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Study for a viable framework for livelihood and social enterprise projects **in BAR ELIAS in the BEKAA**

Report on Key Findings

April 2018

This report was conducted and written by a team of researchers from Parallel Perspective Consulting (Q perspective), as part of a research project commissioned by Basmeh and Zeitooneh and Trócaire to collect and analyse labour market data collected from vulnerable Syrian refugee youth and women heads of household in Bar Elias to identify and develop a viable framework for livelihood and social enterprise projects.

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Deep Development Consultancy

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

B&Z	Basmeh and Zeitooneh
BDS	Business Development Support
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoL	Government of Lebanon
GPFD	Global Program on Forced Displacement
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
ITS	Informal Tented Settlement
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
PRL	Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency

I. INTRODUCTION

Basmeh and Zeitooneh (B&Z) is a local organisation working on relief and development in marginalised and vulnerable areas in Lebanon. It has commissioned this study to provide evidentiary data, conclusions, and recommendations that can be used to (re)define B&Z's socioeconomic development and advocacy frameworks and approaches to optimise its livelihoods interventions and their results and impacts in service of its beneficiaries. In light of the protracted nature of the Syrian crisis and its implications for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the region, it has become essential for humanitarian organisations to become more aware of the role they play in local markets and to examine how they can more effectively work through and for labour markets to ensure that both refugee and host households are able to maximise their labour potential and recover or diversify their livelihoods.[1]

Much of the literature acknowledges the widespread constraints to livelihoods development in refugee settings. In the case of Lebanon, this includes a disabling policy and economic environment, low levels of social capital, poverty, and weak baseline levels of trainings and skills. Measures to support self-sufficiency in situations of protracted crises are often hampered by restricted freedom of movement, weak tailoring of interventions to local economic conditions, and the short-term nature of some programmes. The political context for supporting refugee livelihoods is also hostile and generally prohibitive, with the Lebanese government largely resistant to livelihoods programming that promotes the ability of refugees to work and, in their mind, compete with locals.

The evidence base of successful interventions is weak in terms of its size and quality and there is lack of research available in the public domain. Even when there is evidence, it is usually limited to describing static outputs from livelihoods programmes in refugee settings with little consideration of longer-term outcomes on livelihoods or impacts. This requires organisations to improve learning and practice regarding successful approaches to livelihoods development, which is a key pillar of UNHCR's Global Strategy for Livelihoods 2014-2018, and to build a comprehensive evidential basis for advocating for improved policy and social environments

In light of these limitations, this report will also be limited. Indications of 'what works' will be presented as recommendations, based on real-life trials where possible, and will address livelihood development principles, approaches, and activities, as well as providing entry points for developing local and national advocacy strategies for livelihoods development. In addition, a market assessment of the agricultural sector, the primary sector in Bar Elias and the Bekaa, to identify needs and potentials to determine future livelihood activity directions is also presented.

[1] Mercy Corps, Save the Children, IRC, *Labour Market Analysis in Humanitarian Contexts: A Practitioner's Guide*, January 2016.

Study Overview

This report presents the findings of the labour market study in Bar Elias and the Bekaa, focusing on the labour activities, initiatives, and aspirations of current B&Z beneficiaries and Syrian refugee youth and women heads of household respondents that could potentially be engaged through future interventions. It also presents a general overview of the formal employment sectors that Syrians can engage in, by law, as well as principles and approaches that could be adopted for the informal economic activities that Syrian refugees engage in.

The objectives of the study, according to the TOR, are:

- Identify livelihood opportunities that can connect refugees with host communities.
- Identify and analyse key challenges and constraints faced by women and youth in the local labour market, and find tailored potential solutions, interventions and strategies to overcome these barriers.
- Identify and analyse influencing factors through which Basmeh and Zeitooneh can create evidence for its local and national advocacy strategy.

Background and Context

According to the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (2017-2018), Lebanon hosts an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees, 997,905 of which are registered with UNHCR.[2] This refugee influx has left Lebanon hosting the second-largest population of Syrian refugees in the region after Turkey, and the highest per capita population of refugees in the world. The Lebanese government has not formally recognised the Syrians as refugees, enabled by the fact that Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees. As such, no formal camps were established after the crisis, and Syrians are distributed across the country with 375,300 refugees residing in Bekaa governorate, 267,140 residing in Beirut and Mount Lebanon governorates, 253,550 living in the North governorate and 119,900 settling in the South governorate.[3]

While there are regional differences in the economic situation of Syrian refugees, it remains dire for most with 58 percent of households living in extreme poverty, an increase of 5 percent since 2016, and 76 percent living below the poverty line. Refugees continue to adopt crisis and emergency coping strategies, with 96 percent of households adopting food related negative coping strategies.[4]

In the Zahleh district, where Bar Elias is located, the percentage of Syrians living beneath the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket -or extreme poverty- is approximately 70 percent, well above the national average.[5]

The impact of the crisis, now in its eight year, has taken its toll on the hosting country. Even prior to the crisis, Lebanon already had substantial socio-economic and political problems as well as historically uneasy relations with the Syrian state. The influx of refugees has placed a heavier burden on host communities, increasing competition over limited jobs, services and resources. The cumulative impacts of internal turmoil and the Syrian crisis on Lebanon were manifested by the decline of GDP growth from 8 percent in 2010 to a

[2] Government of Lebanon and the United Nations (2018), Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2018 (2018 update).
[3] Syria Regional Refugee Response, Inter-Agency Information Sharing Portal, Available on: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122
[4] UNHCR, UNICED, and WFP, (2017) Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, (VASYR), Available on: https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2017-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon. The SMEB
[5] Ibid. The SMEB is calculated at 87 USD/capita/month.

projected 2 percent in 2017.[6] According to a World Bank report, the Lebanese economy had lost an estimated USD 18.15 billion due to loss of fiscal revenues, economic slowdown and pressure on public services.[7] In addition, an estimated 200,000 Lebanese have been pushed into poverty and 250,000-300,00 have become unemployed.[8] While work opportunities were limited even prior to the crisis, 2013 saw 32,000 new entrants into the labour market, and only 5,000 new jobs created.[9] Moreover, most of the new jobs tended to be in low skill and low productivity sectors that often employ migrant labour, including refugees. The increase in competition for low-skilled and low-productivity jobs had significantly detrimental impacts on Lebanese women, youth, and unskilled workers.[10] Amongst the most economically vulnerable, youth and women suffer from systemic failures, with youth unemployment 3-4 times higher than the total unemployment rate[11] and the percentage of working women reaching 19.7 percent compared to men 67.8 per cent for men.[12]

In comparison to their Lebanese counterparts, Syrian workers are preferred by employers as they accept lower incomes and are obliged by poorer working conditions, including longer work hours and no social welfare or benefits in return.[13] Syrians are legally restricted to employment in three sectors, agriculture, construction and environmental services (collection and waste management).[14] In addition, it is estimated that that 47 percent of Syrian refugees are economically active in the informal sector, mostly in the services sector (almost 40 percent), other personal and domestic services (27 percent), agriculture (24 percent), commerce (15 percent) and construction (12 percent).[15]

There are significant differences between Syrian male and female employment rates, which are 56 percent for men and 76% for women. While both Syrian men and women face barriers to employment in Lebanon, women face additional cultural barriers related to traditional gender roles that limit their participation in the labour market.

The absence of legal paperwork has also been an obstacle for many Syrian households. As of January 2017, the GoL eased residency restrictions through a directive waiving the residency renewal fees for Syrians, but only if they have been registered with the UNHCR prior to 1/1/2015. This move is anticipated to increase the number of registered Syrian refugees, who could not afford the 200 USD/ person/ year imposed according to

[6] World Bank (2017), Lebanon's Economic Outlook: October 2017.
[7] World Bank (2017), Preliminary Findings of the Economic and social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict.
[8] Government of Lebanon (2017) Vision for Stabilization and Development, presented at the Brussels Conference in April 2017.
[9] LEADERS (2017), Skills Gap Analysis for Improved Livelihood Sustainability in Lebanon: Competency Needs and Skills Gap Analysis of the Private Sector in Mount Lebanon, Tripoli and the Bekaa.
[10] Gohlke-Rouhayem,J; Melki,N; and Weinmann; C. 2016. Employment and Labour Market Analysis (ELMA)- Lebanon, GIZ, Available on: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=11220.
[11] GIZ (2016), Emergency Labour Market Analysis (ELMA), p.30 (source cited: KILM 2015). ILO (2015), Towards Decent Work in Lebanon: Issues and Challenges in Light of the Syrian Refugee Crisis., UNFPA et al. (2014), Situation Analysis of Youth in Lebanon Affected by the Syrian Crisis.as cited in Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020, Available on: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2017_2020_LCRP_ENG-1.pdf
[12] International Labour Organization ILO (2017), Labour Market Review and Analysis: In Focus on Northern Lebanon, Available on: https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/labour-market-information-review-and-analysis-focus-northern-lebanon
[13] International Labour Organization (ILO), Assessment of the Impact of the Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile, Available on: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@arabstates/@ro-beirut/documents/genericdocument/wcms_240130.pdf.
[14] Ministry of Labour, Decision 1/41 of 31 January 2017, Available on: http://jo.pcm.gov.lb/j2017/j7/default.htm
[15] LEADERS for Sustainable livelihoods, Skills Gap Analysis for Improved Livelihood Sustainability in Lebanon, Competency Needs and Skills Gap Analysis of the Private Sector in Mount Lebanon, Tripoli and the Bekaa, January 2017.

the previous residency policy.[16] However, the new directive is seen as problematic because it excluded an estimated 500,00 Syrians[17] who have not registered with the UNHCR, in addition to any Syrians who have previously obtained legal residency through a sponsor.

Due to limited access to labour market and income generating opportunities, the great majority of Syrian refugees require external assistance in order to meet basic needs. While funding requirements are increasing, donor funds have been decreasing: in 2017, only 30 percent of the funding required to provide adequate support to Syrian refugees was secured.[18]

In the context of the protracted crisis, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (2017-2020) is currently transitioning from being humanitarian focused to longer term development strategies that include providing services through national systems and reinforcing Lebanon's economic, social and environmental stability. In order to strengthen the resilience of host communities and refugee households, the LCRP is aiming to achieve the following outcomes: 1. Stimulate local economic development and market systems to create income generating opportunities and employment; 2. Improve workforce employability and 3. Strengthen policy development and an enabling environment for job creation. The strategy calls for working on both the demand side of the labour market through supporting MSMEs and strengthening value chains to enable job creation; and the supply side of the labour market by improving market-based skills and providing job guidance and placement. The strategy will also be advocating for an enabling policy environment to guarantee favourable conditions for MSME growth and job creation as well as decent working conditions.

The national SME strategy has recognized that SMEs are one of the main drivers for economic recovery.[19] Growth and productivity can also translate into the creation of much needed jobs. MSME's already employ 50 percent of Lebanon's labour force and it is estimated that a 1 percent increase in productivity can translate into 3.9 percent increase in job creation.[20]

Current regulatory frameworks have posed some obstacles to the MSME growth, as these businesses often have to compete with Lebanon's sizable informal sector. In addition, business owners often lack appropriate skills for enterprise growth, including business planning, financial management, marketing and customer service.[21] Addressing these obstacles and supporting MSMEs in sectors that can legally employ Syrians can create jobs for both Syrian and Lebanese job seekers.

In some sectors, jobs are available, but there is considerable mismatch between skills required by employers and available skills of job seekers. For example, according to one study the tourism and industry sectors currently require an estimated 30,000 and 15,000 employees respectively but have difficulty in recruiting

[16]The latest vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (VASYR 2017) found that 74 percent of those surveyed and above 15 years of age did not have legal residency. UNHCR, UNICED, and WFP, Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, VASYR 2017, Available on: https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2017-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon. The SMEB

[17] https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/14/gaps-lebanons-new-refugee-policy

[18] Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 (2018 update). Funding has been diminishing since 2015. According to the latest LCRP, funding diminished from 1.285 million in 2015 to 1.86 million USD in 2017, noting that the initial requirement for funding for 2017 was 2.75 bullion USD.

[19] Ministry of Economy and Trade (2014), Lebanon's SME Strategy: A Roadmap to 2020.

[20] LEADERS (2017), Skills Gap Analysis for Improved Livelihood Sustainability in Lebanon, Competency Needs and Skills Gap Analysis of the Private Sector in Mount Lebanon, Tripoli and the Bekaa.

[21] Ibid.

people with the required skills and profiles. Developing partnerships between the private sector and vocational training institutions can ensure that skills training is based on labour market needs.

However, this strategy and road map has to operate within a social and political context that poses some challenges, especially with regard to providing employment opportunities for Syrian refugees. Host communities view the intervention of INGOs as mainly in support of the Syrian populations at the expense or neglect of host needs and concerns.

The government's position towards Syrian refugees was evident in Lebanon's Statement of Intent London Conference of 2016. The Statement affirmed that it wanted to seize the opportunity to launch a new approach and vision to manage the Syrian crisis "anticipating the safe return of Syrian nationals to their home country, in order for them to contribute effectively in the reconstruction and economic development of Syria."[22] While stopping short of clear commitments for job creation for Syrians, the statement proposed a combination of interventions to stimulate the economy through donor grants and concessional financing, estimating that these interventions can create 300,000 to 350,000 thousand jobs, 60 percent of which would be for Syrians.

