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1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since the unrest in Syria began in March 2011, the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon has hosted varying numbers of displaced Syrian families. Local actors such as municipalities and NGOs registered families for assistance received through regional and international donors. In March 2012, UNHCR and partners established operations in the Bekaa in order to support local actors with the increasing number of displaced families. By 11 May 2012, there were approximately 9,000 displaced Syrians registered with local actors throughout the Bekaa region.<sup>1</sup>

Following DRC Lebanon’s livelihood assessment of displaced Syrians in the Northern Governorate, the newly established DRC programme in the Bekaa sought to offer a preliminary assessment of Syrians’ livelihood situations in the Bekaa region. The areas assessed included Aarsal, Baalbeck, Central Bekaa, West Bekaa, as well as parts of El Sahel (Fekha and Ein). DRC collected quantitative data from 247 displaced households throughout those areas, which constituted approximately 19% of the total reported registered population in April. In addition to the survey, DRC conducted 7 focus group discussions with host community men as well as displaced Syrian men and women (disaggregated by gender and geographic area of displacement), and used data from other DRC assessments as sources for this report.

**Main Findings**

- In general, **displaced Syrian families in the Bekaa have far more transferable and diverse skillsets than those displaced in Northern Lebanon** (Akkar region), as indicated by their previous livelihood strategies in Syria.
  - 46% of households surveyed engaged in unskilled work, mainly related to construction and agriculture.<sup>2</sup>
  - 22% were involved in semiskilled work not related to construction (tailor, driver, butcher, commerce, etc. – please see page 5 for further details).
  - 13% reported working in construction in Syria (semiskilled – electricians, stone work, glasswork/installation, etc.).
  - 12% were either unemployed in Syria (mainly students or elderly) or were female-headed households without income earners present in Lebanon (16 households).
  - 7% engaged in skilled work in Syria – teaching, accounting, administrative work, engineering, nursing, law.
  - **51% of families surveyed had at least one member working in Lebanon.**
- **Most Syrian families displaced in the Bekaa have incurred some type of debt.** Examples of common debt include: rental payment, credit owed to shops (for food, medication, etc.), fees related to border crossings
  - For example, in Baalbeck local shops have been lenient in allowing purchases on credit; however, in some cases the shop owners have become impatient and are no longer extending their offer to accumulate debt.
- **Rent emerged as a huge need**, particularly in the Central and West Bekaa areas, with space becoming limited in locations with high concentrations of displaced families. Rent was the largest source of debt for most families, and the biggest need

<sup>1</sup> Source: UNHCR Lebanon Update, “Support to displaced Syrians,” 4 April – 11 May 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Unskilled labour is generally defined as work people can learn to do in 30 days or less. Semi-skilled labour consists of professions that take at least 30 days to learn, but the scope and variety of semi-skilled professions can vary from low to high skill levels. Source: U.S. Department of Labour.

for very poor households (please see socioeconomic categories). Moreover, all of the urban areas surveyed reported soon reaching a maximum hosting capacity, with very little accommodation left available to arriving families.

- DRC Lebanon in the North and Bekaa reports that families who arrive in the Bekaa and cannot find accommodation or assistance are moving to Tripoli in order to access better services and support networks; this was corroborated by a visit to a local agency in Tripoli, where a group of men had just arrived from Aarsal seeking additional support.
- The **different geographic areas of the Bekaa present very different livelihood challenges** for displaced families. The main factors influencing livelihoods for displaced people are accommodation and income opportunities (job markets), which are described in more detail on page 3.

### **Recommendations** (please see page 10)

#### **Humanitarian programming for displaced households**

- **Cash or voucher-based assistance** will benefit local businesses and allow displaced families flexibility in meeting needs.
- **Targeted cash assistance to the most vulnerable households** (socioeconomically “very poor”) – strict selection criteria based on systematically identified vulnerabilities (integrated livelihood and protection profiling).
- **Rent support** programming for vulnerable households
  - Rent and shelter in general remains a serious concern. Livelihood programming can address shelter issues by improving families’ income possibilities while creating additional accommodation in the Bekaa (through the DRC box approach, for example).
- **Home-based income generation for women (Syrian & Lebanese)** to provide income opportunities in a way that makes women feel safe and connects displaced and host community women
- **Creation of a job database** to connect displaced people with specific skillsets to employment opportunities (teachers, nurses, lawyers, etc.)

#### **Priorities for development actors & funding: focus on Bekaa communities’ hosting capacity**

1. Concentrate exclusively on host community livelihoods in areas with large concentrations of displaced people – to balance the effect of assistance exclusively to displaced families and hopefully reduce tensions related to overuse of limited resources
2. Skills development and job creation programming should focus mainly on host communities, with a percentage of opportunities available to displaced people

## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Bekaa Valley is a unique region of Lebanon characterised by fertile land and plurality, both political and religious. The Bekaa is politically heterogeneous, with delineated sectarian divisions and a strong presence of Hezbollah. The Bekaa is also known as Lebanon’s most important agricultural region, and most development programmes focus on building the region’s environmental and agricultural capacity; as such, most livelihood opportunities are in male-oriented sectors (construction, farming), with few development projects supporting female-focused income generation.<sup>3</sup> The Bekaa has a long history of seasonal migration from Syria to Lebanon for agricultural or construction-based work; there are also Syrians who have been working permanently in the Bekaa for years. Moreover, intermarriage between Syrians and people from the Bekaa is a regular and longstanding occurrence.

Since the beginning of the unrest in Syria, Syrians crossed into the Bekaa by both legal and illegal means to settle throughout the region. DRC has witnessed various types of displacement – entire households displaced due to unrest, households that are partially displaced, migrant workers that used to cross individually and now bring their families, nomadic groups (such as Bedouins) who cannot resume regular migration, etc. Depending on where people are displaced in the Bekaa, they are renting accommodation (in buildings or nomadic dwellings), staying with host families, occupying abandoned structures, or living on public land. Given the history of migration in the Bekaa, displaced families are relying on a mix of assistance and casual work.

