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THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS AND HEALTH SECURITY RISKS IN LEBANON

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THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS AND HUMAN SECURITY RISKS IN LEBANON

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THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS AND HUMAN SECURITY RISKS IN LEBANON

Syria and Lebanon have a complex history that has often been filled with ups and downs. Both countries have experienced internal conflict and have had tumultuous relationships with other states in the region which have influenced their interactions with each other. For the purposes of this paper, only the situation between the two countries, and to a certain degree the events going on within each of the countries, will be discussed.

Lebanon gained independence in 1943.¹ It has experienced periods of prosperity and has been a commercial and cultural centre for the Middle East at various times in its history. It has a very diverse population and engages in a political system that allows for proportional representation of its religious communities. Although Lebanon played no active role in the 1967 Arab-Israel war, it felt the aftermath of Israel's retaliation on Palestinians who used Lebanon as a base for their attacks on Israel.²

Increasing sectarian tensions resulted in a civil war breaking out in Lebanon in 1975 with Syrian forces being called in to assist the following year.³ They are credited with helping to bring about the end of the Lebanese civil war but that did not occur until 1990. However, the end of the war did not mean the departure of Syrian forces. They remained in Lebanon until 2005, when the United States forced them to withdraw

¹ Glenn Richard Bugh, William L. Ochenwald, Samir G. Khalaf, and Clovis F. Maksoud, "Lebanon," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition published 12 March 2018, last accessed 23 April 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lebanon>.

² BBC News, "Lebanon profile – Timeline," last modified 6 December 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14649284>

³ *Ibid.*

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following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri as it was believed that the assassination was carried out by Syrian and Hezbollah supporters.⁴

Syria gained independence in 1946.⁵ Friction amongst social, religious and political groups was common and there have been numerous coups, revolts, and riots over the years. In 1970, Hafiz al-Assad became the authoritarian president of the country and ruled until his death in 2000. At that time, his son, Bashar al-Assad, took over and is currently Syria's president. Although initially it seemed as though he would not be as oppressive as his father, within one year he was using threats and arrests to stop pro-reform activism.

In looking at relations between Syria and Lebanon, one must include Hezbollah. This organization emerged in the 1980s during the Lebanese civil war and its purpose is to resist Israel and Western involvement in the Middle East.⁶ It is essentially a "state within a state" in Lebanon, is financially backed by Iran and considered to be a terrorist group by the United States and the European Union. In 2006, it was engaged in a month-long war with Israel. Zisser contends that the organization deems this victory as "the finest hour of Hezbollah and, even more so, of Bashar al-Assad, who appropriated the Shiite organization's achievements in its confrontation with Israel without firing a single shot".⁷ This highlights the close relationship between the Assad regime and Hezbollah.

⁴ Eyal Zisser, "A Decade of Decisions: Lebanon and Syria, from the Second Lebanon War to the Syrian Civil War," in *The Quiet Decade: In the Aftermath of the Second Lebanon War, 2006-2016*, ed. Udi Dekel, Gabi Siboni, and Omer Einav (Israel: Institute for National Security Studies, 2017), 99.

⁵ David Dean Commins, Cyril John Gadd, Howard Hayes Scullard, and Albert Habib Hourani, "Syria," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition published 22 March 2018, last accessed 23 April 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Syria>.

⁶ Jonathan Masters and Zachary Laub, "Hezbollah," Council on Foreign Relations, last updated 3 January 2014, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/hezbollah>.

⁷ Zisser, "A Decade of Decisions" . . . , 97.

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In 2011, the opposition in Syria to the Assad regime gained momentum, bolstered by the success of other Arab Spring movements and the encouragement of other countries.⁸ The opposition was met with brutality which resulted in the escalation of violence. Regime change within Syria was supported by some powerful states but it did not happen as predicted and within a year Syria was in the middle of a civil war.

Since the war started, the players involved have changed and the battle has become more complex. Iran and Russia have stated their support of the Assad government with Russia formally joining the conflict in 2015.⁹ In addition, Russia and China have blocked United Nation Security Council resolutions to sanction the Syrian government.¹⁰ Syria is also supported by a variety of local and foreign militias, including Hezbollah (who joined in 2013).¹¹ Key supporters of the opposition forces are Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. Western countries such as the United Kingdom and France have provided support as well. The United States has voiced its opposition to the Assad regime but resisted becoming involved in military action until last year when they accused the government of carrying out another chemical weapons attack on civilians.¹² However, many Western countries are involved in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in its various iterations.

During times of conflict it is normal that thoughts turn to security. The historical way of thinking about security has the state as the referent object or item that must be

⁸ Shahram Akbarzadeh and Dara Conduit, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis," *Ethos* 24, no. 2 (2016): 8.

⁹ Zisser, "A Decade of Decisions" . . . , 103.