Since the London Conference, the Syrian return to their homeland has been dominating political rhetoric. This was explicitly stated by President Michel Aoun in his statement at the General Assembly in September 2017 when he declared the Syrian presence in Lebanon tantamount to a "population invasion". As Aoun stated: "If it is not about safety, then the Syrians should return. The displaced people are living in misery and unhealthy environment despite all services provided by the government and INGOs."[23]

In addition, there has been an attempt to crack down on informal employment of Syrians. In January 2017, the Minister of Labour, Mohammad Kabbara, launched a campaign to organize foreign employment and ordered inspections of businesses to employing foreign workers to check for work permits.[24] Within the few months after the pronouncement, around 30 municipalities were systematically shutting down Syrian-owned businesses.

<u>Bar Elias: Overview</u>

Bar Elias is the second largest town in the Zahleh district, Bekaa Governorate and is located on route to and approximately 16 km from the Syrian border. Farming and agro-food manufacturing are the main sectors of this region's local economy. The region ranks second after Mount Lebanon with regards to the number of agro-food establishments, hosting 30% of Lebanon's establishments.[25] This is an important economic sector in Lebanon, identified as being the number one industrial sector and accounting for more than a fifth of Lebanese exports.[26]

The Syrian Crisis has had a significant impact on livelihood opportunities in this region. Both farming and the agro-food sector have been severely affected by the closure of inland trade routes to Syria for goods' exports, as have transport related services and activities. The agricultural sector also suffers from other

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[22] London Conference- Lebanon's Statement of Intent Presented by the Republic of Lebanon, 4 February, 2016.
[23] General Assembly of the United Nations (2017). Statement of H.E. Mr. General Michel Aoun, President of Lebanon in the General Debate of the 72 Session. New York: United Nations. Available at: https://gadebate.un.org/en/72/lebanon
[24] The Daily Star. Lebanon Seeking to Organize Foreign Labour: Minister. The Daily Star, January 9, 2017. Available at: http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2017/Jan-09/388477-lebanon-seeking-to-organize-foreign-labour-minister.ashx
[25] Investment and Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL), Agro-Food Factbook 2016,
[26] Ibid.

serious and chronic challenges, the most of important of which is water, both in terms of scarcity and safety, with water pollution reaching an unprecedented level last year due to the pollution of the Litani River which has not only harmed farming but also the health of the local population.[27]

Around 36% of the Syrian refugees in the Bekaa governorate lived in a total of 1,424 informal tented settlements (ITS) – the most common form of shelter - as of May 2016.[28] More than 240,000 registered Syrian refugees live in the Bekaa (167,000 in Zahle Qaza and 63,000 in the West Bekaa Qaza and the rest in Rachaya Qaza). In many villages, like Ghazze, Qab Elias, Marj amongst others, the ratio of refugees to locals is two or three times higher.[29] More than 70% of Syrians in Lebanon do not have legal residence, and the number is as high as 90% in the Bekaa.[30]

According to an interview with Bar Elias municipality, the town has 35,000 Lebanese residents, and hosts 150,000 Syrian refugees residing both in and outside informal settlements. This has caused strain on Bar Elias' infrastructure and services. The town's mayor, Mawas Araji, has publicly stated that the town does not have the capacity to host the Syrian refugees, especially as related to waste management. With the influx of people, Bar Elias now handles 40 extra tonnes of refuse every day, all the more concerning given the lack of a national waste management plan.[31]

In response, a solid waste sorting facility was constructed in Bar Elias in the spring of 2017 through a project funded by the European Union and implemented by the Economic and Social Fund for Development in order to assist municipal services to manage the large amount of daily waste in the three communities of Bar Elias, El Marj and Qab Elias. The facility is expected to process 150 tonnes of waste daily and also provide an opportunity for job creation, according to Araji. However, as of October 2017, the municipality of Bar Elias had no technical capacity to launch the project and sent a request to the Council of Ministers requesting a contractor to operate the plant.[32]

In terms of the local policy environment, the Governor of the Bekaa issued a number of circulars requiring all municipalities to regularly update databases on the refugees they are hosting and urging them not to recognize any birth certificate, rent, or shelter agreement for any refugee not registered with the municipality. In 2016, he issued a circular prohibiting the establishment of any additional informal tented settlements and any move from one settlement to another (Circular 45/1/2016).

In terms of the economy, and according to a UNDP report[33], the refugee crisis in the Bekaa, is presenting economic opportunities for some and economic threats for others, depending on the sector and the nature of the job market. Syrians refugees are perceived by the local communities as affecting the local economy and the labour market in three areas: first as skilled or semi-skilled labourers and employees, second as owners of small businesses, and third as fuelling an increase in cost of rent due to increase in demand.

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[27] UNDP (2017), The Burden of Scarce Opportunities: The Social Stability Context in Central and West Bekaa, Conflict Analysis Report.
[28] OCHA, Bekaa and Baalbek/Hermel Governorates Profile, May 2016 [accessed 13 January 2017]
[29] Source: OCHA
[30] As reported by Legal agenda based on UNHCR figures: Ghida Frangieh, 'Denying Syrian Refugees Status: Helping or Harming Lebanon?', 2017 [accessed 15 February 2017]
[31] Reuters: In Lebanese town, mountain trash shows strain on refugees. March 2017, Available on: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-refugees/in-lebanese-town-mounting-trash-shows-strain-of-refugees-idUSKBN1721Q7
[32] LBCI report: Report: waste sorting and treatment in plant in Bar Elias, October 2017 https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/news-bulletin-reports/343105/report-waste-sorting-and-treatment-plant-in-bar-el/en
[33] UNDP, 2017.

Syrians have traditionally offered their services as semi-skilled labourers like painters, plumbers, etc. and unskilled labour in agriculture.[34]

With the influx of refugees, the supply of labour has increased, mainly in sectors where Syrians are permitted to work but has also spilt over into other industries, including working in (and opening) small shops and hospitality, among other businesses. A main sector where Lebanese complained of competition is in construction, where Syrians work as skilled and semi-skilled labourers. The increase in supply not only affected the Lebanese, but also Syrians themselves, who have faced lower wages, poorer working conditions, and decreased work opportunities, largely as a result of the high competition. Lebanese employers, in particular, are benefitting from an increase in labour supply and consequently lower wages and weaker working terms and conditions.

Another area of competition is where Syrians have opened small businesses, particularly in commercial hubs on the main roads and in the centre of villages hosting a large number of refugees. While officially these businesses cannot be operated by Syrians, they are often established under the patronage of a Lebanese citizen who offers the legal cover in exchange for a share of the profit. Given the willingness of the Syrians to lower prices, these shops compete with Lebanese shops, attracting both Lebanese and Syrian costumers and have been subject of repeated complaints to local authorities.

This has particularly affected Bar Elias, as its market is profitable because of its location on a main street.[35] The municipality responded to complaints from Lebanese shop owners by enforcing a regulation stipulating the requirement of Lebanese sponsorship for Syrians to operate shops. As a result, the Syrians that ran the shops found a Lebanese ‘sponsor’ and silent partner. The same shops remained open, but with the added cost of Lebanese sponsors who are benefitting from the returns of a business partnership without any or minimal financial investment.[36]

In terms of the impact on land costs, informal settlements have increased rental rates for farming land and have re-purposed agricultural lands for (temporary) residential purposes. Several interviewees in the UNDP study claimed that the large number of Syrian refugees renting residential spaces made it expensive for the young locals to rent a house, marry, and start a family. Unforeseen profits for landlords has come in the form of renting substandard, built spaces not intended for human dwelling, like garages and storage space as well as uncompleted constructions.

At the macro level, the significant humanitarian assistance to Lebanon has generally boosted aggregate consumption in addition to some job creation. Supermarkets and shops in the Bekaa that are contracted to accept aid payment cards of refugees are benefitting from a higher turnover of merchandise. Local NGOs and community service organizations are partnering with larger or international NGOs in the region to implement externally funded projects. Funding for development and infrastructure projects for host communities has also increased, supporting local economic activity and providing employment.

However, interviews conducted for this report indicate that the positive spill-over effects are not necessarily perceived favourably by the local Lebanese communities. One of the mukhtars of Bar Elias, Mr. Saad Araji, stated that he believes donors are only focusing on refugees, while the host community has been neglected. He noted that over the past 6 years, many people had lost their jobs in factories and shops due to cheap

[34] UNDP, 2017.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

Syrian labour that is preferred by local business owners. According to Araji, local craftsmen have also been unable to compete with Syrian craftsmen, who charge 'half the price for the same product or service.'

According to a Bar Elias municipal employee, Mahmood Obeid, some of the local population work in factories (paper, dairy products, and poultry), but several have been left unemployed by the closure of two large factories in the area (glass and beetroot processing). According to Obeid, while there is a high percentage of university educated youth in Bar Elias, there is also a very high unemployment rate.

When asked in a study conducted by the American University of Beirut surveying 2,400 female youth Syrian refugees living in Bar Elias, Marj and Qab Elias about their priority need, most females cited access to livelihood opportunities (see Figure 1, below). However, Syrian refugee communities in the area face a number of constraints related to their mobility, their ability to find livelihood opportunities within the sectors they have been limited to, and difficulty in accessing education and training that may enable them to find work opportunities.

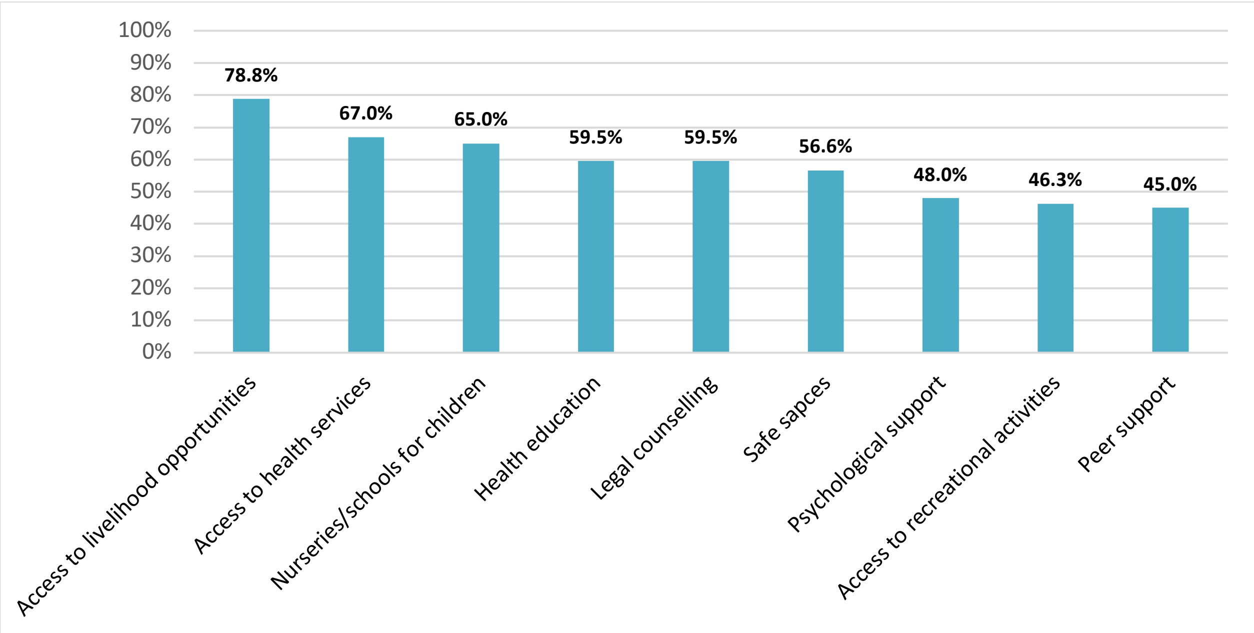

Figure 1 - Services requested by Syrian female youth, AUB Study (2016)

On Linking Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development

The concept of LRRD has been on the international agenda for decades aiming to overcome the "grey zone" between the different assistance types and as a response to the funding gap that was identified between relief operations and longer-term development operations following disasters.[37] In other words, the LRRD approach or what is also known as developmental relief, is a response to the need felt by humanitarian and development actors to address not only the symptoms of humanitarian emergencies, but their root causes as well.[38] Initially, the LRRD concept represented a linear one-way transition from a phase of relief to a phase of development, what is known as the 'continuum' model. Later on, this conception of a 'linear' LRRD model was challenged,

[37] German Wash Network, Linking Relief and Development in the WASH Sector: An Overview and Contribution to the International Debate, Available on: http://www.washnet.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/washnet_wash-relief-to-development_2014.pdf

[38] InterAction (2001), Developmental Relief: NGO Efforts to Promote Sustainable Peace and Development in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies, Available on: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4817BC099F3207DDC1256CB10055A135-intalert-relief-jun01.pdf

and the concept of an aid 'continuum' was adopted implying the appropriate use of relief, rehabilitation and development instruments simultaneously.[39]

Elements of the LRRD framework that apply include:

- Improved resilience by affecting structural and systematic changes to current policies and practices that are increasing the vulnerability of agricultural rural communities to disasters, as clearly demonstrated by the impacts of the Syrian crisis.
- Programme interventions linking vulnerability and deep structural inequalities in the targeted communities and acknowledge that disasters are not outliers, but symptomatic of poverty and political crises.

Programmatic mechanisms and modality of programme interventions adhere to principles contained in the LRRD framework (i.e. partnership model; institutional sustainability; clear exit strategies).

[39] Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2005), Links between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development in the Tsunami Response: A review of the debate, Available on: www.alnap.org/pool/files/lrrd-review-debate.pdf

II. METHODOLOGY

The fieldwork was initiated in February, with the core of the fieldwork conducted in the town of Bar Elias in the Central Bekaa from 6-20 March 2018 using a mixed-methods approach in order to allow for triangulation and verification of results and to increase the internal reliability and consistency of the findings. In addition, it provided the study team with opportunities to bring into light diverging evidence, which may be overlooked with a single methodology.