## **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSESSMENT**

Following DRC’s livelihood assessment in Northern Lebanon, DRC wanted to understand populations’ livelihood needs and challenges in the Bekaa. The assessment took place between 10 April and 4 May 2012 with the following objectives:

- To understand Syrian families’ livelihood strategies prior to displacement;
- To assess displaced families’ livelihood needs and challenges, and how they are coping during displacement;
- To understand the difference in livelihood situations, needs and challenges for displaced and host community households in different geographic areas of the Bekaa.

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<sup>3</sup> The notable exception is UNDP’s partnership with Kraft Foods on food processing support to women’s cooperatives; however, the scope of the project is quite small (200 women) in comparison with much larger development initiatives in the Bekaa.

Due to time constraints, DRC was only marginally able to assess the livelihood situation of host communities. Also, the sample size of households surveyed was only 11% of the total registered population at the time, which is low; given the increase in displacement since April, the percentage has further decreased. DRC plans to supplement its protection and post-distribution monitoring data collection with livelihood information to bolster its coverage and understanding of livelihood issues in displacement-affected areas.

Sources of information for this assessment include:

- Livelihood survey (please see Section 5 – Assessment), as well as the larger DRC verification exercise within which the livelihood survey was conducted (verification exercise sample size: 453 households – please see Annex A)
- Household data from the joint DRC-World Vision Lebanon (WVL) pre-assessment for the WFP food voucher project (sample size: 147 households – please see Annex B)
- 7 focus group discussions with displaced and host community adults (disaggregated by gender and geographic area)
- Key informant interviews with DRC and UNHCR staff, as well as local partner representatives and municipality officials
- Document review

#### **4. GENERAL LIVELIHOOD NEEDS**

##### *Displaced Households*

Findings from the verification exercise indicated that families generally prioritized **food** and **rent** as their main household needs. However, this livelihood assessment revealed that Syrians displaced in different areas of the Bekaa presented very different livelihood needs mainly based on two factors – accommodation and income opportunities (job markets). In this sense, the Bekaa can be divided into three broad categories:

##### 1. Central & West Bekaa

These areas demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Majority of displaced **paying rent**
- **Limited availability of accommodation** (problem of space) – soon reaching the point of saturation
- **Few job opportunities** in areas where displaced families are concentrated (so travel is required)
- **High debt** – displaced families want to diversify their diets and pay for other basic needs such as medicine. Goods are available but displaced families cannot afford them, so they purchase items on credit.

According to families, the main livelihood needs are rent payment and job opportunities, with which they say they will be able to meet their own needs (including eliminating debt and diversifying their diets). Men also requested transport such as bicycles to be able to travel and find job opportunities.

##### 2. Baalbeck & El Sahel (Fakha, Ein, and Zeitoun)

- Majority of displaced **paying rent**, although prices are lower than in Central and West Bekaa
- **Limited availability of accommodation** (problem of space) – soon reaching the point of saturation
- **Job opportunities exist but are exploitative** – low wages and long hours compared with Lebanese workers
- **High debt** – goods are available but displaced families cannot afford them, so they purchase items on credit
- **Some tensions with host community** due to the political heterogeneity of Baalbeck

In Baalbeck, both men and women said their main livelihood need is cash to pay rent and supplement low wages in order to meet basic needs.

##### 3. Aarsal

- **Few displaced are paying rent** – those that do pay much lower rates than elsewhere in the Bekaa (25-50% less)
- **Limited availability of accommodation** (problem of space) – soon reaching the point of saturation
- **Job opportunities exist but are exploitative** – low wages and long hours compared with Lebanese workers
  - **This in turn creates tensions with the host community** due to limited job opportunities, as well as the highly politicised environment and general poverty of the host community.

Displaced families requested voucher assistance (as opposed to food kits) for more flexibility to meet basic needs and circulation permits to move freely in order to find work.

##### *Host Community Households*

It was difficult for DRC to access host community households because the concept of “host community” by local actors was limited to families physically hosting displaced people, many of which did not want to be included in focus group discussions (so as not to advertise the fact that they host Syrians). DRC therefore concentrated on host community men in Aarsal, where the local population is known to be poorer than in other parts of the Bekaa. The men who participated in the focus group reported their incomes were between USD 200-600 (500,000-900,000 LL) per month. They raised the issue of the lack of space in Aarsal to continue hosting

displaced families; DRC has also noted an increase in families in the Northern Governorate who have moved from Aarsal due to the overcrowding and lack of resources. Some mentioned that displaced men are accepting temporary work at much lower wages than Lebanese, which was “taking away work opportunities from the locals.” The men also cited the need to address environmental issues caused by the displaced, namely littering and pollution from burning shoes for cooking fuel. Their livelihood needs were therefore a combination of a lack of development and squeezed resources because of the large presence of Syrians.

**5. ASSESSMENT: LIVELIHOOD SURVEY FINDINGS**

In mid-April DRC conducted a verification exercise of local partners’ registration lists, which also included information about displaced families’ needs and protection concerns. During the verification exercise (10-14 April), outreach teams asked 247 families<sup>4</sup> the following questions regarding livelihoods:

- 1) What kind of work were you doing in Syria?
- 2) What are you doing now in Lebanon to meet your family’s basic needs?
- 3) What are the skills you have that you think could be used to earn an income?
  - a. If you do not have the skills, what do you think would be useful to get an income?