¹⁰ Sarah Deardorff Miller, *Political and Humanitarian Responses to Syrian Displacement* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 5.

¹¹ Akbarzadeh and Conduit, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis," . . . , 8.

¹² History.com staff, "Syria," last modified 2017, last accessed 23 April 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/the-history-of-syria>.

secured. In the Syrian civil war, state security and its very existence are at stake and need to be considered. However, the state is made up of citizens and their security also needs to be considered. This falls into the realm of human security.

The concept of human security first appeared in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report.¹³ There is still a great deal of debate on the topic but there appears to be consensus that it puts individuals, rather than the state, as the referent security object to be made secure. The establishment of human security as a concept was to increase attention and resources on development and assist vulnerable people.¹⁴

The UNDP Report indicated that there were two main aspects to human security: “safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression”; and “protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities”.¹⁵ Over time, this has translated to “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear”.¹⁶

Although the report acknowledged that the list of threats to human security was long, most could be divided into one of seven categories: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security,

¹³ Pauline Kerr, “Human Security,” in *Contemporary Security Studies*, ed. Alan Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 105.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “New Dimensions of Human Security,” in *Human Development Report 1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 23.

¹⁶ Karen A. Mingst and Margaret P. Karns, “Human Security: The Environment and Health,” in *The United Nations in the 21st Century, Fourth Edition*. Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2012), 248.

and political security.¹⁷ Each of these aspects is further defined and discussed but for the purposes of this paper, each definition will be provided in a sentence or two.

Economic security has to do with having an assured basic income, whether from work or a publicly funded source. Food security involves the physical and economic access to food. Health security is a wide category and includes anything that risks the health of an individual, including things such as epidemics, nutrition, maternal mortality rate, child survival, and access to health care. Environmental security looks at how environmental events threaten humans and includes how human activities are affecting the environment. Personal security deals with threats from physical violence in a variety of forms and sources. Community security involves the security people obtain from their membership in a group. Finally, political security has to do with people being able to live free from any form of political oppression in a society that respects their basic human rights.¹⁸

There are possible overlaps and interrelationships between these categories. For example, environmental security looks at water scarcity. A lack of water can affect food production and therefore food security. This in turn can affect nutrition which impacts health security.

Although there are interrelationships between the dimensions of human security, this paper will only focus on a couple of dimensions in isolation. Specifically, this paper will examine how the migration of Syrian refugees into Lebanon is creating human

¹⁷ UNDP, "New Dimensions of Human Security," . . . , 24-25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25-33. These pages provide further details but the definitions provided here are from the author's summarization of what is in the report.

security risks particularly in the dimensions of health, personal, economic, and community security.

SITUATION IN LEBANON

Before delving into each of the human security dimensions let us take a look at the situation of the Syrians in Lebanon. When the war started in 2011, Lebanon, along with other close neighbouring countries, allowed refugees to freely enter the country.¹⁹ In January 2013, Lebanon agreed to register refugees.²⁰ Doors started to close in the fall of 2014, with Jordan refusing entry in October 2014 and Turkey following suit in March 2015. The Lebanese government had the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stop registering refugees in May 2015 and now required them to have a visa.²¹ The cost of the visa is \$200 for up to one year and requires them to provide proof of sponsorship by an individual or company.²²

The Lebanese government has refused to build formal refugee camps, leaving the majority of refugees living in already existing structures or informal tented settlements.²³ Many of the existing structures are in the poorest areas of the country and about 30% of refugees are living in places that have no access to potable water or sanitation facilities.²⁴ The Lebanese government is reluctant to build refugee camps because they don't want a

¹⁹ Janine di Giovanni, "Lebanon: About to Blow?" *The New York Review of Books* 65, no. 2 (2018): 20.

²⁰ Deardorff Miller, *Political and Humanitarian Responses to Syrian Displacement* . . . , 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 40.

²³ William Young *et al.*, *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria : An Assessment of the Factors that Aid and Impede the Spread of Violence*, Vol. RR-609-OSD (Santa Monica: RAND, 2014): 28; Zeinab Cherri *et al.*, "Early Marriage and Barriers to Contraception among Syrian Refugee Women in Lebanon: A Qualitative Study," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 14, no. 8 (2017): 836.

²⁴ Karl Blanchet, Fouad M. Fouad, and Tejendra Pherali, "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: The Search for Universal Health Coverage," *Conflict and Health* 10, no. 1 (2016):1.

repeat of their experience with Palestinian refugees: more than 60 years later there are still a number of them in the country and the establishment of armed groups in the camps was a contributing factor to the civil war that started in 1975.²⁵ There are those who believe that the lack of refugee camps allows refugees a more dignified lifestyle²⁶ and some refugees even prefer to live outside of camps as it gives them more opportunities to influence their situation.²⁷

HEALTH SECURITY

The living conditions have contributed to some of the risks to health security. These risks include a decrease in access to health care, an increase in the spread of infectious diseases, and a decrease in pregnancy care. Each of these will be examined in a bit more detail.

