



# Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugee Men in Lebanon



Investigating protection gaps, needs and responses relevant to single and working Syrian refugee men in Lebanon

**January 2016**

Lebanon

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IRC is grateful to all those who participated in the preparation of this assessment, especially the refugees who contributed time and energy to enriching this assessment with their experiences.

This publication has been produced with the support of the Asfari Foundation. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the International Rescue Committee and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Asfari Foundation. The Asfari Foundation is a grant making organization that, among other areas of focus, supports humanitarian action to alleviate the trauma and loss inflicted by man-made and natural emergencies in the Foundation's target countries, particularly the Syria region.

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## Executive Summary

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This assessment aims to fill a gap in available data about protection vulnerabilities faced by Syrian refugee men in Lebanon. This gap is significant, as the lack of clear evidence regarding vulnerabilities of Syrian refugee men reinforces a misperception that they face no or minimal vulnerabilities compared with other demographic cohorts. This, in turn, is problematic: both giving unwarranted force to generalizations about the vulnerability of women and children, which can undermine genuine efforts to support and empower those groups, while also leaving the very real vulnerabilities faced by refugee men (as well as other underserved groups) unrecognized and, therefore, not addressed. This is not an argument for reducing focus on any one demographic cohort in favor of another, rather, it is an attempt to highlight the gaps that emerge when humanitarian responses draw on status based categorizations to determine vulnerability at the expense of a more holistic approach. Truly needs-based prioritization and targeting of responses must be based on a comprehensive assessment of the protection context, rather than by equating vulnerability with particular groups or demographic categories.

The assessment relies on data collected through community level assessments, typically conducted with groups of men and women of varying ages drawn from either the refugee or host communities, as well as tailored individual surveys and focus group discussions conducted with single refugee men. A total of 10,113 people participated in community level assessments, while 468 refugee men responded to individual surveys and a further 100 contributed to focus group discussions. Data was collected on five areas of specific focus: (1) threats to personal safety; (2) exposure to abuse and exploitation; (3) access to services and assistance; (4) access to informal networks; and, (5) agency and self-perception.

Key findings included the disproportionate, and sometimes aggressive, targeting of refugee men by both government authorities and host community members. Over two-thirds of refugee men individually surveyed reported experiencing threats to their personal safety. Incidents of abuse and/or exploitation were recounted by 17.74% of respondents, with over half of those incidents related to work. Both in cases of threats to personal safety and exploitation incidents, refugee men reported not seeking help from authorities due to lack of confidence that justice would be afforded them. Nationally, fewer than one in ten individually surveyed refugee men reported receiving assistance in the 30 days prior to the survey (8.12%), and of those who did receive it over 55% described it as only 'somewhat useful'. Commenting on their capacity to 'stand up' for themselves, surveyed refugee men drew a sharp contrast between their ability to do so in interactions with other refugees, as opposed to the context of interactions with the host community. The majority reported a significant reduction in capacity to disagree with others, if the 'others' were host community individuals.

This assessment concludes that refugee men, a category not prioritized by the humanitarian system for support, are often not able to access support that they need and, even more often, feel themselves to be excluded from it. In addition, refugee men's engagement in informal work creates specific vulnerabilities to abuse and exploitation for which effective and consistent responses have not been formulated. These are exacerbated by refugee men's lack of confidence reporting work-related and other rights violations to authorities, which contributes to an atmosphere of impunity that enables those perpetuating the abuses. Specific recommendations are provided at the conclusion of the assessment; the most important of these being that the humanitarian community more readily recognizes that single and working refugee men have specific protection needs, and strengthen efforts to ensure their inclusion in holistic assessments of the protection environment.

## Introduction

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“Group or status-based categorisation largely determines which at-risk groups are supported and how priorities are defined within the broader humanitarian system including in relation to refugees ... as opposed to whole of caseload and needs based approaches that allow for a holistic determination of who, and in what circumstances, faces protection challenges. Most protection efforts are directed towards children, women, IDPs and refugees largely reflecting pre-defined categories provided for under IHL, IHRL and International Refugee Law (IRL). This means that others, including **men**, youth, persons with disabilities, the elderly, social, ethnic or other minority groups or those who have not managed to flee, can to a significant extent be ignored by the system.”

*Independent Whole of System Review of Protection in the Context of Humanitarian Action,<sup>1</sup> (emphasis added).*

The ‘status-based categorisation’ described above is evident in Lebanon, perhaps because it ostensibly renders the overwhelming scale of the refugee influx more manageable. The focus on specialized caseloads contributes to this perceived manageability by effectively limiting the scope of service providers’ responsibilities and programming mandate. The category-driven approach also overlooks the fact that humanitarian interventions are implemented in communities, which are themselves complex systems with myriad internal linkages and patterns of influence. These communities may be under great stress, fractured and ill-equipped to cope with crisis or post-crisis conditions; however, they typically continue to operate in some fashion. To the extent that programming approaches focus on specific caseloads without consideration of community ‘eco-systems’, they risk missing opportunities to mitigate protection risks at greater scale with available resources as well as doing harm by alienating some groups whilst prioritizing and potentially stigmatizing others.