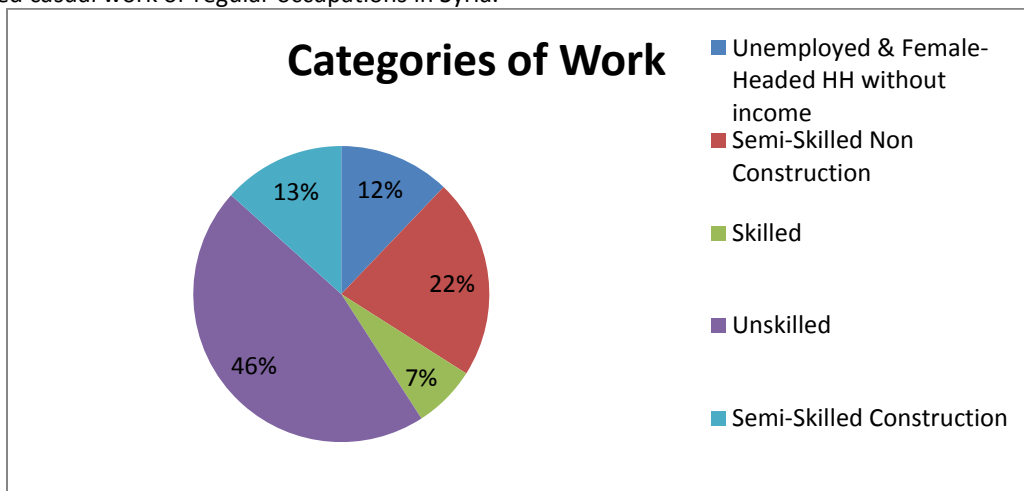
Geographic Area	Total registered displaced households (April 2012)	Sample size (households) & percentage of area total	Percentage of total sample size
El Sahel	199	42 (21%)	17%
Aarsal	530	49 (9%)	20%
Baalbeck	338	50 (15%)	20%
Central Bekaa	963	81 (8%)	33%
West Bekaa	261	25 (10%)	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,291 HHS<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>247 HHS (11%)</b>	<b>100%</b>



Source: Google Maps (May 2012)

**General Survey Findings**

In general, **displaced Syrian families in the Bekaa have far more transferable and diverse skillsets than those displaced in Northern Lebanon** (Akkar region), as indicated by their previous livelihood strategies in Syria. However, most households surveyed were engaged in unskilled casual work or regular occupations in Syria.



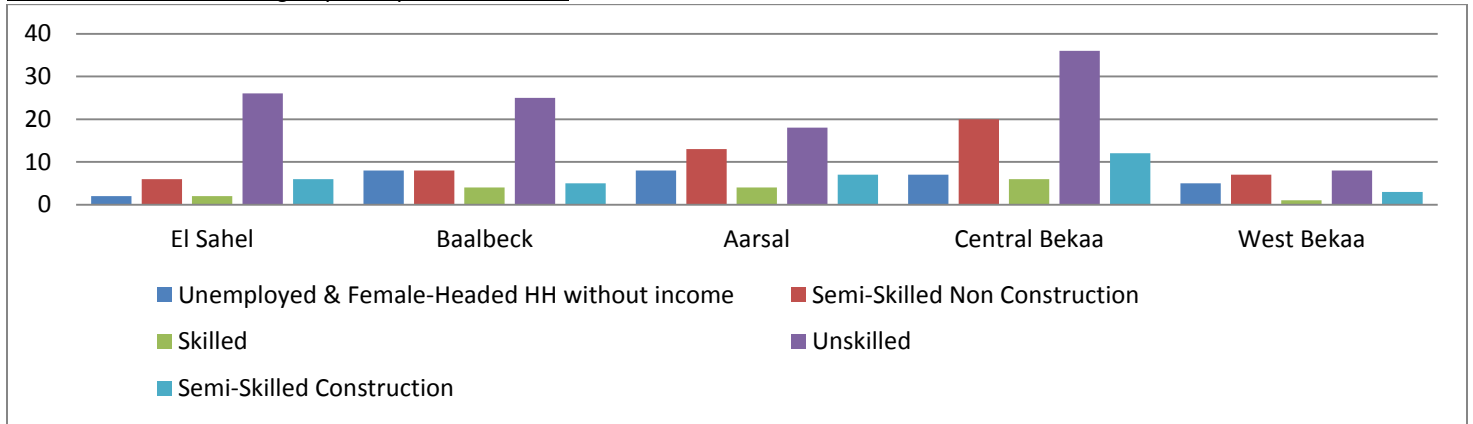
<sup>4</sup> 247 households constituted approximately 11% of the reported registered population at the time of the assessment (mid-April 2012).

<sup>5</sup> These are the figures reported by local partners on 23 April 2012.

The survey of 247 households revealed 35 different professions that people held in Syria. Annex C contains a full breakdown of the types of jobs per category, but the following were most commonly reported (the most prevalent is listed first):

- *Unskilled* – casual worker, migrant worker, farmer (agricultural worker), vegetable vendor, painter, factory worker
- *Semi-skilled non construction* – driver, merchant/vendor, tailor, restaurant owner/chef, mechanic, baker, butcher, barber
- *Semi-skilled construction* – carpenter, welder, tiling worker, electrician
- *Skilled* – teacher, administrator / office worker, accountant, public employee
- *Unemployed* – retirees (previous professions not mentioned), students
  - 16 families identified themselves as *female-headed households* without any income earner, mainly because spouses were either still in Syria or deceased

Previous livelihood strategies per displacement area



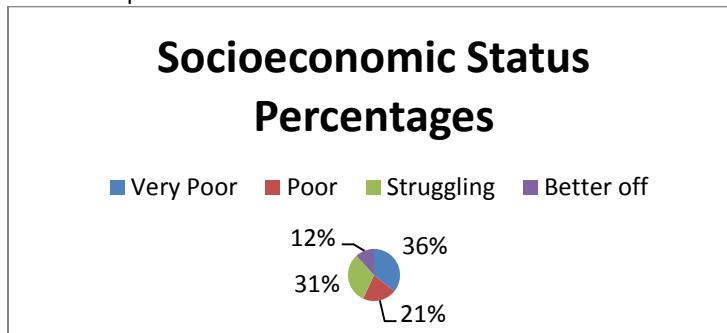
While the figures are influenced by the total number of displaced families per area, it is important to note the following:

- Skilled work: The highest concentration of skilled people is displaced in Central Bekaa.
- Unemployed / female-headed households without income: West Bekaa has the highest proportion of unemployed families; however, within the survey sample Baalbeck has the highest number of unemployed, vulnerable households.