Access to Health Care

The health care system in Lebanon was already in debt before the arrival of the Syrian refugees.²⁸ The arrival of such a large number of people has added an additional strain to the system, causing difficulties for all to access health care. The UNCHR has been in charge of health care for refugees. With the increase in the number of refugees and the decrease in international funding, they had to increase the out of pocket expense for people to access health care to 25%. This contribution, regardless of financial situation, is further restricting health care access for refugees who are poor and some

²⁵ Venetia Rainey, "Lebanon: No Formal Refugee Camps for Syrians," TCA Regional News, Mar 11, 2015, Cathrine Thorleifsson, "Coping Strategies Among Self-Settled Syrians in Lebanon," *Forced Migration Review* no. 47 (2014): 23.

²⁶ Rainey, "Lebanon: No Formal Refugee Camps for Syrians".

²⁷ Thorleifsson, "Coping Strategies Among Self-Settled Syrians in Lebanon," . . . , 23.

²⁸ Blanchet, Fouad, and Pherali, "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon" . . . , 2.

have even returned to Syria to seek medical care despite the risk of violence.²⁹ Even then there is no guarantee that they will be able to access care as a large number of Syrian health care providers have been killed or fled the country.³⁰

The UNCHR has also started to prioritize basic primary health and emergency care over costlier, complex treatments and hospital care.³¹ The aim of this was to ensure that the highest number of refugees receive coverage. However, this means that those with chronic illnesses and diseases, such as diabetes, cancer and hypertension, are not having their health care needs addressed because it is too expensive for treatment and medication. In fact, there are some indications that there have been more deaths from these treatable conditions than from conflict injuries.³²

The health care system in Lebanon is delivered through a combination of private and public providers with the funding coming from social and private insurance systems.³³ The Lebanese Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) covers part of the costs for health care of uninsured citizens as a last resort. Syrian refugees are not entitled to subsidy through the MOPH and must rely on their own financial resources to get treatment or receive it from the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or UN groups in the area.³⁴ This parallel system of health care provision has resulted in a fragmented system where the care provided is determined by social group classification.³⁵

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁰ Sophie Cousins, "Syrian Crisis: Health Experts Say More Can Be Done," *The Lancet* 385, no. 9972 (Mar 14, 2015): 931, doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(15)60515-3; Adam Coutts, Martin McKee, and David Stuckler, "The Emerging Syrian Health Crisis," *The Lancet* 381, no. 9865 (2013): e6.

³¹ Blanchet, Fouad, and Pherali, "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon" . . . , 2.

³² Lana Asfour, "Lebanon and the Syrian Refugee Crisis," *OpenDemocracy*, Mar 13, 2014.

³³ Blanchet, Fouad, and Pherali, "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon" . . . , 2.

³⁴ Deardorff Miller, *Political and Humanitarian Responses to Syrian Displacement* . . . , 41.

³⁵ Blanchet, Fouad, and Pherali, "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon" . . . , 3.

International aid being given to Syrian refugees has also started to erode relations between the refugees and the local population.³⁶

Infectious Diseases

With the influx of personnel coming into the country and residing in largely unsanitary conditions there is also a concern about infectious diseases. With the breakdown of the health care system in Syria, a number of children have not been receiving routine vaccinations consistently.³⁷ This has resulted in the re-emergence of a number of infectious diseases in Syria and has spread to neighbouring countries as refugees migrate to them.³⁸ There has been a re-emergence of polio in Syria after having been gone for 14 years.³⁹ This has caused some concern that other countries could be threatened as a result of mass migration combined with poor public health infrastructure, a lack of clean water, and poor nutrition.⁴⁰

In 2015, Jordan and Lebanon saw an increase in tuberculous cases.⁴¹ As many refugees live in conditions ideal for the spread of tuberculosis (crowded and unsanitary) this is hardly surprising. Another disease endemic to Syria is leishmaniasis, a parasitic disease spread by sand fly bites. It has spread beyond its endemic area to neighbouring countries. Between 2000 and 2012, Lebanon had between 0 and 6 cases of leishmaniasis reported annually. In 2013 this number was 1033, with approximately 97% of these being

³⁶ Young *et al*, *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria* . . . , 28.

³⁷ Cousins, "Syrian Crisis: Health Experts Say More Can Be Done," . . . , 932; Coutts, McKee, and Stuckler, "The Emerging Syrian Health Crisis," . . . , e6.

³⁸ Hakan Leblebicioglu and Resat Ozaras, "Syrian Refugees and Infectious Disease Challenges," *Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease* 13, no. 6 (2015): 443.