Given the focus on status-based programming in Lebanon, coupled with protection monitoring data indicating an uneven response to different protection risks, this assessment was undertaken to further explore unaddressed vulnerabilities and potential gaps in assistance. It focuses on Syrian refugee men, particularly single refugee men, for two key reasons. Firstly, to a much greater extent than other groups for which support is rarely available (such as adults with disabilities and the elderly), refugee men are often perceived as not being in need of assistance. They are commonly regarded as the demographic cohort best able to self-protect, self-sustain and negotiate the complexities of displacement unaided. As a result, their vulnerabilities are rarely specifically assessed or acknowledged. This information gap reduces the capacity of response actors to target based on need, and to understand the ways in which the vulnerabilities of single men create or exacerbate protection risks for the broader community, both of which detract from the implementation of a holistic and comprehensive response. Secondly, single Syrian refugee men in Lebanon are the group most likely to be perceived as posing a risk to host communities. This is driven by public sphere rhetoric that seeks to frame refugees as a security threat or source of criminality, and to use this characterization to justify measures that further constrict the protection space available to them. Engaging with refugee men is therefore integral to understanding and addressing protection risks in Lebanon.

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<sup>1</sup> Niland, N and Palastro, R (et al). May 2015, published by NRC (on behalf of IASC and GPC), p51, available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/world/independent-whole-system-review-protection-context-humanitarian-action>.

## Methodology

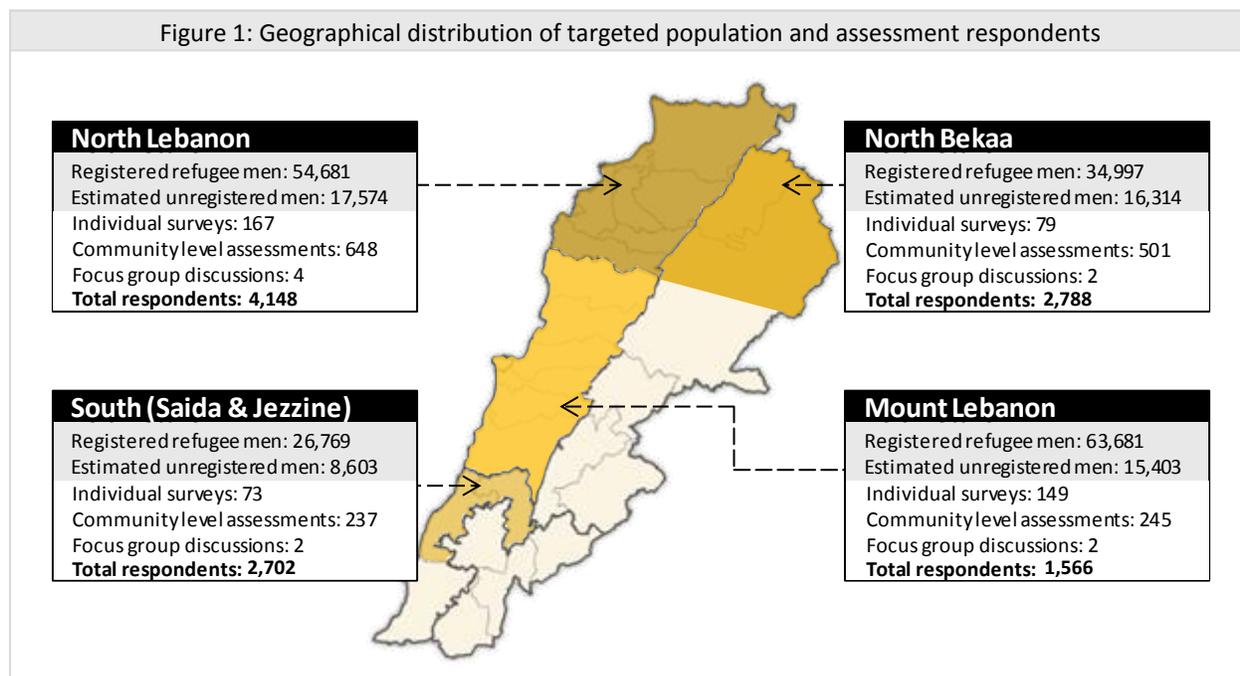
### Assessment Strategy

This assessment relied upon a combination of three data collection methods: individual surveys of single refugee men, focus group discussions with single refugee men, and semi-structured community level assessments conducted with groups of men and women from refugee and host communities and community leaders. Data was collected over a four month period from April to July 2015. While a mixture of quantitative and qualitative information was gleaned through each data collection modality, the individual surveys and community level assessments provided the bulk of the quantitative data and the focus group discussions provided the majority of the qualitative data analyzed for the assessment. The data gathered through each of these complementary methods was intended to support meaningful analysis on five key themes: (1) threats to personal safety; (2) exposure to abuse and exploitation; (3) access to services and assistance; (4) access to informal networks; and, (5) agency and self-perception.