**Socioeconomic Status: Qualitative Categories**

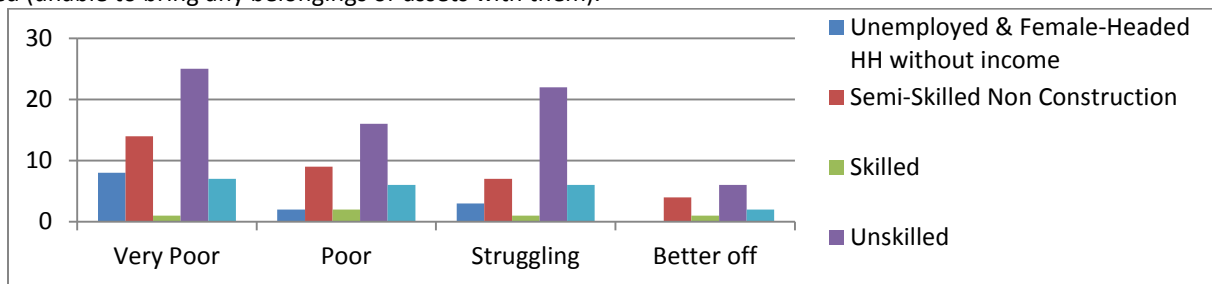
DRC outreach teams were also asked to qualitatively compare households’ socioeconomic status, given the teams’ experience visiting displaced Syrian households in both the Northern Governorate and the Bekaa. Rather than a quantitative analysis, these qualitative observations allowed DRC to roughly categorise households’ situations in relation to other displaced families. It is important to note that these categories were used to describe households’ current situations in Lebanon, not their socioeconomic status prior to displacement. The DRC outreach teams assessed 204 families in the following **socioeconomic categories**:<sup>6</sup>

- **Very poor** (36%) – high debt (often from renting), little to no furniture (even donated), no communication means (phone, etc.), no transportation means
- **Poor** (21%) – medium to high debt, little furniture (or in bad condition), only 1 mobile phone, bicycle as the only transportation means
- **Struggling** (31%) – small debts, some furniture, at least 1 member working (employment excluding casual work), at least 1 mobile phone, some form of transportation
- **Better off** (12%) – little to no debt, able to pay rent, steady employment (including longstanding work in Lebanon), multiple forms of communication and transportation

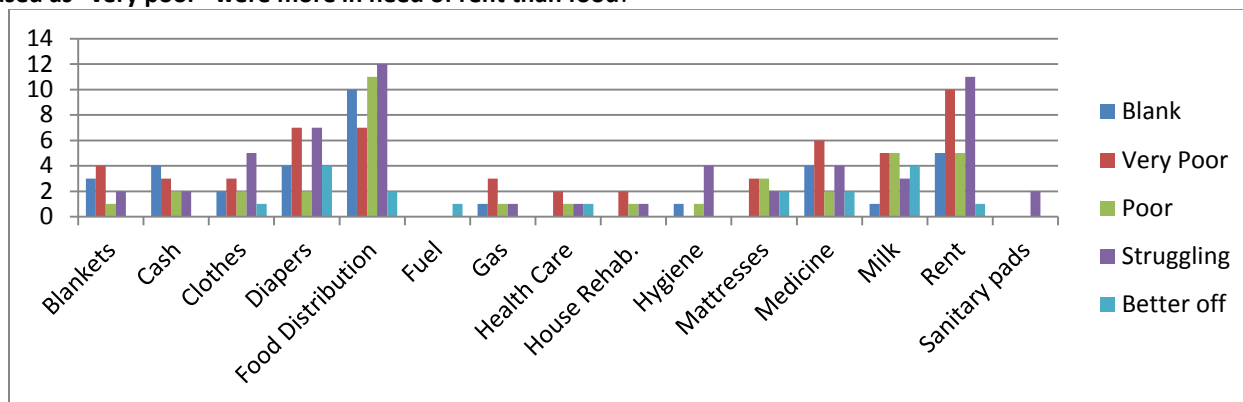


<sup>6</sup> There was inconclusive socioeconomic category information for 43 households in the sample of 247 households.

While unskilled work predictably kept households in the poor to struggling range, it is interesting to note that of the few households with skilled work, most were considered poor rather than struggling or better off. This may be more related to the way in which people fled (unable to bring any belongings or assets with them).



Using the data collected through the verification exercise (please see Annex A for the summary report), DRC was able to compare households' socioeconomic status with the primary self-identified needs. In the graph below it is interesting to note that **households categorised as "very poor" were more in need of rent than food.**



### Meeting Basic Needs during Displacement

Households surveyed were using the following strategies to meet basic needs in Lebanon:<sup>7</sup>

- 51% of families had at least one member working in Lebanon
- 47% rely on assistance
- 15% receive support from the hosting family (cash, food, etc.)
- 14% rely on personal savings, with most reporting a near depletion or debt
- 8% receive remittances from family members abroad or back in Syria
- 3% are looking for work but cannot find anything
- Skills – households listed 30 different skillsets they possessed that they thought could be used to get an income
  - 41 households (17%) were able to list more than one skillset their family could use to get an income
  - 40% of families did not list any skills. On 32% of the forms it was blank (data collection error or no response from family); 8% of families replied that they felt they had no skills.
  - The highest percentage of reported skills was unskilled to semi-skilled; however, there were a notable proportion of teachers.

