the political representation of the population.

Furthermore, responsibility for dealing with pressure in this fragile society lies within the competencies of municipalities, and the lack of administrative capacity at the local authority level constitutes one of the main challenges for the Lebanese government, which has planned to empower local institutions by creating and reinforcing specific spaces for dialogue between key institutions and social actors. This measure is intended as a conflict prevention strategy, based on dialogue, and it seeks to involve as many social actors as possible to support municipalities in the management and mitigation of social tensions. At the same time, effective monitoring of conflicts will be carried out, taking into account categories such as policy and socio-economic indicators, power and governance conflicts, and conflicts related to social discrimination, in order to identify the most vulnerable municipalities. Specific actions can then be targeted in response to the needs identified. In every municipality, these strategies will be accompanied by work to strengthen youth participation and empowerment.

The measures provided by the UN and the Lebanese government anticipate various types of cooperation with civil society and non-governmental organizations, which often constitute a link between the different communities and local and national institutions. The involvement of actors at different levels may be difficult and risks the development of many actions with the same aim implemented by multiple entities; this might lead to overlaps that make some interventions worthless. For this reason, effective coordination is the key element for effective planning, coupled with a monitoring and evaluation phase to overcome potential challenges. Taking into account the main challenges and considering the risks in terms of social and political instability, these types of action have to be managed from the civil society to the political level. The creation of a space for

dialogue and the empowerment of communities are the long-term objectives key to reducing the risks of conflict.

### **Shelter, healthcare, and education: symptoms of social imbalance and instability**

The number of diasporic people in Lebanon is very much higher than that suggested by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR),<sup>13</sup> due to a lack of accurate information and access to registration points and the consequent unofficial entry of many Syrians, which creates a worrisome vacuum in the protection regime. The impossibility of accessing services and the weak impact of protection programmes reflects a lack of basic security, as well as of legal, physical, and psychological support. The choice not to establish camps, which was mainly adopted by the government for reasons linked to internal security, obliged up to 85 per cent of refugees to live in substandard conditions in urban and rural settings in the poorest areas of Lebanon, where dire social conditions and difficulties in accessing social services and livelihoods cause host communities and refugees to understand each other as mutual threats.

The high cost of renting appropriate accommodation, which has risen considerably in the last number of years, has complicated the situation on both sides. The lack of infrastructure and proper accommodation means that refugees are not guaranteed adequate access to water, sanitation, electricity, or waste management, and so struggle to achieve a reasonable standard of living.

Social imbalance is also evident in the healthcare system. Although UNHCR is the primary provider of healthcare for refugees, and improvements have been made, the scale of the demand has created space for other NGOs, charities, and religious organizations to provide health services or financial support. The introduction of other actors into the delivery of healthcare services has created a fragmented and bureaucratic system where access is limited only to registered refugees, and so unregistered refugees who are often in severe need are not treated. These services, which focus on guaranteeing primary healthcare, (e.g. treatment of chronic diseases and prenatal care), depend on funding, so the actions overseen by various organizations are often focused on limited and specific target groups and consequently the availability of medical intervention depends on people's specific circumstances and general care is unavailable. For example, psychiatric and psychological issues are not treated, and many women and girls who have been victims of abuse and sexual violence are not supported by any effective psychological support.

Nevertheless, the privatized, and expensive Lebanese healthcare system is stretched beyond its limits due to high demand, high costs, shortage of personnel, and the lack of effective structures. For this reason, access is also limited for vulnerable groups in Lebanese society. Considering these general difficulties, the impossibility of a great part of the Lebanese population accessing the system, and the exclusion of refugees and unregistered refugees from it altogether, the risk of epidemics and infections is very high both for refugees and host communities.

The main objectives in the health sector must be the improvement and strengthening of healthcare institutions and increased access to services to ensure health security and

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<sup>13</sup> The UNHCR's latest update suggests that there are 1,001,051 refugees in Lebanon. See UNHCR, "Syria Regional Refugee Response", <http://data2.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> (Accessed 19 May 2019).

control of outbreaks. These goals, coupled with special attention to the care of the most vulnerable, could ensure, with careful and effective planning, basic security in terms of welfare and sanitation. The government, as well as international organizations and NGOs in this specific field, should work side by side to achieve these objectives and to ensure proper medical management in response to the high demands made on healthcare by both refugees and host communities. To avoid tensions emerging between communities with regard to the cost of healthcare – a phenomenon reported by the LCRP – attention should be paid to vulnerable Lebanese families, who should be guaranteed the same package of services as is available to refugees.