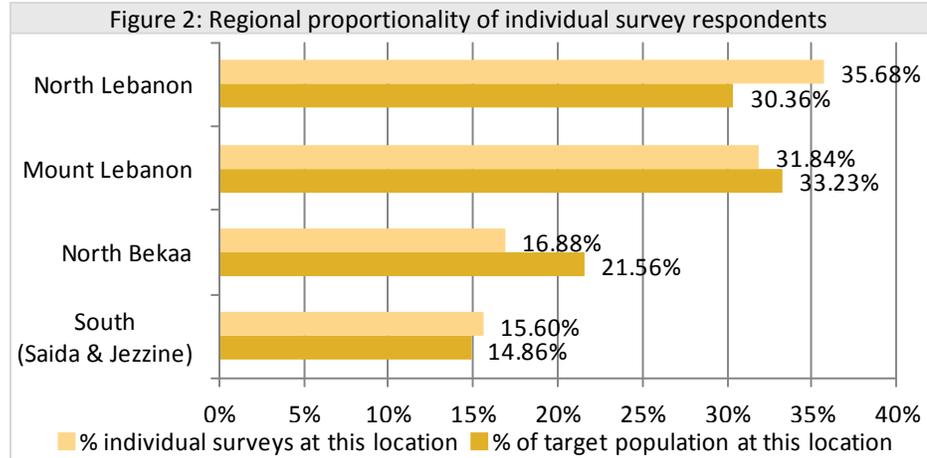
### Sampling Methodology

The 'target population' for the assessment was refugee men, both registered and unregistered with UNHCR. There are no agreed estimates of the unregistered refugee population in Lebanon. For the purposes of this assessment a total unregistered population of 320,000 was assumed, which roughly aligns with the gap between the total registered population (approximately 1.2 million) and the Government of Lebanon's estimate of the total number of 'displaced' Syrians in Lebanon (approximately 1.5 million). Estimations of the demographic breakdown of the unregistered population assume that it skews more heavily towards men aged 18-59 than the registered population at a rate of 5%. This assumption is based on protection monitoring findings that indicate men, particularly single men, are less likely to be registered with UNHCR than the broader refugee population.

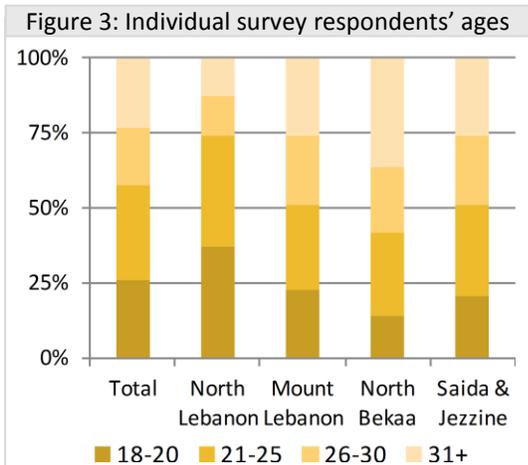
Figure 1: Geographical distribution of targeted population and assessment respondents



Every effort was made to implement a sampling methodology that would allow for conclusions to be reliably drawn at national level, as well as providing credible indications of regional specificities. Therefore, it was designed with the intention of reaching a sample population with a confidence interval of 5 and a confidence level of 95%, proportionally representative of each geographic area in which IRC implements protection monitoring (note that this excludes West and Central Bekaa, and five districts of South Lebanon). This strategy was broadly successful for the individual surveys, with deviations from regional proportionality not exceeding 5% (figure 2); however, proportional representation was not achieved for focus groups and community level assessments. This was deemed acceptable, given the qualitative nature of focus groups, and the large pool of respondents for community level assessments.

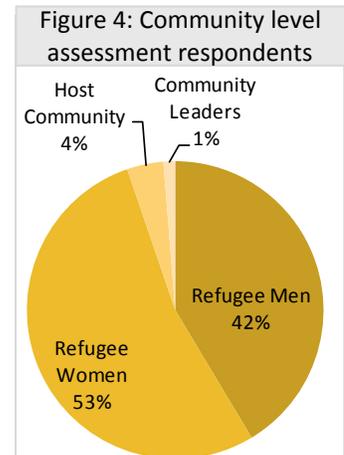


proportionally representative of each geographic area in which IRC implements protection monitoring (note that this excludes West and Central Bekaa, and five districts of South Lebanon). This strategy was broadly successful for the individual surveys, with deviations from regional proportionality not exceeding 5% (figure 2); however, proportional representation was not achieved for focus groups and community level assessments. This was deemed acceptable, given the qualitative nature of focus groups, and the large pool of respondents for community level assessments.



The demographic breakdown of respondents to individual surveys (figure 3) illustrates the predominance of the 18-25 age group. Respondents in this age range comprised 57.7% of the total sample group and at least 50% of the regional sample groups in every area except North Bekaa. Given the deliberate targeting of single men, this may suggest that refugee men in this age group are more likely to be single. It may also indicate that refugee men in this age group are more likely to be visible and accessible to the assessment teams (as well as others), either due to their participation in work, their concentration in groups or particular areas, or due to other factors.

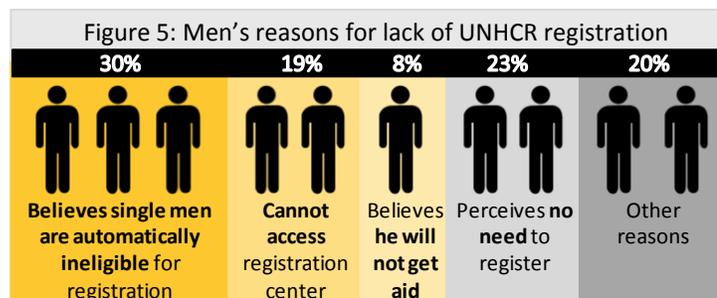
Community level assessments predominately targeted refugees, with women slightly overrepresented. Host community members and leaders (mukhtars, municipality members and others) were approximately 5% of respondents. Since community level assessments targeting the host community tend to include a smaller number of respondents per assessment, representation of host community members at assessment level (rather than individual respondent level) is greater, at 14.71%. Participating refugees represented different location types including: collective sites (managed: 8.64%; unmanaged: 14.13%); informal settlements (10.26%); and, villages/towns/urban areas (66.96%). This roughly aligns with national statistics indicating about 14% of refugees live in informal settlements, and a further 25% live in collective sites.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, *Summary of 2014 VASyR Results*, p3, available at: <http://www.alnap.org/resource/19527>.

Respondents were identified through a combination of snowball sampling, utilizing existing networks within refugee communities (for example, with the support of refugee outreach volunteers), and opportunistic sampling by assessment team members. Initial intentions to obtain reasonably even coverage across districts within each operating area were achieved to a reasonable extent, with some deviations from proportionality (for example, Baabda district of Mount Lebanon was underrepresented in individual survey respondents compared to registered refugee population). Deviations were generally attributable to higher concentrations of single refugee men in areas where work opportunities were perceived to be greater, and because of single refugee men's deliberate desire to maintain a low profile in their communities to avoid protection risks.