What are the <u>skills</u> you have that you think could be used to earn an income?	Number of HHs	Percentage of Total Sample
Casual or daily work (any sector)	25	10%
Farming or agricultural work	20	8%
Driving (trucks, cars, vans, etc.)	16	6%
Tiling work	15	6%
Painting	12	5%
Commerce / entrepreneurship	11	4%
Carpentry	11	4%
Cooking or restaurant work	10	4%
Teaching	8	3%

<sup>7</sup> Households were able to use multiple answers, so the total will be over 100%. 4% of households (9 families) did not respond to the question.

Concrete work (construction)	7	3%
Mechanical repairs	7	3%
Sewing	6	2%
Porter / janitor work	6	2%

- Skills households think would be useful to get an income but that they did not have:
  - 70% of families surveyed could not think of skills they did not have but could use for an income
  - 11% said they needed assistance with job placements or how to better conduct job searches
  - 6% replied that they would work any type of job, however temporary or casual
  - 5% of households surveyed mentioned that a member had found permanent employment

### **Women as Income Providers**

7% of households reported women working in Syria and Lebanon (17 HHs), which is a marked difference with Northern Lebanon where no women in displaced households reported working. There are a higher proportion of skilled women compared with the overall number of households that reported women working. The most common jobs women held in Syria and tried to find in Lebanon related to sewing, teaching (everything from general teachers to specific subjects, such as biology), university studies (law, literature, etc.), harvesting, cleaning, factory work, hairdressing, photography, nursing, and vending. Syrian women who had worked outside of the home said they would only do so in Lebanon for “decent” jobs such as teaching (a combination of acceptable wages and dignified positions). For example, in Baalbeck displaced women tried to find jobs but either the wages were very low (200,000 LBP/month working 6 days a week from 8am to 6pm) or they did not find suitable positions.

Women who had not worked outside of their homes in Syria (or worked at all) are finding themselves in need of an income while displaced; however, they prefer working from home to “avoid confrontation” with host communities and to be “more at ease” near their children and families. Some of these women who participated in the focus groups are widowers and depend on themselves to survive; while they were able to live comfortably in Syria, their living standards have diminished considerably in Lebanon. Few women, however, have found opportunities to work from home. A notable except was in Bar Elias, where a woman worked for 20 days preparing sweets for a shop. The representative would come by every day to give her the ingredients. She would work 12 hours to get paid less than 1 USD per kilo of prepared sweets (1,000 LL); her average daily income was between 20-30 USD.

### **Gender roles in consumption decision making**

Women reported feeling proud that they rarely needed to leave the house in Syria to buy basic items because their husbands were able to provide everything for their families. Now that families are displaced, it appears that a combination of distance to shops and household habits affects who makes consumption decisions in a household. In Central Bekaa, displaced families reported that women would be in charge of shopping if they did not have to travel far; if they felt it was unsafe or too far, men (including boys) would be responsible. In Baalbeck, when the women were asked who takes care of the household finances, they all said they took on that responsibility; their men would sometimes help by staying in with the children or going to buy heavy goods. However, when displaced men in Baalbeck were asked who decides what to spend money on within the household, they said they were leading this issue because of traditional norms (Syrian women stay at home while the men bring the goods). Their reasoning was more opportunistic than conservative – they felt that going out to buy goods gave them an opportunity to meet people and perhaps find jobs.

### **Livelihood Profiles per Area**

The following profiles combine the qualitative and quantitative information to give a brief picture of the livelihood situations for displaced families in each area. More information was collected in areas with larger concentrations of displaced, namely Aarsal, Baalbeck, and Central Bekaa.

#### **El Sahel**

Displaced population (April 2012) = 199 households (24% sampled)

<b>Places of Origin in Syria</b>	<b>Livelihood Strategies in Syria</b>	<b>Livelihood Strategies during Displacement in the Bekaa</b>	<b>Socioeconomic Status (during displacement)</b>	<b>Main Needs<sup>8</sup> (in priority order)</b>
Rural Homs (62% of sample), specifically Al Qusair (50%)	<b>1) Casual worker (19%)</b> 2) Driver (15%) 3) Teacher (6%) 4) Tiling worker (4%)	<b>1) Assistance (50%)</b> <b>2) Temporary work (50%)</b> 3) Savings (23%) 4) Remittances (6%)	<b>1) Poor (31%)</b> 2) Very poor (23%) 3) Struggling (21%) 4) Better off (21%)	1) Baby milk 2) Diapers 3) Food 4) Clothes

<sup>8</sup> Source: DRC-UNHCR verification exercise primary data, 10-14 April 2012.

	5) Electrician (4%)	<i>HHs provided multiple answers</i>		
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**Accommodation:**

Just over half (52%) of the families registered in El Sahel are renting, while the others are hosted; however, those renting are paying generally at least 1/3 less than families renting in more densely populated areas such as Baalbeck or Central Bekaa.

**Income Opportunities & Meeting Basic Needs:**

Most households who have found work in Lebanon are engaged in casual jobs, but some have also found semiskilled opportunities such as tailoring work, driving, carpentry, and electrical work. This indicates a relatively solid level of transferrable skills that displaced families in El Sahel can use to diversify their livelihood strategies. Despite the relatively small sample, there is a range of skilled and unskilled work among displaced households, with women in the role of teachers. Even within the casual work, households surveyed listed multiple types of skills they thought they could use in Lebanon to get an income, such as painting, tiling, and carpentry.