In the education sector, the plans that have been implemented already have created little residual impact in a situation where access to good education is fraught with difficulty. Due to the extreme poverty of many Lebanese and Syrian households, children are forced to work to supplement family income, while others are subjected to forced marriages, abuse, and other forms of exploitation in order for their families to earn some extra income. From the perspective of Syrian refugees, restrictions on movement, for those who do not have a valid residency permit, combined with their distance from schools, becomes a considerable challenge, as well as an issue in terms of security and safety because of checkpoints and other forms of bureaucratic control. Difficulties related to the education sector include poor school environments, low demand for a public education that would benefit the most vulnerable families, along with high costs. All of these challenges have been underestimated by the plans carried out until now at national and municipal levels, and head teachers have often refused to accept Syrian children into their schools; these issues create stumbling blocks in terms of access to the education sector, and, at the same time, they benefit employers who use the underpaid child labour force made available when education is not being accessed. The government's plans to open the education system to refugees have, until now, been opposed by many deans, and programmes related to education have not produced satisfactory results. In fact, the double-shift system, established to allow Syrian children to attend classes in the afternoons while the mornings are reserved for Lebanese children, has been proven to produce negative effects on the general quality of education. There are not enough teachers to respond to pupils' needs and deliver a quality education, and the prevention of Syrian teachers working in the Lebanese education system reduces the availability of teachers in an already stressed system. In this context, the new intervention plan focuses on the renewal of teaching programmes, the facilitation of access to education for the most vulnerable parts of the population, and the professionalization of teacher training in terms of both formal and informal approaches to learning.

Healthcare facilities, along with school infrastructure and shelters, play a decisive role in matters of human security. Educational opportunities can foster social inclusion and awareness, alongside conflict resolution processes, in the long term. Interventions in this direction should have the objective of protecting basic freedoms, and they should adopt a frame of reference predicated on creating sustainable livelihoods and identifying the specific needs of target groups.

These developments, and the improvements foreseen by the 3RP and the LCRP, will enhance the availability of livelihoods and therefore human security, and they will also ensure a reduction in the risk of conflict due to greater access to public services.

### **The destabilisation of the Lebanese economy**

The economic impact of the Syrian crisis on the economy of host countries is a considerable conflict risk factor, together with the increase in population it generates. The general deterioration of social cohesion, already considered here from a political and social perspective, is aggravated by economic marginalization and by underdeveloped social services and infrastructure, which have a significant impact in terms of livelihoods. The injection of humanitarian aid expenditure into the Lebanese economy mitigates some of these effects, but does not resolve this state of affairs.<sup>14</sup> The existing constraints on development in the country have been exacerbated by the crisis which has placed considerable strain on host communities in Lebanon's poorest areas.

From 2011, when the crisis began, Lebanon has incurred losses of 13.1 US\$ billion as a result of the economic downturn and fiscal pressures on public services; GDP has contracted by 10 per cent; growth has decreased from nine to two per cent; tourism has reduced by 23 per cent and exports by 7.5 per cent. General costs for rent, goods, and services have risen and trade with economic partners beyond the borders with Syria has diminished, causing an economic deadlock in the villages adjacent to the borders that depended on these markets. Despite the general state of the economic system and the impact on growth, the main security challenge results from lack of employment opportunities and the saturation of the job market.

Before the crisis, unemployment and informal labour levels were a serious issue in the Lebanese economy, and the presence of refugees and the macro-economic ramifications of their presence exacerbated the previous situation and created strong competition for low-skilled jobs. In fact, host communities perceive refugees as a clear threat to their own chances of employment. In 2016, the rate of employment was around 6.8 per cent, and the insertion of displaced people into the labour force drove down wages and labour conditions. Harsh competition in the labour market pushed a great number of Lebanese nationals into poverty; in particular, young people were badly affected and induced to migrate to find job opportunities. These factors slowed down Lebanon's economic growth, slightly worsened the economic grievances that are the main sources of tensions between communities, and created social instability.

On the refugees' side, the absence of work permits pushed them to work in harsh conditions without rights and with very low wages in informal and illegal businesses. The job market does not allow them to profit or benefit or work in secure and adequate environments, and so the situation remains desperate. The International Labour Organisation's reports shed light on a framework where the majority of refugees workers are either unskilled or semi-skilled, and this means that they are likely to find only the types of informal, temporary, or seasonal jobs that are most likely to expose them to exploitation in their workplaces. Due to the high prices of goods and rent, and food insecurity, child labour is widespread, and children are vulnerable to exploitation. A gender gap is also noticeable, and only 12 per cent of Syrian women are integrated into the job market, so, like children, women are highly vulnerable to wage exploitation.

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<sup>14</sup> For a complete overview of the impact of humanitarian aid on the Lebanese economy, see UNDP/UNHCR, *Impact of Humanitarian Aid on the Lebanese Economy*, 2015, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Impact%20of%20Humanitarian%20Aid-UNDP-UNHCR.PDF> (Accessed 19 May 2019).