The inclusion of single Syrian men not registered with UNHCR in the sample population for this assessment, and the contention that they are relevant to an understanding of the protection environment for refugees in Lebanon, may be perceived to require some additional justification. Unregistered individuals lack the recognition of their



claim to refugee status that registered individuals have; however, it would be incorrect to assume that unregistered individuals do not meet the criteria for refugee status enshrined in international law. Indeed, as noted in the findings, the majority of the men surveyed described reasons for their lack of UNHCR registration that did not reflect any lack of need for international protection. Three in ten of the 468 men surveyed reported believing that single men were not eligible for UNHCR registration, and a further two in ten could not access registration centers due to restrictions on freedom of movement. Field teams did not attempt to conduct refugee status determinations in the course of data collection for this assessment; rather, it was assumed that to the extent that the sampling methodology allowed for the inclusion of Syrian men who may not meet international standards for refugee status, their experiences would remain reflective of many others who do. This judgment reflects two key factors: firstly, the suspension of UNHCR's registration function during the assessment period, at the request of Government of Lebanon, which rendered registration inaccessible to new arrivals and unregistered individuals in-country regardless of the strength of their claim to refugee status under international law; and, secondly, the general lack of differentiation between registered and unregistered single Syrian men in the attitudes and practices of host communities and local authorities.

### Constraints

A number of limitations affected the design and implementation of the assessment. These included:

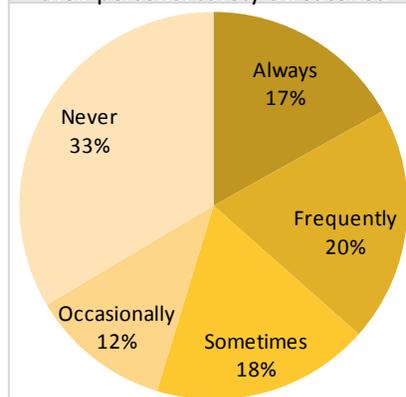
- information gaps concerning the unregistered population;
- the limited number and unequal distribution of assessment teams across the different areas of coverage, which resulted in weaker community level data collection in Mount Lebanon;
- difficulties accessing respondents relevant to the sampling frame; and,
- the limited relevance of the assessment to the areas where data was not collected by assessment teams (Central and West Bekaa, and five districts of South Lebanon) as, while it is unlikely that the experience of refugee men in these areas is completely different to that indicated in this assessment, there was no opportunity to reflect regional specificities.

## Findings

### Threats to Personal Safety

Two out of every three refugee men responding to individual surveys reported experiencing threats to personal safety. More than half that group (37% of the total sample) perceived those threats to be constant or frequent. Most respondents perceived these threats to come predominately from the Lebanese authorities (72.26%), with the bulk of the remainder indicating that host community members were the most frequent source of threats they experienced (20.97%). Refugee men's perception of Lebanese authorities as a threat tallies with information gathered through community level assessments, indicating that refugee men are the most frequent targets of raids, arrests and checkpoints. In addition, refugee men are the most frequent targets of social cohesion incidents (such as verbal or physical aggression) despite having similar perceptions of social cohesion overall as refugee women.

Figure 6: Frequency refugee men felt their personal safety threatened



Of 72 raids reported upon in community level assessments, 65 targeted refugee men and seven targeted both refugee men and women. Refugee men were the primary targets of over 90% of raids reported during the assessment period.

Of the 479 arrests reported upon in community level assessments, 472 affected refugee men and seven affected both refugee men and women. Refugee men were the targets of over 98% of arrests reported during the assessment period.

Of the 299 assessments in which checkpoints were discussed in detail, refugee men were described as negatively affected in 199, with refugee women equally affected in 46 assessments. In 21 assessments, refugee women's only concern about checkpoints was the risks they pose to their male relatives.

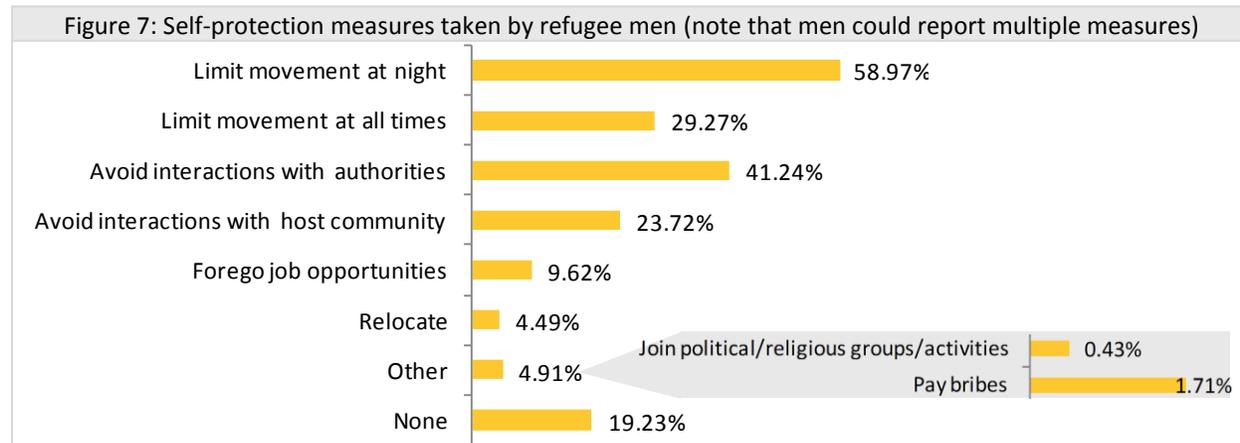
Of the 90 incidents of host community aggression towards refugees reported to have occurred in the 30 days prior to community assessments undertaken during the assessment period, 50 targeted refugee men only (55.56%). Eight targeted refugee women only, 13 targeted refugee children only and 19 targeted all refugee demographics in a specific area. This included 32 incidents of assault or serious assault, 19 of which (59.38%) were directed only towards refugee men.