³⁹ Vappu Tyyskä *et al*, *The Syrian Refugee Crisis: A Short Orientation*, RCIS Working Paper No. 2017/2, Toronto: Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement, 2017: 7.

⁴⁰ Cousins, "Syrian Crisis: Health Experts Say More Can Be Done," . . . , 932.

⁴¹ Leblebicioglu and Ozaras, "Syrian Refugees and Infectious Disease Challenges," . . . , 443; Cousins, "Syrian Crisis: Health Experts Say More Can Be Done," . . . , 933.

in Syrian refugees.⁴² This is cause for concern. The health care system was not prepared to treat this disease, as it has not had many cases to deal with.⁴³

Women's Health Issues

Forced displacement can have an impact on women's health issues, especially sexual and reproductive health, family planning, and antenatal care. About 24% of Syrian refugees are women between the ages of 18 and 59.⁴⁴ The reproductive health of conflict-affected or refugee women suffers because there of a lack of services, gender dynamics or the fear of seeking services.⁴⁵ Indicators of poor reproductive health include gynecological conditions, pregnancy and delivery complications and poor birth outcomes.⁴⁶ Female Syrian refugees in Lebanon have reported gynecological problems.⁴⁷ The majority of Syrian women do not visit a gynecologist unless they are pregnant and even then the numbers seeking assistance are low and the care available in Lebanon is lacking.⁴⁸ Some of the barriers for accessing care include the lack of female gynecologists, expense and long travel distances.⁴⁹

Family planning is another area of women's health that is affected in times of conflict and displacement. About 60% of Syrian women used contraceptives before the

⁴² Ali Alawieh, "Revisiting Leishmaniasis in the Time of War: The Syrian Conflict and the Lebanese Outbreak," *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* 29, (2014): 116.

⁴³ Asfour, "Lebanon and the Syrian Refugee Crisis," . . .

⁴⁴ Cherri *et al.*, "Early Marriage and Barriers to Contraception," . . . , 837.

⁴⁵ Goleen Samari, "Syrian Refugee Women's Health in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan and Recommendations for Improved Practice," *World Medical & Health Policy* 9, no. 2 (2017): 255.

⁴⁶ Amelia Reese Masterson *et al.*, "Assessment of Reproductive Health and Violence Against Women among Displaced Syrians in Lebanon," *BMC Women's Health* 14, no. 1 (2014): 30.

⁴⁷ Samari, "Syrian Refugee Women's Health," . . . , 261.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Amelia Reese Masterson *et al.*, "Assessment of Reproductive Health and Violence Against Women among Displaced Syrians in Lebanon," *BMC Women's Health* 14, no. 1 (2014): 31.

conflict in Syria but only about 35% report using them during displacement.⁵⁰ Family planning through the use of contraceptives, postponing the first pregnancy and having safe intervals between pregnancies could prevent about 30% of maternal deaths.⁵¹

Once a woman is pregnant it is important she gets adequate antenatal care. Limited or delayed access to care is a key determinate in pregnancy outcome.⁵² However, delivery of antenatal care has been particularly challenging for Syrian refugees in Lebanon because of the increase in refugees and the decentralized living arrangements of the refugees.⁵³

The UNHCR covers a number of antenatal and post-natal visits, 85% of diagnostic tests and 75% of childbirth costs for registered refugees. However, the patient is responsible for the remaining costs and not all can afford it.⁵⁴ Unregistered refugees are only covered for one visit to a primary health care center that is supported by UNHCR.⁵⁵ This makes their situation even more precarious. Only about 16% of women who are accessing antenatal care are receiving adequate coverage which puts them at greater risk for preterm birth.⁵⁶ The fact that 40% of referrals to secondary and tertiary care centers are for obstetric and gynecological concerns is a good indication that that there is

⁵⁰ Samari, "Syrian Refugee Women's Health," . . . , 261.

⁵¹ Cheri *et al*, "Early Marriage and Barriers to Contraception," . . . , 837; Matthew Benage *et al*, "An Assessment of Antenatal Care among Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," *Conflict and Health* 9, no. 1 (2015): 15.

⁵² Masterson *et al*, "Assessment of Reproductive Health and Violence Against Women," . . . , 31.

⁵³ Benage *et al*, "An Assessment of Antenatal Care," . . . , 9.

⁵⁴ Cousins, "Syrian Crisis: Health Experts Say More Can Be Done," . . . , 934.

⁵⁵ Benage *et al*, "An Assessment of Antenatal Care," . . . , 9.