**Aarsal**

Displaced population (April 2012) = 530 households (9% sampled)

Places of Origin in Syria	Livelihood Strategies in Syria	Livelihood Strategies during Displacement in the Bekaa	Socioeconomic Status (during displacement)	Main Needs (in priority order)
Rural Homs (80% of sample), specifically Al Qusair (31%)	<b>1) Casual worker (12%)</b> 2) Driver (8%) 3) Farmer (8%) 4) Painter (6%) 5) Factory worker (4%) 6) Office worker (4%)	<b>1) Casual work (45%)</b> 2) Assistance (31%) 3) Savings (12%)  <i>HHs provided multiple answers</i>	<b>1) Very poor (45%)</b> 2) Poor (14%) 3) Struggling (14%) 4) Better off (4%)	1) Food (first, second, third priorities) 2) Hygiene

**Accommodation:**

Most displaced families in Aarsal are not paying rent; in April, DRC outreach teams noted only 3% of registered families were renting. Those paying are spending between 66 and 100 USD per month (100,000-150,000 LL). The vast majority are hosted in various housing situations. During the livelihood assessment, displaced men said they preferred not to live in collective shelters because they think it would make them targets for harassment from the host community. Families are reported to be expanding due to new births and arrivals, which displaced households feel is not covered by current assistance and accommodation.

**Income Opportunities & Meeting Basic Needs:**

According to displaced men, the biggest problem is finding work – opportunities are limited and employers offer Syrians much lower wages than Lebanese, which displaced men know is creating tension with Lebanese labourers. Cement daily work was quoted at 30,000 LL per day (20 USD), which is higher than other jobs but lower than what Lebanese are paid. However, these temporary jobs are often Syrians' only employment opportunities. There were many reported instances of problems with the host community – because Syrians are taking away job opportunities, political pressure for displaced men to return to fight, etc. Displaced men in Aarsal prefer that their women don't work.

**Baalbeck**

Displaced population (April 2012) = 338 households (15% sampled)

Places of Origin in Syria	Livelihood Strategies in Syria	Livelihood Strategies during Displacement in the Bekaa	Socioeconomic Status (during displacement)	Main Needs (in priority order)
Rural Damascus (38% of sample) Rural Homs (28%) Homs (16%)	<b>1) Unemployed: retired &amp; students (14%)</b> 2) Female headed-households (12%) 3) Tiling worker (10%) 4) Casual worker (10%) 5) Commerce (6%) 6) Carpenter (6%) 7) Restaurant work (6%) <b>8) Farmer (6%)</b>	<b>1) Assistance (62%)</b> 2) Casual work (34%) 3) Savings (20%) 4) Remittances 16%) 5) Host family support (12%)	<b>1) Struggling (53%)<sup>9</sup></b> 2) Very poor (26%) 3) Poor (12%) 4) Better off (9%)	1) Food (first and second priorities) 2) Clothes 3) Blankets

**Accommodation:**

During the focus group with displaced men, DRC staff polled the 12 participants and found that they were all paying rent. On average, monthly rent was 200 USD for 6 people per household (although households had anywhere from 2 to 14 members). This

<sup>9</sup> The sample size for the qualitative socioeconomic assessment was 43 households, not 50.



rent provided on average 2 rooms, and two thirds of the participants said that utilities were not available with the accommodation. Women reported that landlords are no longer renting out their premises and in some cases some landlords are trying to evict the existing displaced families due to political tensions and pressure from the local community.

#### *Income Opportunities & Meeting Basic Needs:*

Almost all the women who participated in focus groups were living in debt somehow; some owe pharmacies and others their local vegetable shop. Some rely on their kids who are currently working and generating income (one case, the woman's son works 6 days a week from 8am to 8pm for 400,000 LBP). Women say they are looking for jobs, but wages are too low or the hours are too long.

In general, the local shops they go to purchase their goods have been lenient with them giving them credit; however, in some cases the shop owners have become impatient and are no longer extending their offer to having them accumulate their debt further.

An unknown organization in Baalbeck promised displaced families 6 months ago that they would receive cash assistance that never materialized. The women spent the money they had and purchased other items on credit because they were under the impression that the allowance would arrive soon; they are now left with even bigger debts.

Men say their first challenge is the lack of employment opportunities and the fact that no one is really working. If work is available, the wages are very low and hours are long (for example, receiving 3.33 USD / 5,000 LL per day from 8am to 8pm). When asked where they buy food and other necessities, some men that the neighborhood local stores are very welcoming and they are given goods on credit with no problems Others said they have to know a Lebanese person to sponsor them in order to purchase goods from the local stores on credit. In some cases, men are sending the goods or even the whole food kit to their families in Syria.

### **Central Bekaa**

Displaced population (April 2012) = 963 households (8% sampled)

<b>Places of Origin in Syria</b>	<b>Livelihood Strategies in Syria</b>	<b>Livelihood Strategies during Displacement in the Bekaa</b>	<b>Socioeconomic Status (during displacement)</b>	<b>Main Needs (in priority order)</b>
Rural Homs (23% of sample) Homs (23%) Rural Idlib (14%)	<b>1) Driver (14%)</b> 2) Casual worker (9%) 3) Commerce (8%) 4) Painter (6%) 5) Carpenter (5%) 6) Vegetable seller (5%)	<b>1) Temporary Work (73%)</b> 2) Assistance (53%) 3) Host family support (16%) 4) Savings (4%) 5) Remittances (3%) <i>Most families surveyed rely on a combination of assistance and work.</i>	<b>1) Very poor (35%)<sup>10</sup></b> <b>2) Struggling (29%)</b> <b>3) Poor (22%)</b> <b>4) Better off (14%)</b>	1) Rent (first and second priorities) 2) Clothes 3) Diapers

#### *Accommodation:*

In Central Bekaa, the main need is rent. All the families in Bar Elias that participated in the focus group discussions and most of the men in Saadnayel are renting accommodation. According to DRC staff from the area, they are paying market prices – 200,000 LL to 400,000 LL per month (133-270 USD), depending on the size of the apartment – but almost all are living as multiple families in an apartment. Also, some landlords may be taking advantage of refugee families (e.g. charging 100,000LL for electricity for 5 lamps + 1 TV). Some landlords in Bar Elias have threatened eviction if families do not pay.