Threats to personal safety were highlighted by participants in nine out of ten focus groups, often with multiple examples of the forms that these threats may take. Checkpoints, raids and arrests were each discussed in detail in six out of the ten focus groups, with threats to personal safety from host community members prioritized in five. The impacts of checkpoints on freedom of movement are rarely disputed but weight must also be given to the way in which they create real and perceived threats to personal safety for refugee men. A 23 year old refugee man, from Aarsal (North Bekaa) explained:

**'I am afraid to cross checkpoints because I tried once and I was detained for a week, insulted and beaten. I would rather die than cross any checkpoint and risk detention.'**

While it is difficult to reliably track the frequency of such incidents, they generate significant fear for both refugee men and women. Similarly, in focus group discussions, refugee men described being

unable to sleep at night due to fear of raids by authorities or break-ins by criminal elements. A 30 year old refugee man from Dawse (Akkar) described leaving his shelter for days at a time when he fears a raid may occur, in order to avoid arrest and detention due to his lack of legal stay.



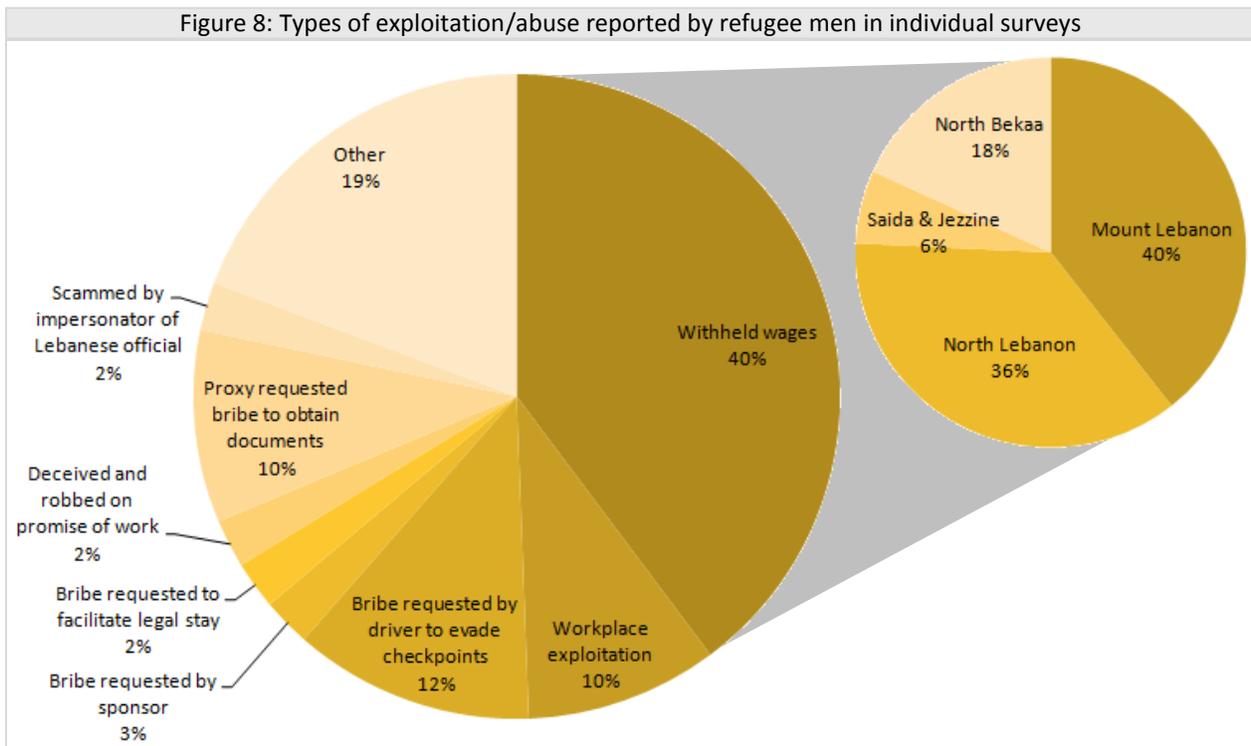
Over 80% of individually surveyed single refugee men reported taking measures to self-protect against threats to personal safety. Over half reported taking two or more measures to self-protect (52.35%), and almost one in four respondents reported taking three or more measures (24.15%). A key self-protection measure taken by over 40% of respondents was avoidance of interaction with public authorities. This is a logical reflection of the high proportion of respondents identifying local authorities as the most frequent cause of perceived threats to their personal safety; however, this fear of interacting with authorities, and the potential for negative consequences to arise from such interactions, can itself be seen as an enabling factor in incidents of aggression perpetrated by host community members against refugees. For example, none of the incidents of aggression reportedly perpetrated by host community members against refugee men during the assessment period were reported to local authorities by those affected. Failure to report incidents of host community aggression towards refugees because of refugees' lack of confidence in authorities or, worse, fear that authorities will discriminate against them, contributes to a climate of impunity that heightens risks of violence and aggression towards refugees by host community members.