⁵⁶ Samari, "Syrian Refugee Women's Health," . . . , 261.

inadequate care being provided and that there needs to be an increase in the awareness of the importance of antenatal care and female physicians to provide it.⁵⁷

As discussed, the increase in population has caused a strain on the health care system. In part, this is because there are not enough resources for the aid organizations to provide care for the refugees, nor are there enough doctors to treat them. One possible solution is to allow Syrian health care providers who are in Lebanon as refugees to treat other Syrian refugees. This would grant them some level of economic security and ease the strain being placed on the Lebanese system.⁵⁸

The increase of people in Lebanon due to the influx of refugees fleeing Syria has resulted in a decrease in access to health care, an increase in the spread of infectious diseases, and a decrease in pregnancy care. All of these are health security concerns that are creating an increase in human security risks in the area.

PERSONAL SECURITY

The influx of refugees has led to increased personal security concerns for refugees. Many refugees have ended up in slums, vulnerable or exploitive situations or begging.⁵⁹ This leaves them open to increased risk of violence. As well, with the introduction of the sponsorship requirement, refugees are open to possible abuse as the sponsor can renege on the agreement at any time, making the refugee illegal and subject to deportation.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*; Masterson *et al*, "Assessment of Reproductive Health and Violence Against Women," . . . , 31.

⁵⁸ Cousins, "Syrian Crisis: Health Experts Say More Can Be Done," . . . , 934.

⁵⁹ Deardorff Miller, *Political and Humanitarian Responses to Syrian Displacement* . . . , 40.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

Another personal security threat that is unique to Syrian refugee girls is that of early or forced marriage.⁶¹ There are a number of reasons for this practice. Some parents married their daughters off in the belief that marriage would protect them.⁶² They worried that their daughter may be attacked or raped and would not be considered acceptable as a bride so they married them off before this happened.⁶³ Another reason was that once a daughter was married, it became her husband's responsibility to provide for her financially and this lessened the burden on the family.⁶⁴ There was a belief that if she married into a more financially secure family her quality of life would improve.⁶⁵ It was also seen as a way of saving the family's honour if the daughter had experienced rape or sexual violence in Syria.⁶⁶ For some parents who don't believe they will live long enough to protect their daughters, marrying them off is a way of ensuring they will be provided for after the parents' death. Finally, in some cases marrying their daughters off is a way of generating income when they have no access to resources.⁶⁷

In cases of early or forced marriage, young women are often forced to drop out of school so that they are able to take care of the household they are now part of.⁶⁸ Early maternity, the health risks of which were covered earlier, can also result. The ramifications of loss of education will be discussed later.

⁶¹ Jane Freedman, Zeynep Kivilcim, and Nurcan Özgür Baklacioğlu. *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017, 5.

⁶² Cherri *et al*, "Early Marriage and Barriers to Contraception," . . . , 840.

⁶³ Freedman, Kivilcim, and Baklacioğlu. *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. . . , 5.

⁶⁴ Cherri *et al*, "Early Marriage and Barriers to Contraception," . . . , 841.

⁶⁵ Lorraine Charles and Kate Denman, "Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: The Plight of Women and Children," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 14, no. 5 (2013): 105-106.

⁶⁶ Freedman, Kivilcim, and Baklacioğlu. *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. . . , 5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

⁶⁸ Rachid Acim, "Underage Syrian Refugee Girls at an Impasse," *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies* 11, no. 2 (2017): 126.

The practice of forced early marriage of Syrian refugee girls to Lebanese men also has an effect on the female Lebanese population. They are experiencing limited opportunities to get married as the men prefer Syrian wives as they believe they would not have many demands.⁶⁹

Another personal security aspect affecting women and girls is a form of prostitution that has been termed 'survival sex'.⁷⁰ It is where women or children are paid in money or goods in exchange for sex. It has occurred out of desperation to survive and is a result of the lack of services, aid available and accessibility. As times become more desperate it is more likely that prostitution will be on the rise. One way to combat this is by making education available and providing women with opportunities to provide for their families by giving them the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.⁷¹

Many refugees have experienced abuse and increased violence. A large number of young girls are being forced into early marriage. Women and girls are resorting to prostitution in order to survive. All of these are personal security issues that are causing an increase in human security risks as a result of the flood of refugees from Syria into Lebanon.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

Economic security is another aspect of human security where there are concerns as a result of Syrian refugee migration into Lebanon. Economic security requires an assured basic income.⁷² It can be from productive work or from some publically funded

⁶⁹ Alaa Tarshishi, "Neighbouring the Syrian War: Lebanon's Unique Case of Dysfunctional Functioning" (master's thesis, Regent's University London, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015), 59.