Approach and analysis

An adapted framework for Labour Market Assessments in Humanitarian Contexts was used to examine:

1) The personal and economic profiles of respondents; the structural and personal barriers and challenges affecting their livelihood; their skills, aspirations, and activities and how they relate to generating income and creating and engaging in livelihoods opportunities.
2) Existing B&Z interventions and assessing their impact, opportunities created, and beneficiaries' recommendations to help identify and define potential principles and approaches to livelihood creation that can be adopted or built on by B&Z.

To achieve this, the study focused on documenting livelihoods strategies and social norms of the target population to develop a basic understanding of the targeted population, including:

- How are the respondents earning money/meeting their needs?
- How many people in the household are working? How were they earning money pre-crisis?
- How many household members are there?
- Are households in debt and resorting to negative coping strategies?

Apart from the profiles of the targeted population, the main elements that could inform future livelihoods strategies that this report strives to identify include:

- Identifying self-reported personal barriers and skills gaps that act as barriers to labour.
- Identifying structural challenges and barriers to livelihoods, both for future programming as well as to inform advocacy strategies of B&Z.
- Identifying livelihood principles and approaches that need to be considered by B&Z when formulating future livelihoods strategies and activities.
- Identifying potential opportunities of one of the three formal sectors accessible to Syrians, namely agriculture, and considering the informal economy activities that respondents aspire to.

Data Collection

Data collection tools comprised of (qualitative) structured individual interviews, semi-structured focus group interviews, semi-structured case story interviews as well as a (quantitative) survey exploring individually and collectively shared views and opinions of respondents from the Syrian refugee communities in the Bar Elias area. The research field activities and targeted study subjects included the following:

Focus group discussions:

- i. Vulnerable young adults from the Syrian refugee communities residing in Informal Tented Settlements (ITSs) in the Bar Elias area;
- ii. Beneficiaries of B&Z's Women's Workshop project; and
- iii. Beneficiaries of the B&Z grants programme.

2) **Key informant interviews:**
   - i. Municipal and community leaders;
   - ii. Tradespeople and business interests;
   - iii. Socioeconomic development actors active in Bar Elias and the Bekaa; and
   - iv. B&Z field staff and management.
3) **Survey questionnaire:**
   - i. Youth and Women-Heads-of-Household in ITSs in Bar Elias.

A total of six FGDs were conducted throughout the study. All FGDS were held at Basmeh and Zeitooneh centre in Bar Elias. All participants were Syrian refugees, except for one Lebanese participant who benefited from the Grants programme. The Focus Group Discussion Guide was based on a literature review and preliminary key informant interviews with Basmeh and Zeitooneh staff and other key informants from the local government of Bar Elias, and other humanitarian actors operating in the town. The Guide aimed to collect information regarding current employment conditions, barriers, and restraints, as well as identify current livelihood activities and interests and aspirational plans. The results of the FGDs will be used as indicators for potential entry points both in terms of developing strategies related to advocating for improved working, legal, and regulatory conditions of Syrian refugees, as well as informing stakeholder engagements, and for livelihood aspirations, barriers, and challenges, which can be used to inform the development of more effective livelihood and related advocacy strategies and frameworks for B&Z.

Interviews were conducted with B&Z staff and managers, Bar Elias municipal mayor and deputy mayor, mukhtars and community leaders, tradespeople and business interest leaders, and actors active in socioeconomic development in the area.

The interview guides developed aimed at identifying and analysing context, challenges, risk, constraints, perceptions, plans and aspirations and capacity needs of the area. Purposive sampling of interviewees helped in maximising the benefit intended from key informant interviews and ensured that the study includes individuals/organisations who could play a pivotal role in future interventions and are able to provide useful insights that include the approaches and services that have been tried and either succeeded or failed as well as gauging what opportunities, resources, and capacities that may be available or are required to successfully engage in livelihood work in the Bekaa. The informants' willingness to cooperate was also gauged, including questioning the models of engagement that they would consider most beneficial and effective.

A survey questionnaire designed to collect data on youth and women heads of households in ITSs in Bar Elias to characterise their current employment and economic conditions, and the barriers and constraints they face in both, and to measure work-related aspirations, opportunities, needs, and priorities. Two hundred and one (201) surveys were collected with a 100% response rate.

Enumerators were recruited from the Syrian refugee community to conduct the survey, all with demonstrated experience in the humanitarian and development field research. The enumerators collected the data using Kobo after an orientation session prior to conducting the interviews during which the researchers explained the details of the survey questionnaire, the purpose behind the questions, and the ethical protocol of the study.

Surveys were conducted with women head of households/youth primarily living in ITSs in Bar Elias (88.1%), 11.9 % of the surveys were also conducted with refugees (females heads of households and youth) living outside ITSs in Bar Elias.

The sectoral analysis, focusing on the agricultural sector as a formal sector which Syrians can legally work, is based on a literature review of other studies focusing on the agricultural sector, with a particular focus on the Bekaa.

Tools

The field Study Tools were designed, developed, and used to identify the following:

- General profiling
- (Current) Employment conditions, including challenges, opportunities, risks, and coping mechanisms
- Economic conditions profiling, regarding resources, services received, coping mechanisms
- Attitude towards and needs and aspirations related to potential opportunities
- Profiling of aspirations regarding future plans
- Impacts on existing B&Z beneficiaries of the organisation's livelihood interventions and approaches

The tools used are:

- Focus Group Discussion guides (for each of the 3 categories of the discussants: vulnerable youth and women heads of household; grant recipients; and women's workshop participants).
- Key informant interview guides for mayors; mukhtars; B&Z field staff and managers; private sector tradespeople and business interests; and key informants from socioeconomic development actors in the area.
- Survey questionnaire for vulnerable youth and women heads of household living in ITSs and private residences.

Limitations

- Lack of definitive economic and market data on the informal economy specifically related to Bar Elias meant that the study had to extrapolate data from more general studies on the Bekaa and Lebanon to determine local trends and conclusions and focused mainly on the labour-side of the assessment to qualitatively and quantitively profile the targeted respondents.
- Bar Elias municipality did not have any coherent economic plan related to local development that could be used to frame the study, nor was it actively engaged in coordinating the various socioeconomic and non-economic development work that was being conducted in the town, making

it difficult to establish a clear reference point for recommendations for future frameworks, activities, and interventions.

- There were few examples of successful social enterprises by beneficiaries of past B&Z programmes and projects, meaning that determining success factors from past and current experiences could not be explicitly determined and had to be inferred and concluded from various sources.

III. KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of the study presented here focus on presenting the profile of respondents (namely youth and women heads of household in ITSs), as they relate to livelihoods, in addition to examining B&Z's current livelihoods interventions from the perspective of the respondent to provide an assessment of these efforts, in terms of impacts, beneficiaries' perceptions, and recommendations (Women's Workshop and Grants recipients).

The respondents profile focuses on identifying:

- Profiles and current work status,
- main sources of income,
- sectors of employment in Syria, if any,
- structural and personal challenges faced in finding or securing work,
- preferences in terms of trainings and work, and
- respondents' assessments on approach, impacts, and benefits of current initiatives (with Women's Workshop and Grants programmes participants).

VULNERABLE YOUTH AND WOMEN HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD

Profile

Respondents were interviewed for both a field survey and focus groups conducted mainly with residents in the Bar Elias area. The majority of survey respondents were female (69.7 percent), 36.3 percent of which are heads of their households. The majority were youth (77.6 percent) who have been in Lebanon for an average of 55 months and most (88 percent) are living in Informal Tented Settlements (ITSs). Households averaged 5 people living in the same residence, with an average of 3 children in each household.

Regarding their economic profile, 42.3 percent of the respondents reported never having worked for any income in Lebanon and only 14.4 percent are currently engaged in income-generating activities. Of those working, 45 percent are engaged in daily work, 21 percent in seasonal work, 17 percent in permanent work, and 17 percent in part-time work (see Figure 2, below). An average of 1 person was reportedly working in each household.

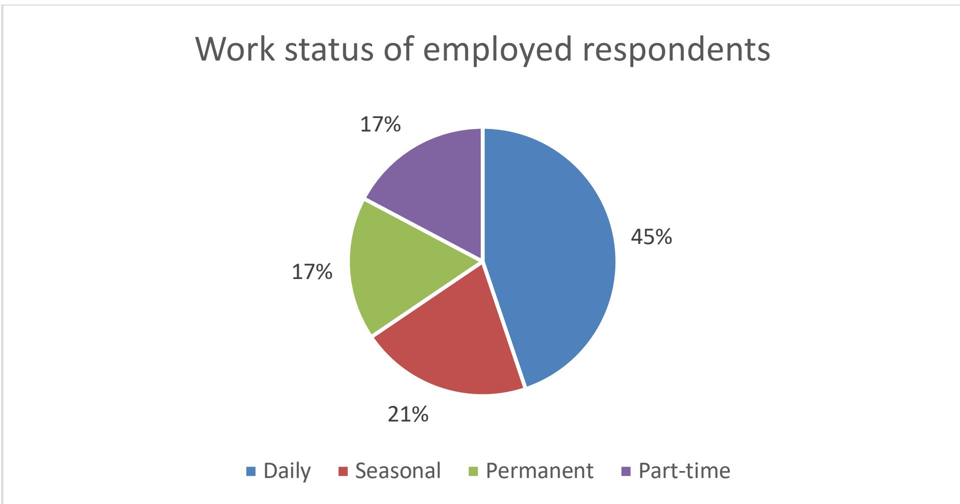

Figure 2 - Current work status of respondents.

The majority of the female youth respondents interviewed were unemployed and reportedly none of the members of their household were working, making them mainly dependent on UNHCR/WFP support. In the case of women heads of household, they were mainly dependent on assistance from organisations in the form of cash and food vouchers. They or their children supplement this income with odd jobs ranging from cleaning to waste scavenging to street peddling. For those who were working in larger manufacturing companies, the reported terms and conditions were clearly exploitative (overworked, poor working conditions, and low wages, well below the minimum wage).

The majority of the male youth interviewed in the focus groups were working or have worked as agriculture as seasonal workers, although it was not a preferred activity, as explained by one participant who stated, “it is hard for one to imagine that one day he will be forced to work in agriculture. In Syria, I was majoring in Arabic literature and I have no experience in any agriculture related work. I had different scholarship opportunities but could not benefit from them since I am the major breadwinner in the family.” The male youth had also worked in a spectrum of jobs, including carpenter’s apprentices, casual labour, manufacturing workers, construction work, and hospitality, although very few were reportedly engaged in these sectors as permanent workers.

The majority of employed respondents acquired their work through a shawish or through extended personal networks, while the others were equally split between acquiring work through NGOs or through direct engagements and initiatives.

The main sources of income for respondents was predominantly casual labour, followed by UNHCR cash cards (63 percent of the respondents) (see Figure 3). The impermanence of income generated through casual labour added to the stresses and strains of respondents’ ability to cope and was a direct cause of the uncertainty and hopelessness expressed by some of the participants.

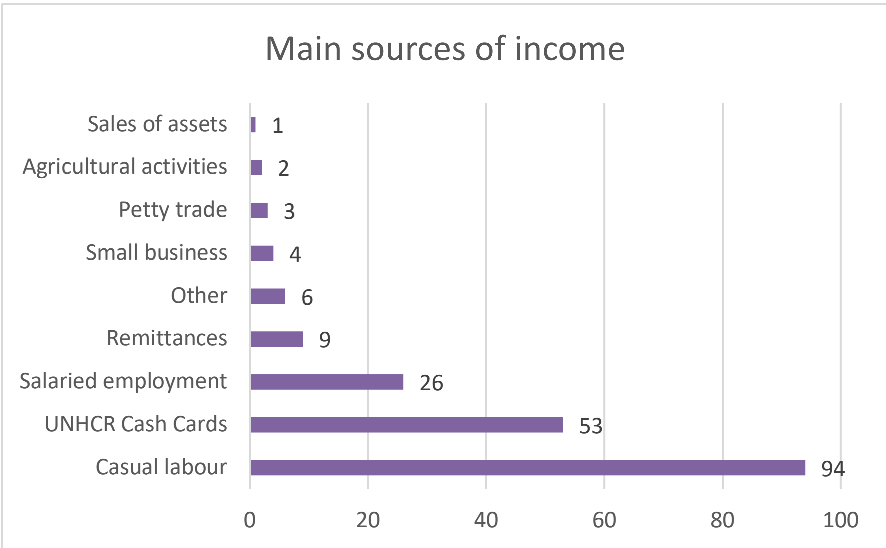

Figure 3 - Main sources of income

Respondents reported increased vulnerability from the lack of income and work opportunities, which in turn forced them to resort to negative coping mechanisms, including borrowing money (80 percent) and reducing consumption (58 percent), as illustrated in Figure 4.