The surplus of labour supply on both sides created increased competition, especially in the low- and semi-skilled job categories, and this led to stagnation in the job market and the consequent impoverishment of the people living in Lebanon. It is estimated that the economic impact of the crisis raised child labour levels in Lebanese communities by four per cent. To deal with these economic challenges and fight against prejudice and the threats perceived by both sides, different programmes have been implemented,<sup>15</sup> but they have had very limited impact since the programmes have not been sustained by inter-community dialogue carried out in parallel at institutional levels.

The risks of conflict and social instability in this domain are high, and there are several human security implications related to them. In order to address the economic challenges that have emerged, it is necessary to work at the macro-economic level to address gaps through job creation policies and actions and to provide support and incentives for micro-entrepreneurs, start-ups, and cooperatives. Furthermore, actions aimed at ameliorating and improving decent working conditions need to be taken, and policies for the elimination of child labour and exploitation must also be enforced. Internal economic policies focused on job creation and growth, as well as development, could turn into an opportunity to develop social cohesion. A comprehensive and multidimensional strategy could support this process if actors at different levels including national institutions, municipalities, and international and local organizations focused on the same process but took responsibility for different aspects of it. Plans developed by the UN, agencies, and the Lebanese government in relation to livelihoods consider these challenges but there is a risk that without proper coordination actions and projects will overlap in the implementation phase in ways that limit the effectiveness of the actions themselves and create a vacuum in specific areas where intervention is needed. Moreover, the State's policies, programmes and plans in relation to economic development are likely to be impacted by the effects of Syrian refugees' insertion into the labour market and this could prove to be a difficult political challenge.

## **Conclusion**

The risk analysis outlined and discussed in this paper illustrates that the massive migration flows into Lebanon during the Syrian civil war have had a great impact on Lebanese society and on human security for both host communities and refugees. The presence of 1.5 million Syrians and a consistent number of Palestinian refugees from Syria has amplified and exacerbated the symbiotic relationship between confessional governance and conflict which characterizes Lebanese society and politics and it has produced notable consequences at multiple levels.

Political, social, and economic challenges, as well as challenges in terms of human security, were already present in the country, mainly due to the religious and social disintegration

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<sup>15</sup> Save the Children's Casual Labour Initiative, a programme which aims to alleviate tensions between Syrian refugees and Lebanese nationals has been implemented in Bekaa and Akkar. The research background of the project was provided by the American University of Beirut and the survey analysis, which focused on threat perception, showed the difficulties both sides had in cooperating in workplaces. It also identified that Lebanese people had leadership and responsibility in those workplaces. Although there are limits and challenges to programmes like this which encourage dialogue, and there is room to identify gaps, strengths, and potential improvements in certain areas, they can be important for the construction of social cohesion and intergroup relations and can also constitute an economic intervention with the potential to open up a saturated job market.



that affected the Lebanese political landscape, along with chronic socio-economic instability, but these problems were all exacerbated. In light of the internal challenges Lebanon faces, as well as individual covariate risks, it is necessary to minimize the risks of conflict and to approach the crisis from a new perspective. The approaches usually used, such as peacebuilding and conflict prevention, are unsuitable and have produced limited results from both theoretical and practical points of view. A risk-oriented and risk-based theoretical framework, together with a strategy of intervention linked to needs/risk assessment, is more suitable. Taking into account Lebanon's socio-economic and political background, along with the impact of Syrian refugees on the country's situation, a conflict risk reduction approach is capable of both tackling the range of issues detailed in this article and identifying the practical actions which can be inserted into a specific Conflict Risk Management strategy.

The Syrian civil war's effects clearly impacted negatively on the human security sphere, both for host communities and refugees, and its spillovers affected basic freedoms including freedom of movement, security, social stability and security, and livelihoods, exposing the most vulnerable cohorts of the population resident in Lebanon to exploitation and abuse.

Considering these insights and the specific approach identified here, human security is vitally important in any risk and needs analysis and can help identify specific outcomes, indicators, and targets for practical implementation. It is evident that programmes with limited aims and the problems caused by poor coordination and overlapping projects need to be avoided: a compartmentalized approach to Lebanon's issues interferes with any effective action. The exclusion of Syrian actors from these processes is also problematic. A multi-level and comprehensive strategy based on the assessment of need and risks will provide a strong substructure for an effective Conflict Risk Management strategy. The assessment and the individuation of clear objectives needs to be accompanied by an ongoing monitoring and evaluation process to ensure continual improvement, and the main aim must be to ensure human security as this approach will support the delivery of basic freedoms and concrete opportunities that will in turn help to deliver human rights. A shared development path, involving refugees, will allow Lebanon to enter upon a new path with the purpose of creating social cohesion and a resilient society.

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