⁷⁰ Charles and Denman, "Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," . . . , 106.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁷² UNDP, "New Dimensions of Human Security," . . . , 25.

source. According to the United Nations Development Programme, only about a quarter of the world's population were economically secure in 1994.⁷³

Prior to the war in Syria, Lebanon and Syria had strong economic relations.⁷⁴ However, the economy in Lebanon has taken a down turn in recent years with unemployment levels rising and agriculture, construction and tourism sectors collapsing.⁷⁵ This is partly due to the war in Syria. Syrians are not importing goods from Lebanon at the levels they used to. As well, all exported goods transported over land go through Syria and with the closure and control measures at the borders, exports to other Arab countries were stopped.⁷⁶ With the domestic supply and demand imbalance, goods in Lebanon have become more expensive, limiting people's purchasing power. The tourism industry, which is one of Lebanon's main sources of income, has also been affected as many countries are warning their citizens not to travel to Lebanon because of the clashes in the border areas and the increased crime rate.⁷⁷

There were many Syrian migrant workers who worked in Lebanon prior to the war and now are bringing their families with them or staying longer.⁷⁸ These migrant workers typically worked for lower wages as the cost of living was less in Syria than in Lebanon.⁷⁹ The more recently arrived refugees are willing to work for even less than before and it is so little that the Lebanese and earlier refugees are losing out.⁸⁰ Since the

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Tarshishi, "Neighbouring the Syrian War," . . . , 49.

⁷⁵ Gabe Ghostine, "Responding to Lebanon's Syrian Refugee Crisis," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 35, no. 5 (2016): 67.

⁷⁶ Tarshishi, "Neighbouring the Syrian War," . . . , 49.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷⁸ Deardorff Miller, *Political and Humanitarian Responses to Syrian Displacement* . . . , 40.

⁷⁹ Thorleifsson, "Coping Strategies Among Self-Settled Syrians in Lebanon," . . . , 23.

⁸⁰ Asfour, "Lebanon and the Syrian Refugee Crisis," . . . ,

refugees are in receipt of some financial aid they are able to work for lower wages.⁸¹ This has led to accusations of the Syrians stealing work from the local population and breeds discontent.⁸² To counter this, the Lebanese government has put restrictions in place that legally prohibit Syrians from working in Lebanon.⁸³ This poses a bit of a problem with regard to economic security. It has also led to many of them working in the informal economy or turning to crime and terrorist groups.⁸⁴

In addition to working for lower wages, there are Syrian businesses that are relocating out of Syria to safer Lebanese areas. As well, Syrian refugees are establishing new businesses in the areas they migrate to. Many of these operate illegally and do not pay taxes, electricity or water. These businesses are threatening Lebanese-owned businesses because they are able to provide cheaper products.⁸⁵ This is causing economic hardship on an already stressed population.

Sufficient population growth is often accompanied by an increase in crime. Khatib indicates that Lebanon's increase in crime rates is also attributed to the deteriorating economic and security situation.⁸⁶ Unless something is done to improve the economic prospects for Syrian refugees, the situation will likely only get worse. Faced with bleak employment opportunities and minimal educational opportunities, these

⁸¹ Thorleifsson, "Coping Strategies Among Self-Settled Syrians in Lebanon," . . . , 23

⁸² Lina Khatib, "Repercussions of the Syrian Refugee Crisis for Lebanon," Carnegie Middle East Center, last updated 10 December 2014, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=57442>.

⁸³ Deardorff Miller, *Political and Humanitarian Responses to Syrian Displacement* . . . , 40.

⁸⁴ Khatib, "Repercussions of the Syrian Refugee Crisis for Lebanon," . . . , <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=57442>.

⁸⁵ Tarshishi, "Neighbouring the Syrian War," . . . , 53.

⁸⁶ Khatib, "Repercussions of the Syrian Refugee Crisis for Lebanon," . . . , <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=57442>

refugees may become security risks in the future as they attempt to find means of survival.⁸⁷

The Syrian civil war has affected Lebanon's economy. Prices for goods have increased but buying power, for both Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees, has decreased. Competition for jobs has increased and the willingness of refugees to work for low wages has exacerbated the lack of buying power. Limited economic prospects often lead to an increase in crime and instability. All of these economic security concerns have increased the human security risks in Lebanon as a result of the large number of Syrian refugees entering the country.

COMMUNITY SECURITY

Many people get security from membership in a group, whether that group is a family, community, religious, or ethnic group.⁸⁸ According to the UNDP, about 40% of the world's states have more than five sizeable ethnic populations and at least one of them faces discrimination.⁸⁹ As mentioned earlier, Lebanon has a diverse religious and ethnic population with more than half being Muslim (27% Sunni Muslim and 27% Shia Muslim) and approximately 40% being various Christian religions.⁹⁰ The political system is based on confessionalism.⁹¹ The Taif Agreement of 1989 set out the power sharing

⁸⁷ Deardorff Miller, *Political and Humanitarian Responses to Syrian Displacement* . . . , 42.