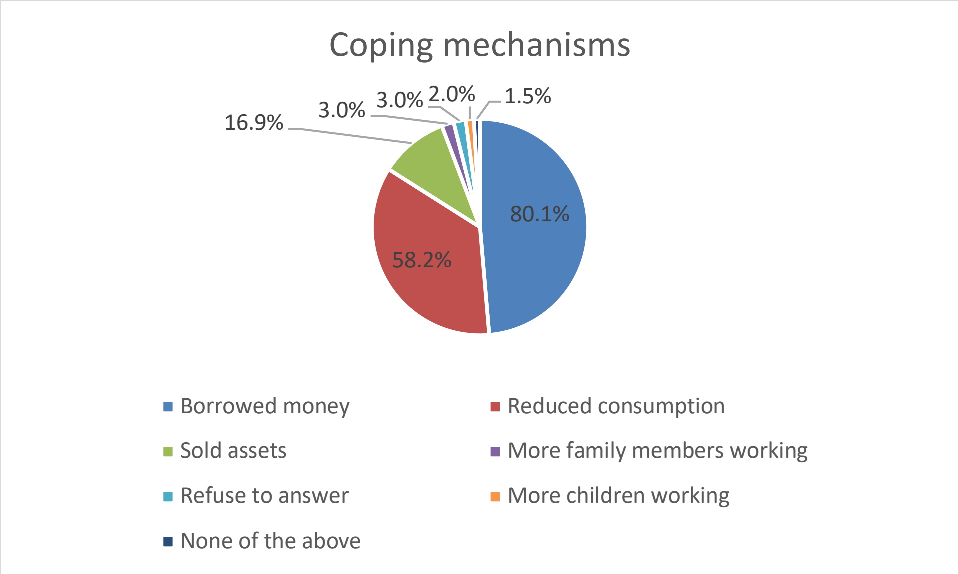

Figure 4 - Coping mechanisms

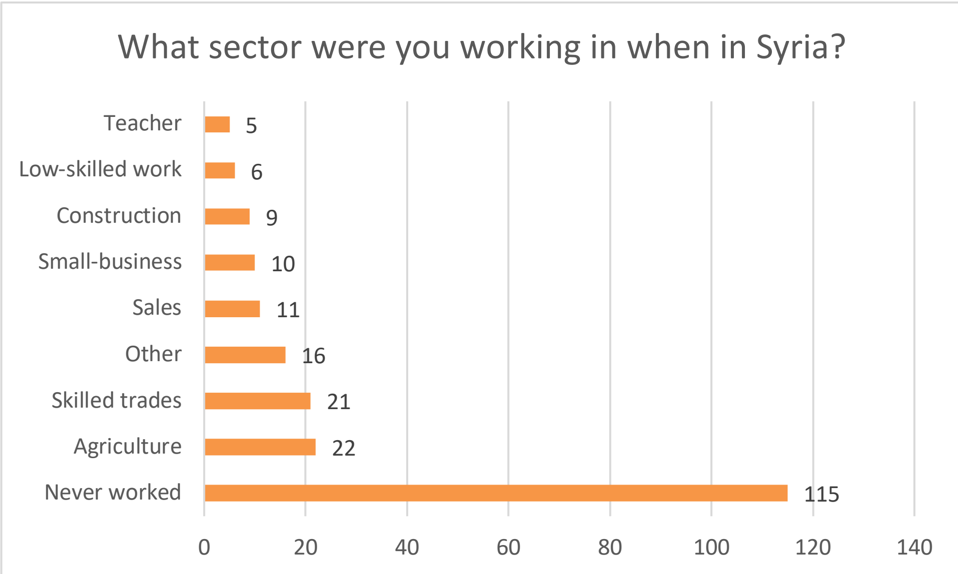

Figure 5 - Sector of employment in Syria

The majority of those interviewed had never worked before in Syria (explained largely by the age of the respondents), with the remainder distributed between agriculture, skilled trades, and a variety of other sectors (see Figure 4). This was an indication of the low skills base amongst the respondents, which in turn often leads to low-skilled jobs that are often subject to harsh, exploitative, and insecure working conditions. Further, when this is considered along with data collected from employers, this lack of skills also poses a problem for employers who then consider the financial and opportunity costs of up-skilling workers so that they meet the demands and requirements of the business. Of the respondents, 42 percent participated in skills training or capacity building programmes, mainly as provided by NGOs. This presents an opportunity for targeted interventions in capacity building programmes and technical up-skilling of beneficiaries and matching the programmes with market-demands and requirements.

The majority of out-of-work respondents (85 percent) were reportedly actively looking for work, indicating a low rate of discouragement (see Figure 5) and indicating the desperate need for generating income. This was also evidenced by the high rate of respondents who expressed aspirations or willingness to participate in any trainings that may contribute to increased job opportunities, even without a guarantee of employment (70 percent of respondents) (see Figure 6).

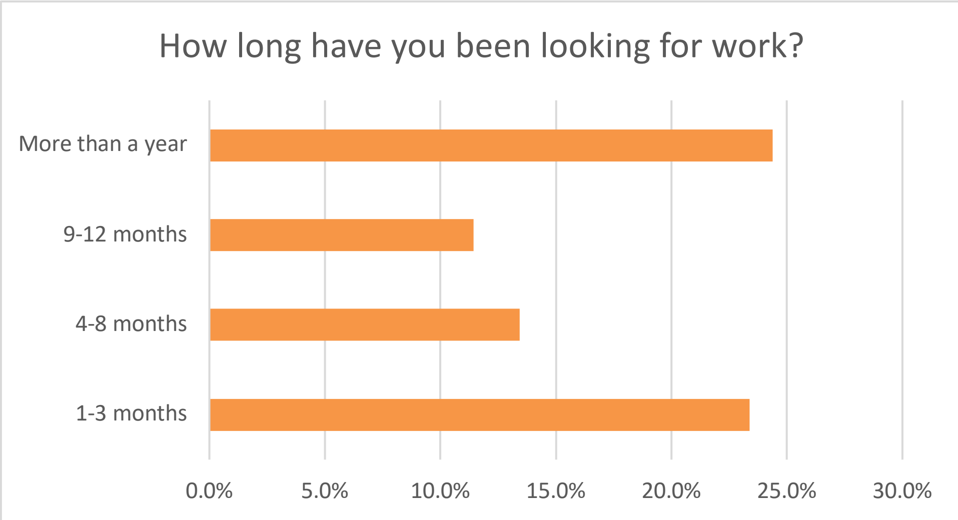

Figure 6 - Time spent looking for work

Structural Barriers and Personal Challenges

Structural barriers

In terms of the structural barriers and personal challenges and constraints faced by the respondents in engaging in livelihoods activities, the evidence verifies all the barriers cited in studies reviewed as part of this report. According to responses to the open-ended question regarding what the main structural barriers they face are, the lack of job opportunities available or accessible to them was the number one reason (58 percent). Respondents also considered their lack of qualifications (35 percent) and lack of skills (33 percent) to be barriers to their access to employment. High competition in the workforce, particularly from other unskilled or low-skilled workers from the Syrian refugee community, which also places negative pressure on wages and working terms and conditions and increased the opportunities for exploitation of the workers.

Particularly for the beneficiaries engaged in unskilled trades, exploitation was a common theme, with beneficiaries feeling that their position is too weak to be able to either resist or respond to it. One respondent gave an example of exploitation from a wholesale trader, reporting "when I first started, I was buying clothes at a fair price from a wholesale trader who, after he saw that my business was doing well, started to increase his prices without any reason why."

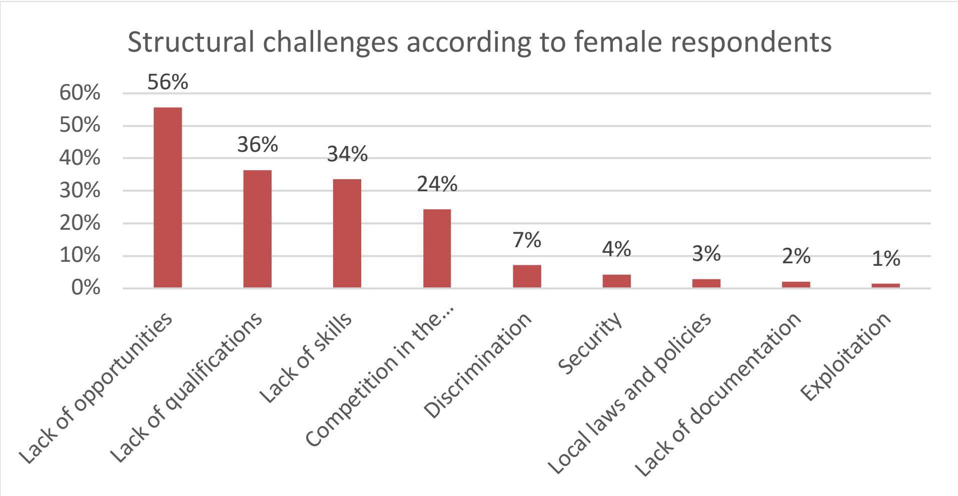

Figure 7 - Structural challenges according to female respondents

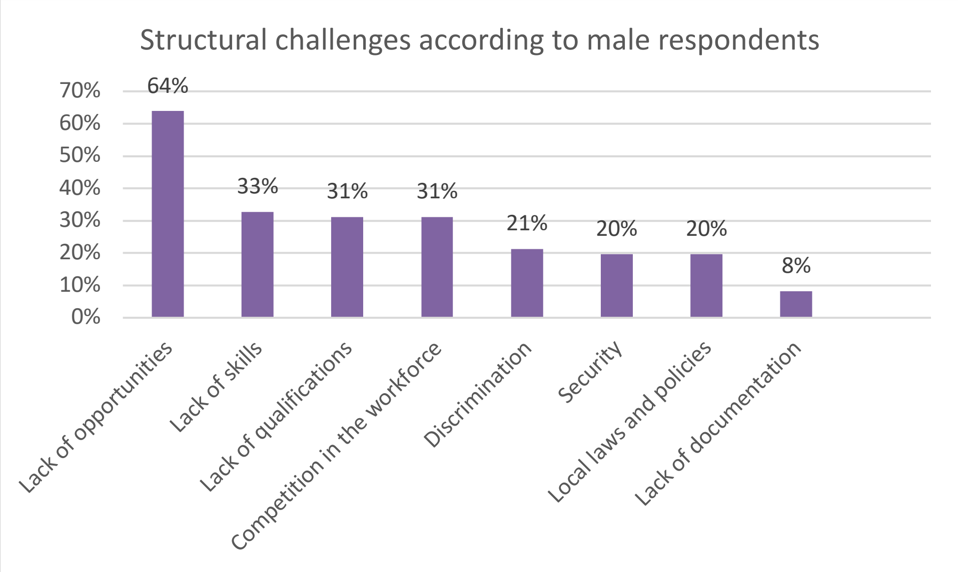

Figure 8 - Structural challenges according to male respondents

The implications of these barriers were considered in relation to whether or not they have discouraged female and male youth from engaging in economic and livelihood opportunities, which was found to not be the case, according to the survey. Despite these challenges, over half of female respondents were willing to work 5+ days a week, if the opportunity were available to them (54 percent). Most of the remainder (41 percent) were willing to work 2-4 days per week, which aligns with their other responsibilities and structural barriers, as illustrated in Figure 8. Amongst the male respondents, the overwhelming majority of those interviewed (79 percent) were willing to commit to working 5+ days per week, with the remainder (21 percent) willing to engage in work from 2-4 days per week.

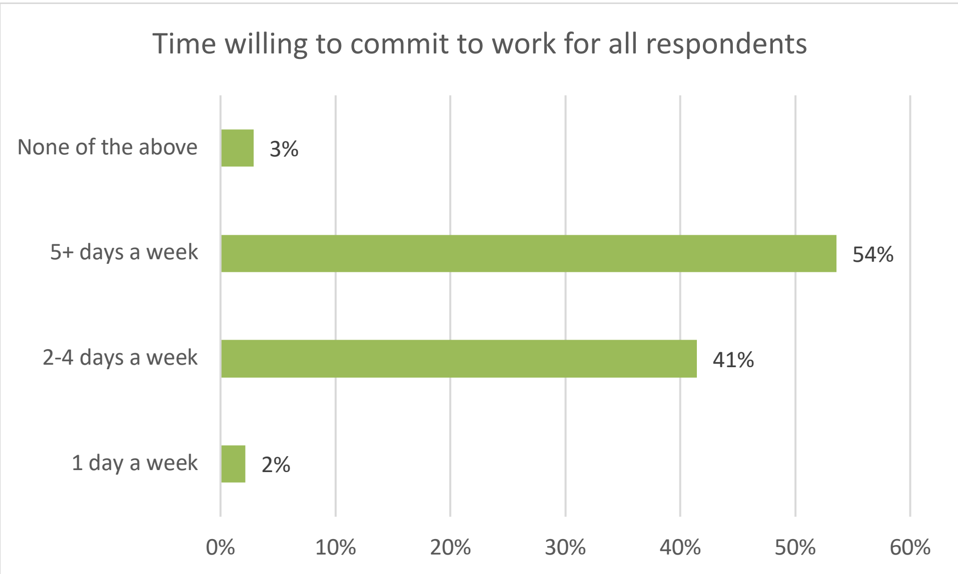

Figure 9 - Time willing to commit to work.

In terms of the feedback gathered during the focus groups, the high cost of transportation is a repeated theme amongst all respondents when considering challenges to employment. Focus group respondents cited several examples of the cost of transportation, coupled with mobility issues related to safety, security, and familial issues, inhibiting their ability to work. One respondent gave an example of his experience with a project sponsored by INJAZ, “grants were given to groups rather than individuals and during the trainings I was placed by the instructor with a group of women who were planning to open a bakery in Chtaura. The girls opened the bakery; however, I am not getting any income because they are operating in Chtaura, which is far away from my home." The issues related to his mobility stemmed mainly from the cost of transportation, but also related to issues stemming from his legal status in the country.

Demonstrable lack of knowledge of services, support, and opportunities amongst respondents, particularly in terms to opportunities for income or assistance, was a prevalent concern amongst respondents in the focus groups.