Limiting movement in order to self-protect may appear relatively innocuous compared to avoidance of interaction with authorities; however, almost three in ten interviewed refugees reported not only limiting movement at night, which was the most common self-protection measure reported (58.97% of interviewed refugee men nationally, and 74.38% of respondents in North Bekaa), but rather limiting movement 'at all times' (29.27%). This is problematic not only because it reflects a severe self-restriction of movement but also because it reduces men's access to services, assistance and livelihood opportunities. While 9.62% of respondents reported that they turned down a specific job opportunity in order to self-protect against risks of harm, it is likely that the extent to which livelihood opportunities are foregone is in fact higher since those who severely self-restrict movement are typically unable to seek them. A common theme in both individual surveys and focus groups was the link that refugee men draw between lack of access to justice when mistreated by authorities and their self-restriction of movement. A 28 year old refugee man in El Meten/Baabdat (Mount Lebanon) illustrated this link well:

**'I am unemployed and at home most of the time, feeling useless, because I am powerless to stand up for my rights in front of the authorities when they treat me badly.'**

Exposure to Abuse and Exploitation

Individually surveyed single refugee men reported having been affected by abuse and/or exploitation at a rate approaching one in five individuals, with a total of 17.74% of respondents describing one or more incidents. Of those who reported experiencing abuse and/or exploitation, 43.37% reported more than one incident. In the majority of cases, refugee men reported that the incident resulted in a financial loss (86.75%). Incidents reportedly resulted in physical harm in a total of 28.92% of cases. These statistics indicate that incidents of abuse and/or exploitation resulted in both financial loss and physical harm in 15.66% of cases. In over half of reported cases, abuse and/or exploitation was related to livelihoods (including withheld wages, deceived and robbed on the promise of work, and other workplace exploitation). It should be noted that respondents were not specifically prompted to consider workplace issues when asked about incidents of exploitation or abuse.



A typical case of work-related exploitation was reported by a 31 year old refugee man from Al Ain/Baalbek (North Bekaa):

**‘I did stone masonry work for a group of about ten Lebanese people and they did not pay me. I am afraid to make any complaint about it because they could harm me and I am a stranger in this country.’**

The frequency with which exploitation and abuses occur in relation to work, at least in comparison to other forms of exploitation and abuse, is of concern because current approaches to determining vulnerability tend to assume that refugee men are relatively less vulnerable if they are engaged in livelihood activities. The statistics above belie this assumption, and reflect the lack of functioning safeguards against abuse and exploitation of refugees in Lebanese workplaces. Importantly, the high level of frequency with which incidents of exploitation were reported to take the form of withheld wages (and the geographically widespread nature of incidents of this sort) also challenges the

assumption that working refugee men are automatically less economically vulnerable than others due to their working status. Rather, these statistics suggest that working refugee men face specific risks due to their engagement with work, against which they are not adequately protected by national authorities and for which the humanitarian community has not developed adequate risk mitigation strategies or remedial measures. While those gaps remain, careful consideration should be given to the way in which the vulnerability of working men is assessed.

In contrast to the commonality of work-related exploitation/abuse across all geographical areas, other types of incidents were specific to particular locations. For example, all reports of bribes requested by taxi drivers when asked by refugee men to take routes that avoided checkpoints originated in North Bekaa. Requested bribes typically varied in amount between \$100 and \$200, and were significantly greater than warranted by the distance travelled. Bribes requested in these circumstances represent efforts to take advantage of those whose movement is already restricted due to lack of legal stay or other security fears, and yet feel the need to move is so great that they must take the risk. Reasons were typically related to the need to move from an insecure area to a safer one, with respondents referencing fighting in Wadi Hamid and their desire to seek safety in Aarsal. It should be noted that over the period of data collection fighting in Wadi Hamid and surrounding areas was frequently so intense that Lebanese authorities closed the area to Lebanese quarry owners, in order to ensure their safety. At the same time, refugee men in the areas where the fighting was taking place continued to be refused access to safer areas that lay beyond checkpoints. This denial of access to safety disproportionately affected single refugee men, with women and families more likely to be granted movement past the same checkpoints. The restrictions were framed as a response to suspicions about the involvement of refugee men in the fighting that was taking place; however, suspicions appeared to attach to the entire demographic group of single Syrian men, rather than to individuals about whom specific information was known. This not only highlights the way in which the protection space for single refugee men is narrowed by perceptions that they, *en masse*, pose a security risk but also draws attention to the problematic consequences of those perceptions, in short: single refugee men were perceived as a security threat and so denied access to safety through formal routes (past checkpoints), forcing them to seek safety through informal routes (avoiding checkpoints) for which they were requested to pay bribes to taxi drivers. This is a clear illustration of the way in which single refugee men are reliant upon negative coping strategies to maintain their immediate safety, and in so doing are exposed to increased risks of exploitation and abuse.