⁸⁸ UNDP, "New Dimensions of Human Security," . . . , 31.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹⁰ United States Department of State, "2012 Report on International Religious Freedom – Lebanon," last modified 20 May 2013, last accessed 4 May 2018, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/519dd4b318.html>

⁹¹ Khatib, "Repercussions of the Syrian Refugee Crisis for Lebanon," . . . , <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=57442>.

agreement that allows for political representation of all groups and an equal representation of Muslim and Christians at the highest levels.⁹²

The majority of Syrian refugees are Sunni Muslims (about 75%).⁹³ Some people worry that the increase of Sunnis into Lebanon will upset the balance between the Sunni and Shia sects and increase tension.⁹⁴ There has already been some violence between the groups and Syrians are accused and targeted as being responsible for the unrest and insecurity.⁹⁵ In addition, Lebanese citizens are jealous of the attention and assistance that the Syrian refugees are receiving from international agencies while the poor Lebanese families are bearing the brunt of the impact of the influx of people to the country.⁹⁶ Add in the division of support for the Assad regime within the country and Hezbollah's activities and there is concern that all of these factors combined are very similar to the situation that led to the 1975 - 1990 civil war.⁹⁷

Another concern that falls under the community umbrella of security is schooling. Before the conflict in Syria there was a 90% literacy rate and almost 100% school attendance.⁹⁸ Now it has the second worst rate of school attendance in the world due to

⁹² United Nations, "The Taif Agreement," last accessed 4 May 2018, https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_tauf_agreement_english_version_.pdf.

⁹³ Khatib, "Repercussions of the Syrian Refugee Crisis for Lebanon," . . . , <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=57442>; Tarshishi, "Neighbouring the Syrian War," . . . , 53.

⁹⁴ Ghostine, "Responding to Lebanon's Syrian Refugee Crisis," . . . , 67.

⁹⁵ Tarshishi, "Neighbouring the Syrian War," . . . , 53; Young *et al*, *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria* . . . , 28.

⁹⁶ Tarshishi, "Neighbouring the Syrian War," . . . , 53.

⁹⁷ Ghostine, "Responding to Lebanon's Syrian Refugee Crisis," . . . , 67; Deardorff Miller, *Political and Humanitarian Responses to Syrian Displacement* . . . , 39.

⁹⁸ Meg French, "Meeting Syrian refugees in Jordan: Five years into conflict, refugee children long for home, peace and school," UNICEF Canada, 1 March 2016, last accessed 4 May 2018, <https://www.unicef.ca/en/blog/meeting-syrian-refugees-in-jordan-five-years-into-conflict-refugee-children-long-for-home-peace>.

the dangers of travelling to school and the destruction and misuse of schools.⁹⁹ In 2016, almost three million children were out of school in Syria and one quarter of the schools in the country were not operational because they were destroyed and teachers have left.¹⁰⁰ The situation is not much better for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In 2013, it was estimated that there were about half a million school aged Syrian children in Lebanon and only about 12% of those aged six to fourteen and 5% of secondary school aged students attended school.¹⁰¹

The Lebanese Ministry of Education instructed its schools to enrol Syrian children regardless of legal status and waive fees but there are still some problems with increasing enrolment.¹⁰² The public school system in Lebanon was weak to begin with as many families choose to pay for private education and the public system was used as a last resort for poor Lebanese families.¹⁰³ With the influx of Syrian students, the schools have become crowded. In 2017, the Education minister indicated there were 250,000 Lebanese students and 450,000 Syrian students in the public school system which comprises 1,200 schools.¹⁰⁴ This has led to a 'double shift' system where Lebanese students attend in the morning and Syrian students attend in the afternoon. This has caused a further deterioration in the quality of the education for all students and has effectively doubled the costs of teachers' salaries, administrative, and operating costs.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Akbarzadeh and Conduit, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis," . . . , 9.

¹⁰⁰ UNICEF Canada, "Children of Syria," last accessed 4 May 2018, <https://www.unicef.ca/en/children-syria-canadas-response>.

¹⁰¹ Charles and Denman, "Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," . . . , 97-98.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁰³ Tarshishi, "Neighbouring the Syrian War," . . . , 60.

¹⁰⁴ Deardorff Miller, *Political and Humanitarian Responses to Syrian Displacement* . . . , 41.

¹⁰⁵ Charles and Denman, "Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," . . . , 98.