Personal challenges

Safety, particularly for the female respondents, was a priority issue, particularly in terms of its effect on their mobility. Female Syrian refugees face a number of gendered barriers to employment verified by the findings of the survey, including discrimination, family responsibilities and lack of childcare, and the threat of sexual harassment and exploitation (see Figure 7).

Many of the women reported discouragement from their families, landlords, and shawishes from engaging in work or travelling outside the ITSs. Some of them reported constantly being questioned by the shawish managing the ITS they reside in, asking where she is going, who she is meeting with, how she is travelling, etc. in addition to pressure to not engage in such activities.

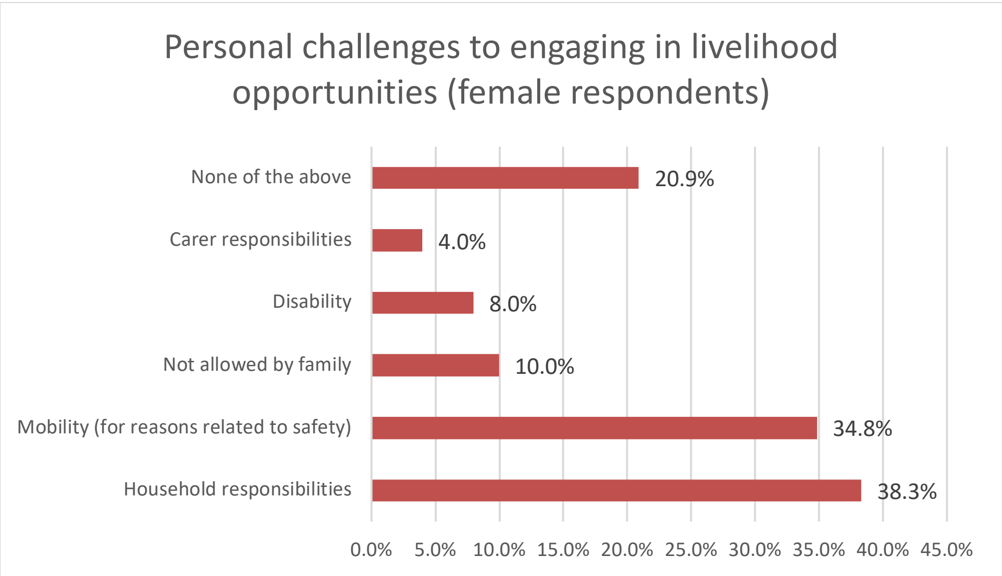

Figure 10 - Personal challenges for female respondents trying to engage livelihood opportunities.

Aspirations, plans, and opportunities

In terms of aspirations, the general consensus was that they were living day to day with no ability to make or achieve any long-term plans, despite having some semblance of ideas, ranging from buying a food caravan to sell foodstuffs to hairdressing to simply applying for and receiving a grant for whatever opportunity that an organisation can offer. Respondents were distinctly without hope for the future and made plans in vain, as they considered them, as none were convinced that they could achieve them.

When cross-referenced with feedback from employers, very few of the respondents expressed any enthusiasm for potential work in the sectors recommended by employers to focus on, namely agriculture, construction, and environment (related to waste management), which are the three sectors where the role of Syrian workers is understood, accepted, and legal. Their preferences, reported by gender, are illustrated in the following charts:

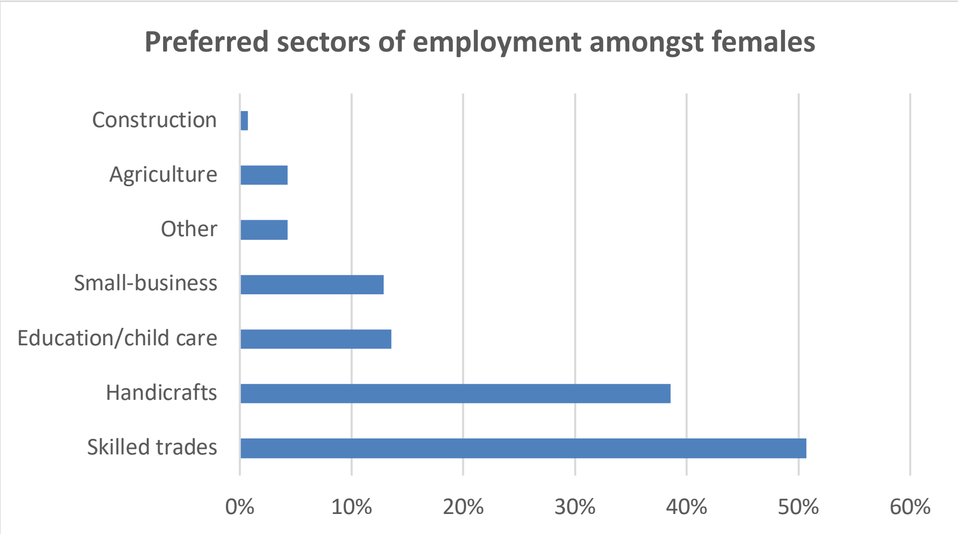

Figure 11 - Preferred sectors of work amongst females

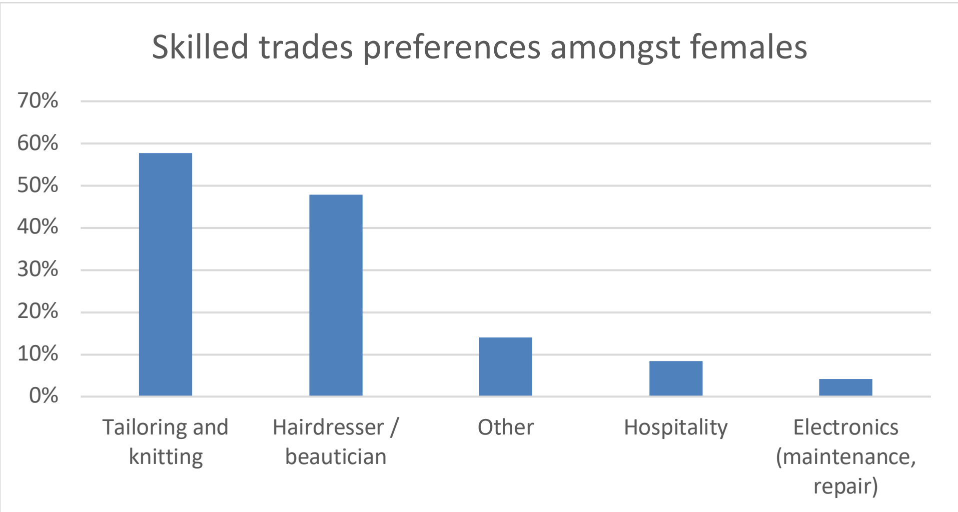

Figure 12 - Skilled trades preferences amongst females

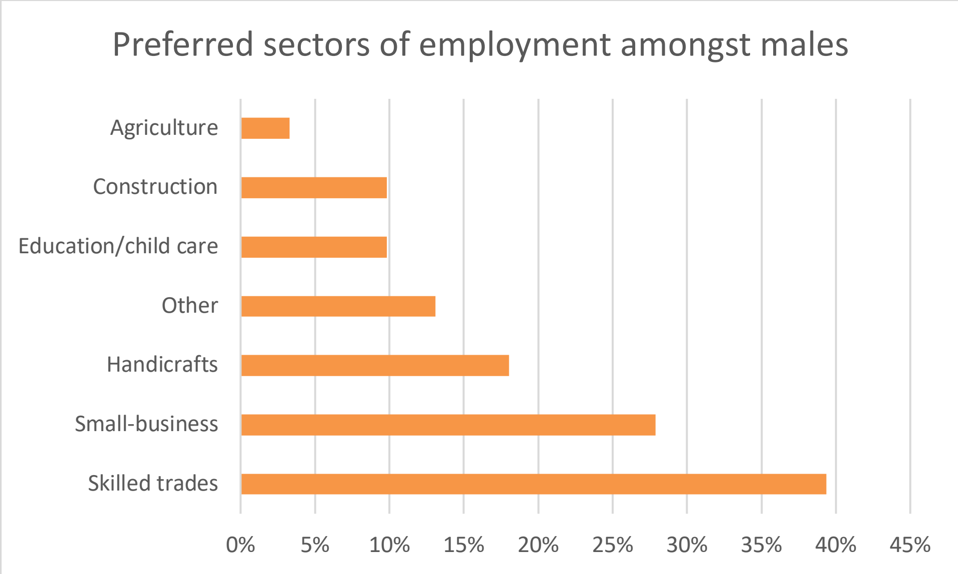

Figure 13 - Preferred sectors of employment amongst males

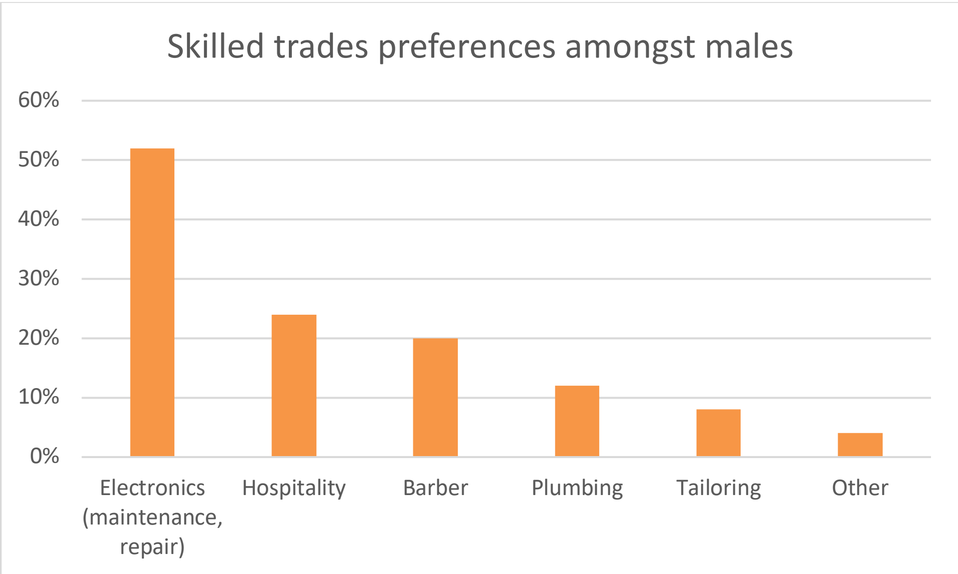

Figure 14 - Skilled trades preference amongst males

The majority of respondents preferred permanent employment (see Figure 15).

Generally, the aspirations that could lead to improved livelihoods in the opinions of the respondents focused on opening home-based businesses focusing on tailoring and knitting and beautician services (amongst the females) and to opening small businesses focusing on buying and selling mobile phones, currency, clothes and accessories, foodstuffs, cleaning products, and electronics repairs (amongst male respondents).

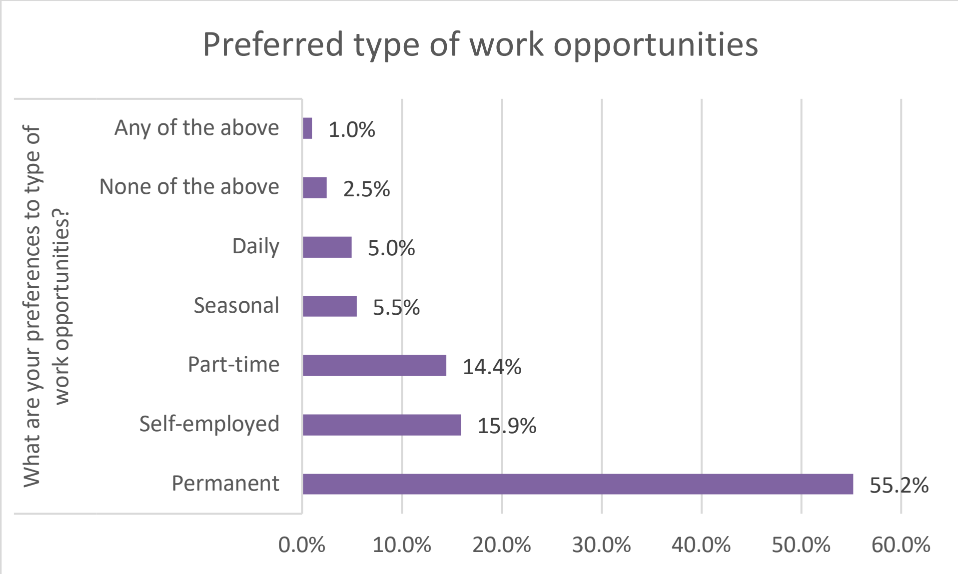

Figure 15 - Preferred types of work opportunities

In terms of what sort of support respondents were looking for, the majority identified grants (59 percent), followed by tools and equipment (52 percent). Skills training and support in terms of job placement were also significant responses, identified by 45 percent and 43 percent of the time, respectively.