#### *Income Opportunities & Meeting Basic Needs:*

As in El Sahel, the majority of displaced people who found jobs are engaged in casual work, but some have found semi-skilled opportunities such as carpentry, commerce, and electrical work. However, 6 households reported that children under the age of 16 were working to support their families because of the high cost of living.

Despite finding temporary work, many families are hundreds of USD in debt despite selling assets in Syria (mainly jewelry & electronics). They owe money in Syria for "facilitation" across the legal border for their wives (100-200 USD), and in Lebanon for rent and credit to shops. When they were asked where they are getting the money they have, most have sold their gold, other jewelry, watches and phones. One person mentioned that displaced people are being exploited through jobs that pay only 200,000 LL a month (133 USD) working 6 days a week in a gas station, for example. Many men and some women have been out in Central Bekaa looking for work but say that the market is saturated. One truck driver said he was hired at 40% of his usual salary. Syrian men in Saadnayel suggested receiving bicycles to be able to look for work or sell kaar (cakes).

In certain areas of Central Bekaa, DRC programme staff received reports that food and NFI distribution items were for sale in local shops. Upon investigation, they were told by shop keepers that displaced Syrians themselves came to the shops to resell mattresses and blankets. DRC also received many reports of trading the food kits directly for things such as medicine and fresh food. Those who sold the food kits said they did so for about 1/4 of the prices. "There is something called meat, ever heard of it?" A displaced head of household asked during a focus group discussion; he and others admitted to selling the food kits to buy fresh food for their children.

<sup>10</sup> The sample size for the qualitative socioeconomic assessment was 72 households, not 81.

## West Bekaa

Displaced population (April 2012) = 261 households (10% sampled)

Places of Origin in Syria	Livelihood Strategies in Syria	Livelihood Strategies during Displacement in the Bekaa	Socioeconomic Status (during displacement)	Main Needs (in priority order)
Idlib (40% of sample) Homs (20%) Hama (12%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Farmer (12%)</b></li> <li>- <b>Unemployed: retired &amp; female headed HH (12%)</b></li> <li>- Casual worker (8%)</li> <li>- Restaurant owner (4%)</li> <li>- Carpenter (4%)</li> <li>- Baker (4%)</li> <li>- Driver (4%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Assistance (32%)</b></li> <li>- Casual work (20%)</li> <li>- Remittances (12%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Poor<sup>11</sup></b></li> <li>2) Very Poor</li> <li>3) Better Off</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Rent</li> <li>2) Mattresses</li> <li>3) Milk</li> <li>4) Blankets</li> <li>5) Clothes</li> <li>6) Food</li> </ul>

### Accommodation:

According to the DRC shelter assessment in April 2012, approximately 61% of registered displaced families are renting accommodation in West Bekaa. This was corroborated by the verification exercise and livelihood assessment, where families reported that their main need is rent. As in Central Bekaa, this is affecting households' ability to support themselves during displacement.

### Income Opportunities & Meeting Basic Needs:

From the responses, work appears to be more difficult to find in West Bekaa than other areas, despite households' diverse skills they feel could be used to gain an income – cooking/restaurant work, farming, vending, carpentry, aluminium work, and driving. This may be due to a competitive labour market or limited opportunities; this assessment was not able to investigate the issue further.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

### General Recommendations for Livelihood Support in the Bekaa Area

**Cash or voucher-based initiatives are well suited for Bekaa context** because of the following preconditions:

- Markets are functioning
- Families vary greatly in size and identified needs, so a standard kit does not respond to specific needs per household
- Many families were embarrassed when asked about their needs in Lebanon; cash transfer programming offers the dignity of choice
- The fact that most households have transferrable skills means organisations can focus on increasing their purchasing power (income sources and ability to meet basic needs) in the short term rather than focus on skills development (which is best suited for the medium to long term)

**Targeted cash assistance to the most vulnerable households** (socioeconomically “very poor”) for approximately 6 months

- Targeted: Strict selection criteria based on systematically identified vulnerabilities (integrated livelihood and protection profiling)
- If cash is not an implementation option, organisations can consider a “special needs fund” to review and support specific cases until a targeting system is in place

**Rent Support:** “Cash for Rent” programming for vulnerable households (Very Poor to Poor); “work for rent” (“Struggling” families)

- Families with able-bodied men can participate in construction-related projects in exchange for the price of rent
  - Projects should include the creation of new shelters – the DRC box concept
- Acceptable rent price ranges and accommodation standards will be applied to minimise exploitation by landlords
- The assumption: food vouchers, NFI distributions, and medical support will be coordinated to cover other needs. If not, actors can consider moving from a “work for rent” to a “cash for work” model.

**Home-based income generation for women (Syrian & Lebanese)**

- Through local actors, international organisations can fund livelihood projects that focus on skills development plus entrepreneurial grants for both Syrian and Lebanese women to create new opportunities and bring entrepreneurial women together to exchange ideas.

**Connect people with specific skillsets to employment opportunities** through a job database

- The number of skilled people is insufficient to flood the Bekaa market, so this is unlikely to cause tensions with the host community
- The majority of women willing to work outside the home have specific skillsets (e.g. teaching) and would greatly benefit

<sup>11</sup> The sample size of socioeconomic categories in West Bekaa was too low to generate percentages.

Development actors and funding can focus on a two-pronged approach:

1. Concentrate exclusively on host community livelihoods in areas with large concentrations of displaced people
  - This will balance the effect of assistance exclusively to displaced families and hopefully reduce tensions related to overuse of limited resources
2. Skills development and job creation programming should focus mainly on host communities, with a percentage of opportunities available to displaced people
  - This can target poor to better off households, with the assumption that over time families that are better off will lose savings and need alternative sources of income.
  - Development programming in the Bekaa has so far unintentionally focused on male-oriented livelihoods. Understanding host community livelihoods and the impact of Syrian displacement on host communities should emphasise women’s perspectives, needs, challenges, and suggestions.

