The Syrian Crisis & its Implications on Lebanon

Social, Economic, Political and Security Challenges and Potential Solutions

Khalil Gebara

Université Saint Joseph, 9/3/2015
Number of Refugees

- Since March 2011, the number of people residing in Lebanon has increased by at least 30%.
- The number of Syrians residing in Lebanon has reached 1.5 million Syrians.
- 1,170,000 Syrians are registered with UNHCR as refugees.
  - 283,800 Syrians registered with UNHCR live in the North of Lebanon
  - 410,000 Syrians registered with UNHCR live in the Bekaa Valley.
  - 337,000 Syrians registered with UNHCR live in Beirut and Mount-Lebanon.
  - 138,000 Syrians registered with UNHCR live in South of Lebanon
- Today 1 in 4 is a refugee in Lebanon.
- 50,000 Lebanese have returned from Syria.
- Around 50,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria have moved to Lebanon since 2011.
Vulnerable Groups

- There are three main vulnerable (poor) groups in Lebanon:

  1- 1,5 Million Syrians who are considered vulnerable.
  2- 1,5 Million Lebanese who are considered vulnerable.
  3- 330,000 Thousand Palestinian Refugees who are considered vulnerable and who live in 12 refugee camps.
The Impact of the Syrian Refugees on Lebanon

• After 4 years since the start of the Syrian revolution, we cannot anymore speak only about the humanitarian impact of the Syrian refugees on Lebanon.

• We need to expand this discussion to include other consequences such as:
  - The Demographic Impact.
  - The Economic/Development Impact.
  - The Security/Political Impact.
Economic Impact of the Syrian Crisis

• 86% of Syrian refugees live in 242 villages in Lebanon that are considered to be poor.
• The Lebanese and Syrians are becoming partners in deprivation.
• Since March 2011, the economic losses due to the crisis in Syria have exceeded $7.5 Billion.
• Since 2011, the labor force in Lebanon have increased by 50%.
• Unemployment in Lebanon have doubled since 2011.
• The number of poor has risen by nearly two-thirds since 2011.
• Cost of Syrian Refugees on public infrastructure: $589 Million in 2014.
• Cost of Syrian Refugees on electricity 500-580 $Million between 2012-2014.
• Cost of Syrian Refugees on education sector: $194 Million between 2012-2014.
• Lebanon lost 894 thousand tourists (around 41.5% of total tourists) between 2011-2013.
Security Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Lebanon

• 16% of Syrian Refugees live in 2000 Informal Settlements
• 40% of Syrian Refugees live in unfinished buildings, empty stores and parking lots.
• The number of small crimes have increased by more than 60% since 2011.
• The Lebanese prisons have become over-crowded.
• 26% of the population of Lebanese prisons are Syrians.
• Increase in Human Trafficking of Syrians and Palestinians from Syria.
• In August 2014, clashes erupted in East Lebanon between the Lebanese army and Nusra and ISIS groups that led to the kidnapping of 25 Lebanese soldiers and policemen.
Political Impact of the Syrian Crisis

- The Lebanese people are divided regarding the Syrian crisis and with regards the different policy options towards Syrian refugees.
- Since 2011, the Lebanese government has adopted a policy of disassociation towards the Syrian crisis.
- Some political groups in Lebanon have been publicly involved in the fighting in Syria in support of the Syrian regime.
- Hezbollah, for example, which is represented in both the government and parliament has been military involved in the Syrian war since 2013.
- More than 700 fighters from Hezbollah have lost their lives in Syria.
- The political groups represented in the government have been unable to agree on the issue of establishing formal camps.
- The political divisions and the security challenges affected the functioning of the government and other constitutional institutions.
- The Lebanese Parliament has been unable to elect a President of the Republic since May 2014.
- The parliamentary elections have been postponed twice since 2013.
The Lebanese Government Response to the Syrian Crisis

• The current government was formed in February 2014. Unlike its predecessor, this government is more inclusive and includes the major political groups in Lebanon.

• As of January 2015, the current government has undertaken 3 major steps towards managing the Syrian displacement into Lebanon.

• The government has adopted a “Policy Paper on Syrian Crisis”.

• The government of Lebanon and especially the Ministry of Interior has introduced new “Borders Measures” with Syria.

• The government of Lebanon and the United Nations have launched “The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan for 2015-2016 (LCRP)”.
The Government of Lebanon Policy Paper

• In October 2014, the government of Lebanon adopted a policy paper setting 3 main priorities for managing the Syrian displacement into Lebanon:

• 1- Reducing the number of individuals registered in Lebanon with UNHCR as refugees from Syria.

• 2- Addressing the rising security concerns in the country.

• 3- Sharing the economic burden by expanding the humanitarian response to include a more structured developmental and institutional approach benefiting Lebanese institutions, communities and infrastructure.
Borders Control

• New borders measures have been introduced by the Lebanese Ministry of Interior and by General Security for the first time since the establishment of Lebanon and Syria, borders.

• For the first time, any Syrian who is intending on entering Lebanon needs to declare the reasons for his visit and to provide supporting documents.

• These new measures were introduced on January 5, 2015. before this date, any Syrian can enter Lebanon for at least 6 month.

• Currently, the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs is working on new measures to identify the humanitarian cases regarding Syrian refugees.
The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016

• The LCRP is a joint Government of Lebanon – UN plan to ensure that the humanitarian response to the Syria crisis tangibly benefits Lebanon and helps to stabilize the country during this challenging period.

• The LCRP describes how the government of Lebanon and its partners will work together to reinforce stability while also protecting Lebanon’s vulnerable inhabitants including the de facto Syrian refugees and the Palestinian refugees.

• The LCRP continues the necessary work of delivering humanitarian assistance to the displaced from Syria and other vulnerable groups, while expanding plans to invest in Lebanese services, economies and institutions.

• $2.15 billion is requested for the overall plan to benefit up to 2.9 million vulnerable individuals including 1,2 million Syrian displaced, 200,000 Palestinian refugees and 1,5 million poor Lebanese.
Thank You for you Attention!