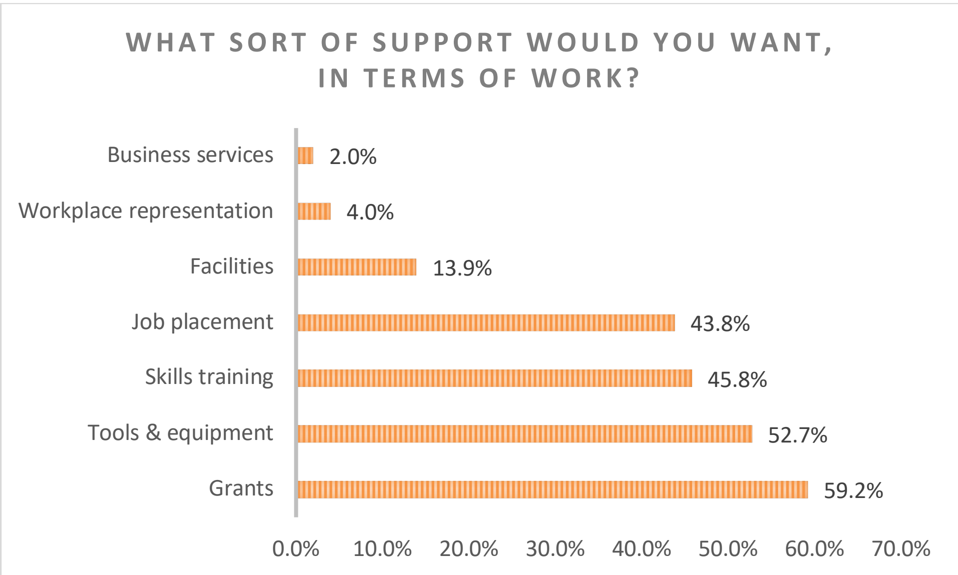

Figure 16 - Priorities of desired livelihoods support

In terms of skills training, the clear majority requested technical/vocational training as increasing their chances for work opportunities.

What sort of training do you believe will lead to increased work opportunities now and in the future?	Technical/vocational	77.1%
	Business administration	23.4%
	Sales and marketing	11.4%
	Other	2.0%

Basmeh and Zeitooneh's Embroidery Workshop

On impact and benefit

The main positive impact and benefit that was resoundingly raised by most of the focus group respondents was the workshop project's contribution to improving their psychosocial conditions. The women present expressed their enthusiasm for meeting collectively with other refugee women and with the training and volunteering opportunities provided by various civil society organisations and NGOs, an experience that was relatively new to them. They reported increased self-confidence and enhanced decision-making abilities. As one responded reported, "my experience [with the workshop and the trainings] in Lebanon has taught me how to say 'no'." The benefits of extended networks of women in similar circumstances training and working collectively were clearly expressed. Even the focus group event itself was treated as an opportunity to meet, socialise, raise issues and problems, and receive advice and guidance to dealing with those problems. While it was not expressed explicitly, the issue of isolation, even within their communal settings, is clearly affecting the beneficiaries. It was repeated that these gatherings are no longer happening and that they should be restarted.

The workshop clearly provided them with a social support network and they were particularly appreciative of the 'safe space' that the B&Z centre provided. It was repeatedly reported that the experience empowered them and made them feel more capable of handling situations where they were being exploited or harassed. Specific praise was also expressed for the B&Z centre staff, as expressed by a beneficiary, "since our first time at Basmah and Zeitooneh, we were warmly greeted by all the members of the centre. They made us feel that we were surrounded by family. They continuously provided us with support and motivation every time we were feeling down." The indicators point to the positive impact that can be realised through the group work and meetings, particularly in empowering the women through communal work that facilitates building larger social support networks, even if just at the level of morale.

However, in terms of achieving economic impact, beneficiaries reported little direct benefit and impact from the activities for the workshop. While the workshop contributed somewhat to their income, the amounts received were not significant, particularly when considered against the level of effort and time required to produce the designated product. This led to questioning amongst the beneficiaries of why they would continue, particularly since a number of them were able to translate their increased capacity in embroidery, sewing, and knitting to improve their income by their own initiative. Some of the women reported income from producing embroidered and decorated wedding dresses, bed covers, and other items, which apparently provides them with a relatively steady stream of income.

In terms of the impact and benefit of the trainings offered to the participants, most recipients believed that the training period was too short and did not fully equip them with the advanced skills they felt they need, mainly borne out of market demands for more advanced products of higher quality. They particularly focused on quality control standards and trainings related to them so that they are better able to evaluate their work and improve their products. With that said, some also clearly acknowledged that their skills were improved as a result of the training, despite coming to the workshop with some previous experience.

Challenges and constraints

The main constraints faced by women participating in the workshop was related to their mobility, which is an issue that also affected their ability to work outside the home. Gossip, sexual and physical harassment and threats, and restrictions from their families (and in one case, a landlord) were all cited as the main restrictive causes.

In terms of personal challenges related specifically to the workshop, these were related to the length and depth of the trainings offered, which some believed were not enough, or were not tailored to the different skill levels of the participants.

Plans, aspirations, opportunities

Participants were eager to benefit from the presence of B&Z community centre as an opportunity for them to (1) escape from their "depressing" daily routine, and (2) find an income generating opportunity. Consequently, participants were ready to participate in any activity that might provide them with both social and economic support.

This reality was further confirmed by women's participation in the different programmes provided by B&Z, and especially in the grants programme to which 7 of the 8 have applied for. Participants showed more interest in discussing the grants programme rather than the workshop, since it was regarded by them as more beneficial in terms of income generation, which is a priority need for all participants.

All present believed that as an activity, embroidery, along with knitting and sewing, were considered to have income-generating potential. This belief is based on their engagements and perceived opportunities outside the work of the workshop, including embroidered bedding sets and home-based seamstress services. It was unanimously agreed that there was greater market demand and opportunities for other products, as compared to the teddy bear or Palestinian embroidered accessories. Some of these suggestions include:

- Wool sweaters, dresses, and accessories
- Rug hooking
- Bedding sets (sewing and embroidery)
- Burlap accessories
- Dresses embroidery and decoration (especially formal wear for special occasions)
- Handicrafts
- Handcrafted dolls and toys

The message to be taken from these suggestions and the related opinions is an important one, namely that the diversification of the embroidery, knitting, and sewing products in response to market demands is essential for optimising the chances and possibilities of generating income.

Furthermore, all the participants discussed other work that they were engaged in, either as volunteers or for income, most of which extended from the increased capacities as a result of B&Z trainings and projects, including:

- Volunteering as a teacher to drop-out students (building on her increased capacities from the English, computer, and coding trainings) and producing and selling handicrafts from her home.
- Volunteering to work with people with disabilities (to help her better understand how to assist and support her disabled brother).
- Knitting and sewing bed covers and sheets, in addition to seasonal agricultural work.
- Sewing clothes and knitting, sold from the home.
- Private tutor and knits and sells wool caps, pullovers, and shawls.

- Food processing (as a result of receiving a grant from B&Z).

All the women expressed clear aspirations for generating their own income, operating from home-based businesses, which better suits their circumstances and the constraints they face in working outside the home. There was an extended discussion on the potential benefits of combining the knitting, sewing, and embroidery groups so as to create more diverse products, although it was clearly expected that B&Z would facilitate this. Opportunities for scale and growth were reportedly present with time seemingly the main restricting factor to expanding their business and taking on more work. According to their responses, none of the women seemingly considered their network from the women's workshop to be a possible option for scaling their business, prior to the focus group discussion; while some of the beneficiaries exchanged contact details while discussing the complementarity of their work, this happened by chance.

Most of those present were building plans that depended on their grant applications succeeding, with initiatives ranging from expanding their services, to diversifying their business products, to setting up small businesses.

Basmeh and Zeitooneh Grant Recipients

Grant recipients interviewed for this study reported using their grant to build businesses and services in the following:

Skilled Trades	Unskilled Trades	Agri- and Food-related Trades
• Tailoring • Sewing • Phone and electronics repair • Hairdressing / Beautician	• Trade in clothes • Trade in fresh groceries • Trade in cleaning supplies • Trade in prepaid mobile cards and accessories	• Production and sale of traditional food pantry products • Pastries and baking • Livestock farming

Almost all the grant recipients reported that the grants were invested in projects and businesses that they had prior skills or based on previous occupations. In many cases, their submitted applications were related to either reinforcing their current businesses or developing and expanding them.

On impact and benefits

It is important to note that not enough time has passed since the conclusion of the project and the initiation of the enterprises set up by the beneficiaries to be able to effectively gauge the impact and benefits of the grants programme on the beneficiaries' lives. With that said, the short-term impacts of the grants have been recorded and are analysed below.

Almost all the grant recipients reported an improvement in their economic conditions after receiving the grant and training from B&Z. Improvements included moving from ITSs to private homes, paying previous debts from income generated by grant-related business, securing and improving basic health and food needs, and returning children to schools were some of the reported results of their involvement in the grants programme. As one respondent reported, "after receiving the grant, I was able to produce more food provisions, my income has increased, and we became able to eat meat four times a month, rather than just once."

However, even with these improvements, their economic situation reportedly continues to be volatile and highly sensitive to risks and barriers. All expressed a continuing need for further financial support for tools, material, and equipment to expand their businesses further and contribute to ensuring a more consistent and greater income.

When questioned about the training received prior to success or failure of their grant application, there was a clear gendered and age division of opinions. The women and younger beneficiaries believed that the trainings were helpful in business administration related tasks, while older men considered the trainings irrelevant and time-consuming. As one male responded stated, “we were provided with very advanced information that we were not able to use in our small businesses.” All the respondents considered that technical skills training would be most beneficial as it would help advance their capabilities and improve their opportunities for income generation. Given that all the respondents refer to customer service, a reputation for honesty, and hard work are key factors for success, they expressed appreciation for the communication trainings (again, more from the female respondents than the male).

The frequency and duration of the trainings was also raised as a point of concern as respondents reported that they had to sacrifice their time on other activities (i.e. employment and home-care responsibilities) in order to attend.

There were some reports of increased social tensions as a result of success or failure of grants amongst the beneficiaries and their communities. Some respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived fairness of the process that required them to attend 2 months of training without a guarantee for a grant afterwards, which was raised as a concern for its effect on the morale and self-confidence of the participants whose applications were not successful. Another respondent reported tensions between their families that, in her case, resulted in physical violence between her children and the children of a grant applicant that was not successful.

Challenges and constraints

The main challenges and constraints that were faced by grants recipients related to the location of their businesses and their relative immobility, albeit for different reasons: women cited security and safety concerns as the main threats, while men were more likely to cite documentation and legal status. In terms of the location, many of the businesses are home-based within ITSs, which are usually located away from the main commercial centres and markets of Bar Elias. “Working at home and especially in the contexts of the camp is in itself an obstacle for growing your business.”

In addition, many of the women reported discouragement from their families, landlords, and shawishes from engaging in work or travelling outside the ITS. Some of them reported constantly being questioned by the shawish managing the ITS they reside in, asking where she is going, who she is meeting with, how she is travelling, etc. in addition to pressure to not engage in such activities. Despite these pressures, relocating their businesses was a main concern for almost all the respondents.

Particularly for the beneficiaries engaged in unskilled trades, exploitation by wholesale traders was a common theme, with beneficiaries feeling that their position is too weak to be able to either resist or respond to it.

A few respondents discussed the challenges faced with their products, mentioning that issues of quality control and standards are something that they are learning organically, but feel that they would benefit from more systematic support. They consider that one of the matters holding them back relate to the quality they can achieve through their work, despite most believing that the quality of their products is equal or higher to that found in the market.

The remaining discussions around barriers and challenges included high production costs, poor electricity supply, lack of networking, and lack of funds as other major barriers. The ever-present barriers that are beyond the control of the beneficiaries that were discussed include the security situation, political instability, and the recession of the economy.

Plans, aspirations, opportunities

There was a consistency in the aspirations of the grant recipients, as they related to their livelihood. All were looking for additional financing to either cement or expand their business initiatives. None were questioning the sector or trades that they are involved in and all considered that there was potential and opportunities within each occupation, despite anecdotal evidence raised by the beneficiaries of a significant number of people involved in the chosen professions (i.e. hairdressing and beautician services, sewing, etc.).

All the respondents expressed desires and plans to grow their businesses, mainly through future grants and other funding opportunities. All the respondents believed that they would be able to generate significant enough income to justify their efforts if they are able to up-scale the volume and quality of their products,

While most beneficiaries reported that there was little to no contact between themselves and other grant recipients, one respondent was the exception. She meets with a group of grant recipients on a monthly basis to discuss challenges they are facing and possible solutions, while also referring clients to each other, forming a business and social support network that she believes adds value to her work. There was general consensus between all the respondents on combining forces with those who are working or implementing similar or complementary projects. They all agreed on the potential benefit of even just meeting regularly to share their experiences and learn from each other. This spirit, however, was tempered by concerns regarding the size of the market and the possible competition. The focus group was also taken as an opportunity by the respondents to exchange contact details and discuss potential business cooperation.

The importance of cooperation, especially under conditions of scarcity, was one that respondents constantly referred back to, as reflected in one of the stories recounted by a respondent, “Since my arrival to Lebanon, I started tailoring bedding sets, carpets, and curtains, a skill that I acquired in Syria. My brother, who also came to Lebanon, was able to rent a small shop in Bar Elias. After agreeing with him, I moved my tailoring machine to his shop and taught both him and his wife how to sew and tailor. As a result of pooling our time and resources, our business grew and I was able to secure more income generating opportunities for all of us.” Clearly, adopting a collective approach to the grants programme can maximise the embedded positive impact of the programme, as perceived by the respondents.

Some respondents also expressed enthusiasm for engaging in additional targeted trainings that could improve their skills, namely in the following areas:

- Design and quality of products
- Maintaining good customer relations
- Assessing sales problems
- Planning and budgeting
- Marketing skills

- Working together with other businesses in the same or complementary sectors

All the beneficiaries stated that they would establish similar projects in Syria, if they have a chance to return. It was clear from the discussion that any skills training, capacity building, and work that is being gained now in Lebanon is with how this could help them once the beneficiaries return. They stressed the importance of the skills and experience they are gaining now for their future ability to sustain themselves and support their families and communities.