Finally, “non-traditional” funding, such as funds channelled directly through local actors from Arab donors, are not easily coordinated within the UN mechanism. Instead of forcing coordination of distributions to avoid duplication, it could be beneficial to advocate that non-traditional funding cover **debt alleviation** of displaced families.

**7. DRC LEBANON LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY**

**DRC Lebanon Livelihood Strategy for Syrian Displacement (Bekaa & Northern Governorate) – 2012-2013**

<b>2011-2012: Livelihood Erosion</b> <i>Current livelihood context</i>	<b>July-December 2012: Livelihood Stabilization</b> <i>Short term livelihood strategy</i>	<b>2013: Livelihood Development</b> <i>Medium term livelihood strategy</i>
Maladaptive (destructive) livelihood strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High debts</li> <li>• Selling assets (asset erosion)</li> <li>• Selling / trading assistance to meet specific household needs</li> <li>• Consuming/eroding savings</li> <li>• Exploitative labour (which creates tension with host community)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In some cases, child labour</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Crowded and/or unhygienic living conditions</li> <li>• Heavy dependence on host community or humanitarian assistance (unsustainable)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Cash-based assistance: provides beneficiaries with flexibility to meet needs &amp; dignity of choice               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Food &amp; NFI vouchers</li> <li>b. Cash for Training (vulnerable households)</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Reduce debt pressure               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Cash for Rent – addresses main source of debt, targets families who cannot participate in Cash for Work</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) Improve accommodation (shelter)               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Rehabilitation</li> <li>b. Reinforce living standards through Cash for Rent</li> <li>c. Create additional space where needed (shelterhood box)</li> </ol> </li> <li>4) Prevent further livelihood erosion               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Job database for skilled people to find work</li> <li>b. Cash for Work: temporary employment for displaced &amp; host community households</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p><i>It is important to consider both displaced &amp; host community needs</i></p>	If the short term interventions are successful, most families assisted should be able to stabilize their livelihood situations. However, extremely vulnerable households will require additional support, and vulnerable families can benefit from ways to improve their livelihood options. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Cash grants for extremely vulnerable households (unconditional or “cash for...”)               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Focus on families who cannot participate in Cash for Work (female headed or otherwise vulnerable)</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Skills development               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Cash for Training / training scholarships for vulnerable households</li> <li>b. Apprenticeships / internships (job exp.)</li> <li>c. Skills courses through DRC Community Centres</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) Community development / participatory approach to improving hosting capacity               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Small-scale and rapid support to communities through “hosting capacity projects” (see below)</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Throughout: <b>Livelihood profiling</b> to assess households’ socioeconomic situations → provision of targeted assistance		

DRC takes a geographic approach, attempting to assist displacement-affected groups within a particular geographic area. DRC assessments indicated that the main factors influencing livelihoods for displaced Syrians in Northern Lebanon and the Bekaa are accommodation and income opportunities (job markets). These are largely based on the type of area:

**Urban** – High rent and cost of living; job opportunities are available but market competition is high (labour is competitive, skills are required)

- North – N/A (we should not consider Tripoli for the moment because of security issues and the politicization of assistance)
- Bekaa – Central Bekaa, West Bekaa, Baalbeck town

**Peri-urban** – Rent is a concern, though lower than in urban areas; high cost of living; job opportunities are available (mainly lower-skilled jobs)

- North – Halba, Bire
- Bekaa – Sahel, Baalbeck (excluding the town)

**Rural** – Most displaced are hosted; job opportunities are limited outside of casual work and seasonal jobs (e.g. harvesting)

- North – Wadi Khaled, Rural Akkar
- Bekaa – Aarsal

In general, DRC implements livelihood programming in areas with the following characteristics:

- The host community is vulnerable (low hosting capacity)
- There is a large presence of displaced families
- Because of limited resources and an expanding population, relationship between the host community and displaced may become strained or tense

Hosting Capacity Projects are similar to quick impact projects (QIPs), but require more time to establish projects and select participants.

- The objective is to improve a host community's capacity to host displaced people while providing temporary employment to vulnerable households
- 4-6 months in duration; approximately \$15,000 - \$40,000 per project
- Temporary employment offered to displaced and host community households: minimum 10 households for unskilled and semi-skilled work, 2 households for skilled work
  - Point of reference: Approximately \$5,000 to employ 20-25 people in Bekaa per month (85% of non-exploitative daily wage)
- Builds the host community-displaced relationship
- Is by nature participatory (community based approach), with a mandatory cash for work approach (see DRC Lebanon cash for work guidelines)

Knowing that Cash for Work projects typically involve manual labour and therefore exclude female-headed households or households without able-bodied men to participate, DRC will balance with the following approaches:

- Where possible, include a non-manual labour element (catering for workers, sewing or cleaning work, etc.)
- Prioritise Cash for Rent, Cash for Training or direct cash grants for extremely vulnerable households who cannot participate in Cash for Work

#### Cash for Rent:

- Concentrate in geographic areas where we know the market is saturated / nearly saturated
- Identify families who are already renting places where limited repairs are needed (in order not to overlap with NRC-type rehabilitation activities)
  - Households should be profiled as "very poor" or "poor" (through livelihood profiling)
- Establish minimum shelter standards (from DRC shelter experts): hygiene, structure, utilities
  - The landlord will be expected to maintain these standards throughout the contract
- Contract is signed between the beneficiary household, the landlord, DRC and a local representative
- The monthly rental fee will be fixed in the contract and paid directly to the landlord
- Recommended: 6 month period maximum