These changes have caused sectarian tension amongst the students and the number of Lebanese students dropping out of school has increased.¹⁰⁶

In addition to the problems with space constraints, Syrian students have to adapt to a different system. The Lebanese curriculum is more demanding than that of Syria and has resulted in Syrian students struggling to keep up or being placed in a lower grade. The language of instruction is also different as in Syria lessons are only taught in Arabic but in Lebanon some lessons are taught in Arabic with English and French also being official instructional languages which are used for math and science.¹⁰⁷ This has caused some Syrian students to drop out. The co-educational schools in Lebanon have also impeded school attendance as many conservative Syrian families have difficulty sending their daughters to mixed schools and don't allow them to attend. Finally, although there are no fees being charged, some families are having difficulty covering the transportation costs for school when there is not one located near the home. With many Syrian families struggling financially many children are being sent to work to help support the family rather than attending school.¹⁰⁸

The Syrian civil war is causing an entire generation of Syrians to be uneducated. This has far reaching effects. Education is linked to productivity and earning potential which has a positive impact on the state's economy.¹⁰⁹ With the loss of education there is a high probability for unemployment and underemployment which leads to a cycle of poverty. The reconstruction of Syria will depend on its young people being educated and

¹⁰⁶ Tarshishi, "Neighbouring the Syrian War," . . . , 60.

¹⁰⁷ Charles and Denman, "Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," . . . , 98.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

becoming productive members of society.¹¹⁰ As well, a lack of education can have an effect on health and well-being of the individual. There has been some correlation found between maternal education levels and fertility rates and infant and maternal mortality rates as educated women have more knowledge of contraception, nutrition and when to seek medical assistance.¹¹¹

Finally, for children who have experienced crisis, trauma and upheaval, schooling provides a return to normalcy.¹¹² It allows them to feel safe and gives them the time to heal.¹¹³ School is thought to provide children with the emotional and psychological support they need to prepare them for the challenges they face to rebuild their lives and gives them the space to just be kids again.

The large number of Sunni Muslims entering Lebanon has upset the precarious religious balance in the country and has increased sectarian tension as many fear a repeat of the Palestinian refugee situation that led to civil war. The education system is seriously strained which is affecting Lebanese and Syrian children and resulting in a whole generation of children not being educated. These community security concerns are posing human security risks in Lebanon.

FAVOURABLE GAINS

Although there are significant human security concerns, there have been some positives with the arrival of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Since there are no formal refugee camps and refugees have been living amongst Lebanese citizens, some areas

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² UNICEF Canada, "Children of Syria," last accessed 4 May 2018, <https://www.unicef.ca/en/children-syria-canadas-response>.

¹¹³ Charles and Denman, "Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," . . . , 102.

have received services and infrastructure improvements in the community.¹¹⁴ Studies in Uganda have indicated that refugees not living in camps have a higher economic interaction with the host community when compared to those living in refugee camps. However, they need to be able to fully participate in the host country's economy and society.¹¹⁵ This may be a difficult sell in Lebanon as the country is greatly influenced by its experience with Palestinian refugees and they do not wish to repeat that experience.

CONCLUSION

The migration of Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war in their country into Lebanon is creating human security risks particularly in the dimensions of health, personal, economic, and community security as defined by UNDP in 1994. There are a variety of health security concerns but only three were discussed in this paper. First there is a lack of access to health care, either because of the cost or availability of service providers. Secondly, there has been a re-emergence of infectious diseases to certain areas as well as the spread of certain diseases beyond their endemic areas. Finally, the war in Syria has impacted women's health concerns such as sexual and reproductive health, family planning and antenatal care.

Concerns in the personal security dimension refugees include abuses and violence that refugees in Lebanon have experienced. As well, young girls are being forced to marry at an early age, sometimes in an effort to protect them and sometimes to ensure financial security. Women and girls are also turning to 'survival sex' or prostitution out of desperation in order to survive the harsh conditions they are faced with.

¹¹⁴ Rainey, "Lebanon: No Formal Refugee Camps for Syrians".

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Changes in trade routes have altered the supply and demand balance for goods, driving prices up. However, there has not been an increase in buying power as refugees compete with Lebanese citizens for jobs and in small businesses. With a down turn to the economy and increase in population size there has also been an increase in crime. All of these are economic security concerns that have arisen as a result of the refugee crisis in Lebanon.

The final human security dimension that was examined here was that of community security. The influx of Syrian refugees who are mainly Sunni Muslims has upset the demographic balance in Lebanon. This has caused sectarian tension and even violence in some cases, increasing the concern that the fighting in Syria will spill over into Lebanon. This tension has made its way into the education system which is struggling to support both Lebanese and refugee students but is failing, resulting in a decrease or loss of education for an entire generation of children.

Lebanon has been one of the largest recipients of refugees in the area, with about one million Syrian refugees registered and many more unregistered.¹¹⁶ This increase of people into the region has caused human security risks as discussed in this paper. Lebanon, along with Syria's other neighbours, cannot bear the cost of providing for refugees alone. The international community has assisted, but more needs to be done to alleviate the humanitarian crisis which is posing human security risks in the region.

[Please see the evaluation sheet for comments about the paper.](#)

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¹¹⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Situation Syria Regional Refugee Response," last updated 31 March 2018, last accessed 5 May 2018. <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>

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