AGRICULTURAL SECTOR OVERVIEW

The study intended to conduct a market assessment on the main sectors identified by the respondents, in terms of their interests and perceived opportunities for employment, in order to gauge the size and scope of the market, its employment and income-generating potential, and the opportunities that are currently available. However, based on the results of the surveys, an overwhelming majority of the respondents identified sewing and beautician and hairdressing work as their main areas of interest (for female respondents) and electrical maintenance and repair and small businesses focusing mainly on trade (for the male respondents).

Focusing on presenting a sectoral overview of agriculture, as the mainstay of the economy in Bekaa, is the most likely/viable opportunity for creating or participating in model livelihoods in a formal sector in Lebanon and the findings are presented here.

Overview

Despite the challenges facing the agricultural and agro-industry sectors, they still play an important socio-economic role. In the last two decades, agriculture[40] has remained relatively stable in terms of its share of Lebanon's GDP at an average of 6% per year between 1994 and 2014. This is significantly less than in neighbouring Arab countries and is consistent with Lebanon's higher income and its highly urbanized[41] and diversified economy. In terms of added value per square kilometre, agricultural production in Lebanon is higher than in many nearby countries, reflecting a higher intensity of production and greater focus on higher added value products, especially in fruits. Hence, agricultural production has decreased by 12 percent between 1970 and 2008. This is mainly due to the effects of the post-war economic crisis, and to the reconstruction and development policies favouring the services sectors (finance, tourism, construction), over the industrial and agricultural sectors.[42]

In terms of employment, agriculture and agro-industry employ respectively 7% and 5% of the labour force. They both represented 11.6% of the 2014 Lebanese goods exports (3% for agriculture and 8.5% for agro-industry). The sector constitutes the main source of income for 30 to 40% of the population. However, regional variations are important; in North Lebanon, in the Bekaa, and in South Lebanon, agriculture remains the principal activity for an important segment of the population. In the poorest rural areas of Akkar,

[40] Agriculture covers: animal and plant production, fisheries and marine products, forestry and forestry products.
[41] 88% of the Lebanese population lives in urban areas.
[42] Asmar, 2011; FAO, 2012

agriculture is reported to assume up to 80% of the local GDP and represents the major income-earning and employment opportunity.[43]

Although the majority of farmers in Lebanon are men, women farmers constitute an average 9% of the total farmers. Women are involved mainly in the production of dairy products, food preserves and subsistence farming. In terms of age, the farmers' population in Lebanon is aging; only 11 percent of the farmers are below 35 years, while 23 percent of the farmers are over 65 years. Around 75 percent of the farmers in Lebanon do not have any kind of social coverage. More than half of the farmers rely exclusively on farming activities, while 33 percent work in the private sector and 15 percent in the public sector to ensure a complementary income.

Agro-food industry

The Lebanese agro-industry and food processing sector are characterized by a heterogenic structure with large competitive investments on the one hand, and family and/or cooperative based small production units on the other hand. The sector constitutes an important component of the Lebanese economy in general and the Lebanese agricultural sector in particular. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Industry (MOI) it represents 18.2 percent of industrial enterprises in Lebanon and about 26% of the total industrial output and 27 percent of the value added of the sector, which makes it the largest contributor to the Lebanese industry. Moreover, the sector employs 23 percentof the industrial workforce.[44]

The majority of the food industries and processing units are modest. According to the MOI, the number of registered food industries was 736 in 2007.[45] These establishments are concentrated in the governorates of Mount Lebanon (32.9 percent), Beirut (17.9 percent), North Lebanon (17.2 percent) and the Bekaa (16.2 percent). The MOI surveyed in 2007 only 10 firms having more than 100 workers and only 7 with more than 250 workers.

In addition to the registered food industries, different experts and studies estimate the number of food industries between 2,000 and 3,000, most of them being small and artisanal producers operating in family business at the household level without any official registration.

The food processing enterprises produce a variety of food and beverages including typical Lebanese products. The main product lines are:

- Beverages (alcoholic and non-alcoholic)
- Confectionery
- Bakery products
- Molasses and jams
- Olive oil
- Pickles and vinegar
- Spices and condiments

[43] FAO, 2006
[44] Darwish, 2008
[45] This number takes into consideration only the large and medium industries with at least 5 workers per industry. Another 618 small food industries were surveyed by the MOI in 2007.

- Processed and canned fruits and vegetables.

On trade and markets

The Lebanese agriculture terms of trade are similar to those of developing countries. They are characterized by a regional comparative advantage in fruits and vegetables and a large trade balance deficit for cereals and livestock and related products (e.g. dairy products, eggs, meat cut). In 2014 the cereals trade deficit was $368 million, it decreased to $281 million in 2016. As for livestock and livestock products it decreased from $1,025 million to $824 million in 2016. The reason of this drop is due to the decrease in both imports and exports. This trade deficit is rendering Lebanon vulnerable to fluctuations in international cereals prices (especially wheat).

The Lebanese government is subsidizing wheat production and has implemented a fixed price system for bread. Governmental programs and international donors' projects are supporting the livestock and dairy production sectors; nonetheless, the sustainability of interventions in the intensive dairy sectors has been questioned by several experts.

According to the FAO rapid assessment of the impact of the Syrian crisis on food security and agricultural livelihoods in neighbouring countries, the deterioration of bilateral trade between Syria and Lebanon and the reduced trade through Syria to the Gulf countries, has made it extremely difficult for Lebanese farmers to export their products.

Vegetables and fruits: Regarding vegetables and fruits trade, Lebanon's exports are valued at $79 and $63 million respectively in 2014, compared to $147 and $159 million for imports. In 2016 vegetables and fruits exports recorded $56 and $73 million respectively, as for imports it was $143 and $180 million. Although vegetables' balance of trade remains negative, Lebanon is considered to be almost self-sufficient in terms of raw vegetables production, especially that a significant part of important vegetables is used for agro-industrial purposes. The balance of trade for fruits is positive when nuts are excluded. The leading export vegetable is potatoes and for fruits it is apples.

Agro-industry: Regarding foreign trade, agro-food products (excluding tobacco) account for 60% of the value of the Lebanese agricultural exports against 32 percent for imports. Agro-industry is an exporting sector of the Lebanese economy. Agro-industrial exports have been growing in value from $303 million in 2009 to $573 million in 2014 (13.6 percent annual growth rate). Products classified under agro-industry range from milling products, vegetables and fruits preparation, to alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Agro-industrial either import raw materials or directly procure it from local famers.

In total the general agricultural trade deficit increased from $2.3 billion in 2010 to $2.7 billion in 2013, to decrease again to $2.5 billion in 2016. As shown in **Table 1**, prepared food stuff, beverages and tobacco occupy the first place in both imports (44%) and exports (65%). Vegetables, fruits and other crops constitute 25% of the imports and 27% of the exports. Live animals and animal products constitute 25% of the imports and only 2 percent of the exports.

Table.1. Agricultural and food imports/exports from 2010 to 2016 in billion USD

Agricultural and food products	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.
Live animals and animal products	0.9	0.02	0.9	0.02	0.8	0.02	0.9	0.02	1	0.03	0.9	0.04	0.8	0.02
Crop products	0.7	0.15	0.8	0.16	0.9	0.17	0.9	0.22	0.9	0.21	0.9	0.18	0.8	0.19
Animal and vegetable fats and oils	0.1	0.02	0.2	0.02	0.2	0.03	0.2	0.04	0.18	0.03	0.16	0.03	0.16	0.04
Prepared foodstuffs, beverages, and tobbaco	1.1	0.32	1.3	0.38	1.4	0.39	1.4	0.45	1.4	0.5	1.3	0.5	1.4	0.46
Total	**2.8**	**0.52**	**3.2**	**0.58**	**3.3**	**0.61**	**3.4**	**0.73**	**3.48**	**0.77**	**3.26**	**0.75**	**3.16**	**0.71**
Deficit	**-2.3**		**-2.6**		**-2.7**		**-2.7**		**-2.7**		**-2.5**		**-2.5**	

Source : www.customs.gov.lb

The opening of the Arab markets and the free trade agreements to which Lebanon is signatory, are negatively affecting the agriculture production and trade by allowing the import of cheaper fruits and vegetables from neighbouring countries. It will become increasingly difficult for the Lebanese agricultural products to be competitive, especially in the conventional crops, since other countries in the region have lower costs and subsidized production, mainly in relation to the cost of energy. At the same time, the opening-up of new markets other than traditional Arab markets is very difficult with the absence of quality norms and products not suitable for such markets.

Vegetables exports: The Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC) market absorbs 63.5% of Lebanon's export of vegetables followed by regional Arab countries (Syria, Jordan and Iraq, whose shares add up to 27.7 percent); overall, regional Arab countries account for 91.2 percent of Lebanon vegetable exports. Lebanon's agriculture has not yet been able to diversify its export markets for its vegetables production. This is due to two main factors:

- With the exception of potatoes which actually represent 62% of the raw vegetable exports, Lebanon does not produce a significant surplus of vegetables;
- Lebanese farmers need to improve and implement innovative agricultural practices to ensure compliance with international phyto-sanitary standards.

There are opportunities in diversifying market exports to large and growing markets such as the Russian as well as to the EU markets that provide Lebanon with preferential tariffs rates and quotas for agricultural commodities including potatoes.

Fruits exports: As for the fruits exports, around 37.5% are directed toward GCC countries, while Syria absorbs 21.4% and Egypt up to 15.2% of these exports. Syria absorbs 70% of Lebanon's export of bananas, which constitute 20% of Lebanon fruit exports, while Egypt imports around 71% of apple exports which also represent approximately 20% of total fruit exports. Lately, Lebanese fruit producers have been able to enter the Russian and the EU markets especially with grapes and cherries. Today European markets represent 5% of total Lebanese fruit exports and there are high opportunities for increasing this share.

Agro-industry exports: The market for agro-industrial preparation of fruits and vegetables is more diversified than both raw vegetables and fruits exports market.

The non GCC and regional Arab countries[46] markets account for up to 40% of Lebanon fruits and vegetables exports. As a matter of fact, Lebanon export agro-food products to more than 70 countries, of which a significant 6.3 percent share goes to the United States market. Most of these exports are pulled by demand from the Lebanese diaspora. There is, however, a growing international demand for ethnic food and delicatessen, a demand that Lebanon food industry may answer thanks to the comparative advantage of the "Lebanon food" brand in that matter. There is a high scope for development project intervention in support of increased linkages between farmers and agro-industrial to produce for export to the United States and to Europe, both higher value market and faster growing markets compare to GCC markets.

On agriculture in the Bekaa

The diversity of micro-climate and agro-ecological zones in the Bekaa plain, enables the cultivation of a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, cereals, legumes, industrial crops, grapes, as well as important livestock. The Bekaa plain is divided into three major agricultural zones:

- ***Northern Bekaa (Baalbek and Hermel)***: characterized by its aridity and low rainfall. The main crops of this zone are: cereals, forage crops, fruit trees, vegetables, and legumes. Northern Bekaa is also known for its important livestock sector and dairy sectors with sedentary, semi-nomadic and nomadic herding systems.
- ***The central part of the Bekaa (Zahle)***. The main crops of this zone are: wine grapes, tables grapes, potatoes, forage crops, cereals, fruit trees, vegetables, and legumes. This area is mainly known for dairy farms and processing units and some poultry.
- ***The south-western parts of the Bekaa (West Bekaa and Rashaya)***. The main crops of this zone are: wine grapes (West Bekaa), tables grapes (Rashaya), fruit trees, and olives. It has mixed dairy cows, sheep, and goat herds, as well as apiculture.

The fertile soils and the two rivers crossing the Bekaa plain, Litani to the south and the Orontes "Al Aassi" to the north, make it the most important agricultural region in Lebanon with the highest share of the total irrigated area (54.5 percent). Table 2 summarizes the main characteristics of the agricultural systems in the Bekaa plain.

Table 2. Number of holdings and agricultural area distribution in the Bekaa plain

Number of farmers & agricultural area	**Bekaa**			**Total Bekaa**	**Baalbeck-Hermel**		**Total Baalbeck-Hermel**	***Total Bekaa Plain***
	Rashaya	West Bekaa	Zahle		Baalbeck	Hermel		
Holdings	3,123	4,818	4,575	**12,516**	16,850	4,719	**21,569**	*34,085*
Share of Bekaa plain holdings	9%	14%	13%	**37%**	49%	14%	**63%**	*100%*
Share of Lebanon holdings	2%	3%	3%	**7%**	10%	3%	**13%**	*20%*
Agricultural area (ha)	5,904	16,818	18,926	**41,649**	48,343	9,282	**57,625**	*99,274*
Share of Bekaa plain agricultural area	6%	17%	19%	**42%**	49%	9%	**58%**	*100%*
Share of Lebanon agricultural area	3%	7%	8%	**18%**	21%	4%	**25%**	*43%*

Source: (MOA, 2012) Results of the agricultural census for 2010

[46] Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq.

A significant number of Lebanese households in the Bekaa plain heavily rely on agriculture as either a primary or a secondary source of income. As shown in Table 3, agriculture in the Bekaa regions embody the livelihoods and productive activities of around 30,872 agricultural holdings distributed over approximately 92,194 ha - i.e. 45.8% of total Lebanon's agricultural land - in turn divided into approximately 70,701 plant production plots and 8,926 animal production units.

Table 3. Distribution of agricultural holdings by type and region in the Bekaa plain

Holdings patterns	**West Bekaa**	**Central Bekaa**	**Baalbeck-Hermel**	**Total**
Crops-only farms	83.8%	80.3%	80.5%	
Animal husbandry-only farms	8.6%	12.5%	3.1%	
Mixed farms	7.6%	7.2%	16.4%	
Total farms number (a)	**4,818**	**4,575**	**21,479**	**30,872**
Total agricultural plots (a)	9,333	9,777	51,591	70,701
Total animal husbandry unit (b)	1,413	1,258	6,255	8,926
Total agricultural area in ha (c)	**17,672.9**	**21,178.8**	**53,342.9**	**92,194.2**
Average holdings (Lebanon:1.4 ha)	4.1 ha	4.6 ha	2.1 ha	
Share of Lebanon Agricultural land	7.3%	11.2%	27.3%	

Source: (MOA, 2012) Results of the agricultural census for 2010
(a) Larger than 0.1ha
(b) Including Beekeeping and fisheries
(c) Does not include grazing area, animal production units, and plots less than 0.1ha

Land tenure in Bekaa

Control of agricultural land in Lebanon is highly concentrated. The distribution of agricultural land reflects modes of production in the different areas. Agriculture in West and Central Bekaa tends to be a more intensive and mechanized with the largest estates and high capital investment. In these regions agriculture is more polarized between small-scale farmers and large investments, while in Baalbeck-Hermel agriculture is still a livelihood option for medium-sized farmers. This is also reflected in land tenure systems and plot size distribution. (Table.4 & Table.5)

Table.4. Land tenure by regions in the Bekaa plain

Tenure type	**Share**	**West Bekaa**	**Central Bekaa**	**Baalbeck Hermel**
Farmed by land owner	Share of land	33.0%	57.5%	64.8%
	Share of farms	67.2%	79.1%	74%
Leased out	Share of land	50.3%	36.6%	14.7%
	Share of farms	11.1%	16.5%	6.4%
Share cropping	Share of land	11.0%	5.4%	3.3%
	Share of farms	3.5%	3.1%	1.5%
Other	Share of land	5.7%	0.4%	17.1%
	Share of farms	18.2%	1.4%	18.1%

Source: (MOA, 2012) Results of the agricultural census for 2010

Table.5. Distribution of plots size by region in the Bekaa plain

		0.1ha to 0.2ha	0.2ha to 0.5ha	0.5ha to 1ha	1ha to 2ha	2ha to 5ha	> 5ha	Total
West Bekaa	Share of land	2.7%	5.1%	6.7%	7.8%	13.8%	63.9%	100%
	Share of plots	34.8%	13.5%	15.4%	9.1%	7.4%	7.8%	100%
Central Bekaa	Share of land	1.1%	4.7%	9.1%	11.0%	21.8%	52.3%	100%
	Share of plots	15.2%	25.3%	23.5%	15.0%	13.6%	7.5%	100%
Baalbeck Hermel	Share of land	4.0%	11.5%	16.4%	18.6%	26.7%	22.9%	100%
	Share of plots	28.0%	30.3%	20.5%	12.1%	6.8%	2.4%	100%

Source: (MOA, 2012) Results of the agricultural census for 2010

In Central Bekaa – the less equalitarian region in terms of agricultural land control - 63.9 percent of agricultural land is within plots larger than 5ha, and only 33.0 percent of land and 67.2 percent of farms are farmed directly by the owners. These farmers are mostly small-scale producers with limited land ownership. Leased out farms represent only 11.1 percent of total farms, but they cover 50.3 percent of the land.

This reflects both the existence of absentee landlords owning a large amount of land, and the capacity of agricultural entrepreneurs to rent large areas of land for field production such as cereals and potatoes. In addition, the significant incidence of share cropping agreements (on 11.0 percent of total land) further reflects the dominance of absentee landlord in the region.

On agricultural labour in Bekaa

Table 6 presents agricultural labour requirements in the Bekaa plain. The data does not take into consideration the farmer's (owner of the land or holder of the lease agreement) labour or that of his family. It is estimated that agriculture employs 19,000 permanent workers and requires approximatively 4.26 million working days from seasonal workers – or the equivalent of 68,055 workers who are working on a 25% part-time equivalent. Based on field observation, it can be assumed that 90% of these workers are Syrian, which leads to the estimation that approximately 78,350 Syrian workers are employed either on a full time or part time basis by the agricultural sector in the Bekaa plain.

Labour intensity differs between regions, for there is a significantly higher demand for permanent labour in West Bekaa at an average of 1 permanent worker for 3ha of land, while in Baalbeck the rate is of 1 worker for approximatively 6.6 ha of land. This difference is mainly explained by the relatively higher presence of family/households-based agriculture in Baalbeck-Hermel compared to West Bekaa.

Table.6. Permanent and Seasonal Labour demand per region in the Bekaa plain

Labour patterns and characteristics		**West Bekaa**	**Central Bekaa**	**Baalbeck Hermel**	**Total**
Demand for permanent labour (workers)		5,879	4,476	8,647	19,002
Demand for seasonal labour (in days)		655,729	1,648,145	1,955,770	4,259,644
Demand for seasonal labour (25% Part time equivalent)		12,610	25,356	30,089	66,055
Overall Labour demand intensity	Permanent workers	0.33 / ha	0.21 / ha	0.16 / ha	
	Seasonal labour days	37 / ha	78 / ha	36 / ha	
Labour demand intensity for vegetables including potatoes, bulbs and other tubers	Permanent workers	0.50 / ha	0.42 /ha	0.37 / ha	
	Seasonal labour days	146 / ha	147 /ha	116 / ha	

Fruits trees, including olives	Permanent workers	1.3 / ha	0.64 / ha	0.32 / ha
	Seasonal labour days	61 / ha	258 / ha	47 / ha

Source: (MOA, 2012) Results of the agricultural census for 2010

In terms of demand for seasonal workers, averages are relatively higher in Central Bekaa reaching up to 258 days of seasonal labour per ha. This figure is in part due to:

- Vegetables production that is particularly highly demanding in terms of seasonal labour and accounts for up to 18.5% of Central Bekaa land cover compared to 8.9% in West Bekaa;
- Table grapes production, which is significantly important in Central Bekaa and requires 352 days of seasonal labour per ha.

In terms of skills, permanent labour tends to be comprised of semi-skilled or skilled agricultural workers, while seasonal labour constitutes unskilled workers mostly used during sowing, weeding and harvesting. Any intervention aiming at working with Syrian agricultural workers should set improving skills and capabilities of semi-skilled and skilled Syrian workers as one of its objectives. This will come to the benefit of the overall level of technology and innovation of agricultural practices in Lebanon, as well as to the benefit of the Syrian workers that carry their skills if they decide to change employer or return to Syria. However, direct short-term benefits beyond wage labour needs new strategy.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

Respondents' Recommendations

ITS Youth and Women Heads of Household's Recommendations

The recommendations presented were all formulated to align with the personal challenges faced by the respondents in the focus groups, with recommendations including:

- Increased opportunities for grants;
- Better advertising of opportunities;
- Technical skills and business skills trainings (especially sales and marketing);
- Cash assistance for expenses such as livelihoods related expenses such as rent and utilities, as well as raw materials and equipment; and
- More partnerships amongst the respondents to work collectively, combining skills and experiences.

Women's Workshop Beneficiaries' Recommendations

On the technical approach and trainings and capacity building:

- Extend the workshops' durations from two to six months, particularly for more advanced trainings and to give greater time to acquire more complex skills, such as knitting. It was a repeatedly expressed desire to get more advanced training from B&Z in order to enhance their capacities and help them to diversify their products (namely those produced beyond the project).
- Taking into account the different skill levels of the participants and responding accordingly (i.e. pairing lower skills and higher skills beneficiaries with each other, as a mentor/apprentice relationship; or grouping like-skilled beneficiaries in training groups).

- Ensure that all the necessary equipment was available from the beginning of the workshop, based on the expressed desires and needs of the beneficiaries.
- Provide more instruction and supervision, particularly in terms of quality control, over the course of the project. As an example, the teddy bear instructions were too complicated for some beneficiaries who did not feel that they were trained sufficiently in following the instructions, which led to rejected products and more time spent correcting mistakes, without extra pay.
- Facilitate opportunities for developing linkages between complementarily skilled women.

On the sales and marketing:

- Reduce the delay in payment for work conducted for the workshop and offer fairer payment terms and rates equal to the effort exerted.
- B&Z should develop, offer, and engage in more systematic sales and marketing support services, not just for products produced for the workshop, but extending to their own personal products (i.e. exhibitions and other marketing platforms).
- Diversify and scale up the types and volume of products produced by the workshop, responding to the consumer market demands of their immediate local markets and develop new markets for them.

<u>Grants Beneficiaries' recommendations</u>

On the technical approach, trainings, and support services:

- Beneficiaries believe that they would benefit from greater post-grant support, in the form of quality control guidance, greater networking, information sharing, and sales and marketing platforms and assistance.
- Reduction of the frequency and duration of the trainings, in favour of more targeted trainings responding directly to challenges and constraints they face in the operation of their businesses.
- More advanced technical training to improve already acquired skills to improve the quality and diversity of their products.
- Facilitation of cooperation between similar and complementary grant recipients in an effort to pool resources, share information, and expand network and coverage.
- More (and larger) grants in order to help them grow their businesses, either through the acquisition of raw material, tools, and equipment.
- Establish a forum/space that periodically brings together grant recipients so that they can exchange information, experiences, and opportunities, as well as discuss problems and challenges and come up with potential solutions.

Recommendations for Livelihoods Development in Refugee Settings and Protracted Crises

Three broad approaches to livelihoods programming that could apply to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon and that should be considered by Basmeh and Zeitooneh when formulating their related strategies and frameworks:

- ***Integrated and holistic income generation, employment, and skills programmes:*** Ad-hoc, vocational training and income generation schemes that target only a small number of beneficiaries have been discredited in the literature.[47] Many have failed to consider the market viability of the skills being imparted, the educational, social, and psychosocial barriers facing refugees, lack of expertise in lending or grants, or fail to forge sufficient links with the private sector and, more importantly, the market. A holistic approach that takes into account all these barriers and fosters and integrates the necessary linkages in a well-resourced manner will contribute significantly to its success.
- ***Predictable safety nets and basic social services:*** Direct support to income generation alone is not enough to counter the disadvantages that burden Syrian refugees and require supporting education, nutrition, and food security, all of which combine to indirectly build livelihoods. A short ODI case study on Palestinian refugees in Jordan concluded that UNRWA's safety net is vital for helping to *indirectly* support Palestinian livelihoods.[48]
- ***Integrated regional and country development approaches:*** The World Bank's Global Program on Forced Displacement (GPFD) calls for a more holistic, longer-term, response to building refugee livelihoods. This may include, for example, advocating for political support to provide major regional infrastructure investments, which contribute significantly to short- and longer-term livelihood

[47] Crawford, N., Cosgrave, J., Haysom, S., & Walicki, N. (2015). Protracted Displacement: Uncertain Paths to Self-reliance in Exile. Overseas Development Institute (ODI). London. Retrieved from https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9851.pdf

[48] ODI. (2015). Protracted refugees and livelihoods in Jordan. Overseas Development Institute (ODI). London. Retrieved from https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9853.pdf

opportunities for both refugee and vulnerable host communities.[49] This also may include smaller social enterprise projects focused on building livelihood opportunities in sectors that serve a larger social need (i.e. recycling, up-cycling, food processing and production, etc.).

In terms of policy and practice literature, a number of other themes recur about good practices for livelihoods and related advocacy programming, including:

- ***Promoting the right to work:*** This is a key pillar of UNHCR's refugee livelihoods strategy.[50] Refugees are considered better able to contribute fully to local communities when they can work legally, access resources and services, create businesses, and pay taxes. To this end, UNHCR aims to pursue greater dialogue with authorities, engage local business, and invest more in institutions to benefit the entire community.[51]
- ***Advocacy and policy dialogue:*** In hostile political situations, as one finds in Lebanon, advocacy has to be carefully calculated and coordinated between agencies and organisations to avoid provoking negative responses from the government. By defining and building a more favourable policy environment, and developing evidence-based reports on the economic situation and contribution of refugees to local economies and host communities, it could lead to a reduction of some of the barriers facing Syrian refugees.[52]
- ***Adopting an inclusive approach:*** Livelihoods programming should adopt an inclusive approach that targets both host communities along with refuges so as to avoid parallel programming and reduce antagonism between communities while creating opportunities for refugees to build networks and social capital outside their communities.
- ***Linking along the value chain:*** Joining up different types of interventions – for example, grants with business development and services – is considered key to building sustainable livelihood opportunities for refugees.[53] Clustering of businesses, activities, and interventions have direct benefit to distributing risk, improving sustainability, expanding opportunities, and increasing social capital of the beneficiaries themselves. It also promotes the circulation of capital amongst local communities.
- ***Promoting self-reliance:*** Through partnerships with government and private sector actors, promoting the principle and aspirations of refugees towards self-reliance is essential to maximising the commitment and independence necessary to sustain livelihood interventions and opportunities.
- ***Developing evidence and knowledge bases for livelihood interventions:*** Failure to account for political, practical, and economic barriers are one of the main reasons why livelihoods programmes for refugees fail. UNHCR is advocating for better use of available data about the refugee population and the economy; better targeting; and market-oriented, longer-term approaches, all verified by stronger monitoring and evaluation.[54]

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[50] UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods*, 2014. Retrieved from: http://www.unhcr.org/protection/livelihoods/530f107b6/global-strategy-livelihoods.html

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Feinstein International Center. (2012). Refugee Livelihoods in Urban Areas: Identifying Program Opportunities Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University, Boston, USA. Feinstein International Center. Retrieved from http://fic.tufts.edu/assets/PRM_report_Final_Recs.pdf

[54] UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods*, 2014.