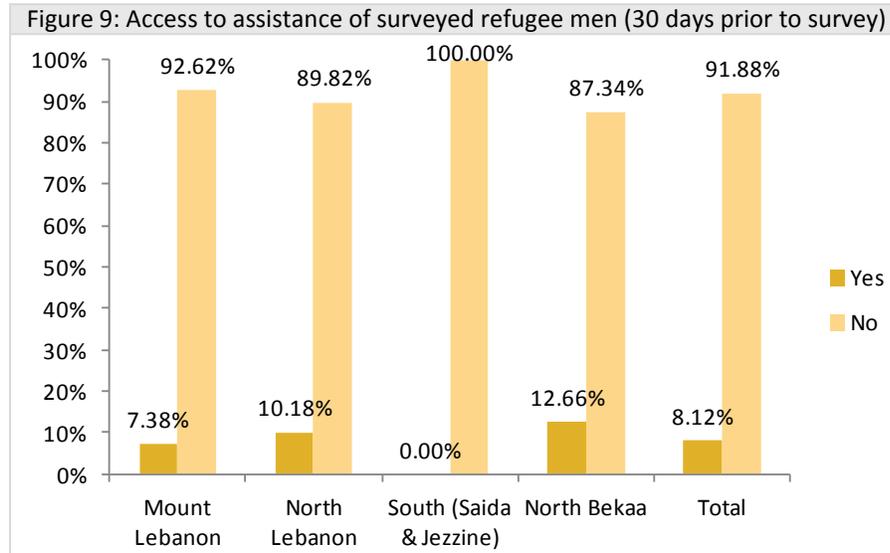
Other incidents of exploitation and abuse included requests for payment of bribes in order to secure aid or resettlement, as well as requests for payment of bribes to secure sponsorship. In two instances, refugee men reported being deceived into paying money to individuals impersonating Lebanese officials. A 25 year old refugee man from Aarsal/Baalbek (North Bekaa) recalled:

**‘I received a call from someone I did not know, who said he was from Military Intelligence. He said that I was wanted on several criminal charges and that if I wanted to be free of the charges I must pay \$1,000 to a person he sent. I paid in fear of my safety and my life.’**

Incidents like this underscore the felt lack of protection that refugee men experience, encompassing both lack of confidence in Lebanese authorities specifically and lack of access to justice more broadly. Threats like the one recounted above are effective because refugee men do not believe that they will be treated fairly if accused of a crime, particularly if that accusation comes from a host community member. Regardless of its accuracy, this perception creates an environment in which exploitation and abuse of refugee men can be undertaken with impunity.

Access to Services and Assistance

Respondents to individual surveys were asked to report on the types and usefulness of any assistance they had received in the 30 days prior to the survey, to provide a rough gauge refugee men’s access to

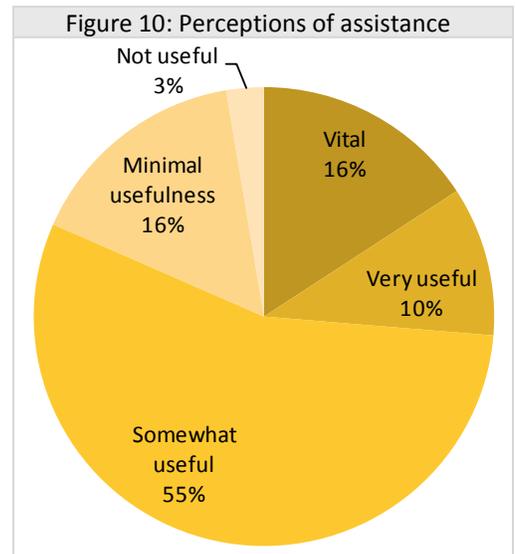


assistance and the effectiveness with which it met their needs. Overall, fewer than one in ten of the refugee men surveyed had received assistance in the 30 days prior to the survey.

Regional differences were observable but, in all cases, the percentage of men who had received assistance in the 30 days prior to the survey remained below 13%.

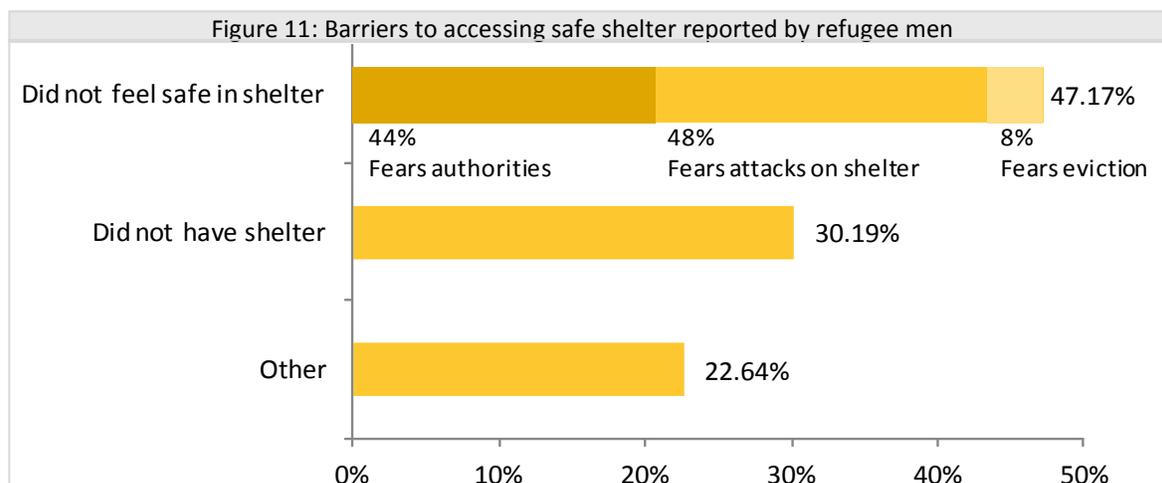
Of those receiving assistance in the 30 days prior to the survey, opinions about the usefulness of the assistance were mixed with over half reporting that the assistance they received was ‘somewhat useful’. In some cases, the usefulness of assistance was limited by its volume. For example, WFP assistance was generally described as a ‘somewhat useful’ type of assistance but simply too limited in value to effectively meet needs. In other cases, refugee men receiving the assistance were unable to make use of it. A 19 year old single refugee man from Assoun/El Minieh Dennie (T5) described assistance he received from a local organization from which he was ill-equipped to benefit:

**‘I received a box of food, but it was all raw grains and I did not know how to prepare a meal with it so it was not useful for me.’**



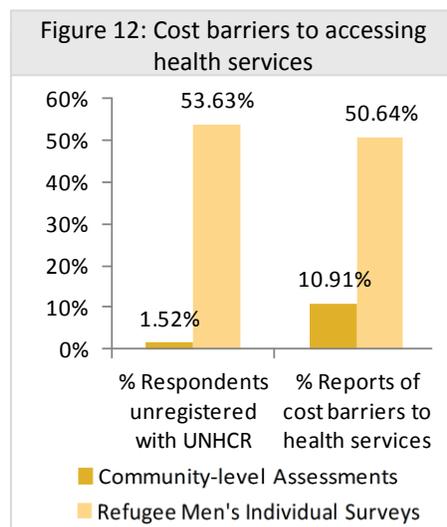
Feedback like this is important, with more than one in five of the refugee men surveyed (21.58%) reporting that they ‘sometimes’, ‘not very often’ or ‘never’ had enough to eat at meals over the 30 days leading up to the survey. Subjective, qualitative feedback like this does not preclude more technical inquiries into refugee men’s access to food; however, the overrepresentation of individuals not registered with UNHCR in this group, as well as the greater extent to which they are typically found ineligible for WFP assistance even when they are registered with UNHCR, means that they are less likely to be included in the more rigorous technical assessments of food security that WFP and related organizations implement. Against that backdrop, even the relatively superficial and self-reported data collected in this assessment does take on some importance as an indicator of potential unmet need.

Assistance described as ‘vital’ or ‘very useful’ typically related to provision of shelter, often by extended relatives or friends from within the refugee community, offered when the refugee man surveyed was unable to identify any other shelter options. The importance of assistance of this type is underscored by reports from more than one in ten of the refugee men surveyed (11.32%) that they could not find a safe place to sleep on one or more occasion during the 30 days prior to the survey. Of that group, the overwhelming majority (81.13%) reported multiple occasions when they were without a safe place to sleep during that period.



Feeling unsafe in the shelter in which they are living is not only a reflection of the poor quality of shelter typically available to refugees, but also of tensions between refugee and host communities and of the impacts of municipal and other security measures. For example, protection monitoring has identified municipalities placing limits on the number of Syrian households able to share single shelters (for example, Douma/El Batroun in T5), while in other cases Lebanese landlords of collective sites have refused to allow single refugee men to access shelter there (for example, Alayle collective site/Saida in South Lebanon). These restrictions are usually justified on security and shelter safety grounds, but act to reduce access to shelter for many refugees and disproportionately reduce access (or increase risks around shared shelter access) for single refugee men.

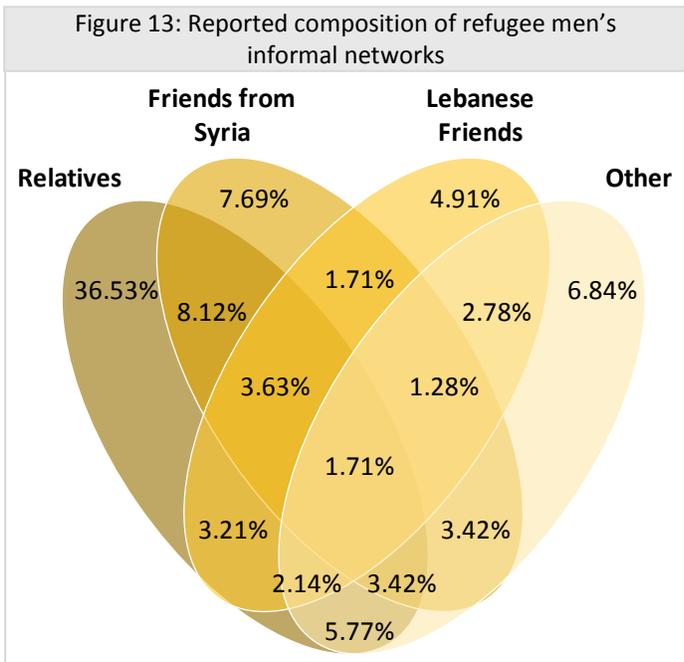
Protection monitoring also consistently indicates that access to health services is the priority service access issue for the refugee population. Those registered with UNHCR have 75% of their primary health care costs subsidized through MediVisa, while those not registered with UNHCR are liable for the full cost of the service (exceptions may be made for those who have approached UNHCR for registration after registration was suspended; however, their means of accessing subsidized health care is not straightforward at field level). Since single refugee men are less likely to have registered with UNHCR in comparison to the rest of the refugee population, they are more likely to face cost-related barriers to health service access. This is reflected in the comparison of data collected through community level assessments, typically conducted with refugee families, and through individual surveys of single refugee men.



Access to Informal Networks

Refugee men are sometimes perceived as relatively less vulnerable because they are not affected by cultural constraints on movement and interaction in the public sphere in the same way as women, making them (it is assumed) better able to access informal support networks in their community. Access to informal networks is, at the same time, of heightened importance for single refugee men who are generally more likely to be ineligible for assistance (compared to, for example, female headed households and households with high dependency ratios). In addition, research indicates that informal support networks are traditionally used by Syrian men to access emotional and psychosocial support, finding that '[w]orking, visiting family and friends, walking, and going out, used to be common forms of coping for Syrian men' prior to displacement.<sup>3</sup> Inquiries on this point were made during the individual surveys with refugee men, targeting single refugee men or refugee men living separately from their families. Data concerning the size of refugee men's 'trusted' informal networks, and their composition, suggests that refugee men may have relatively limited access to informal networks.

The vast majority of refugee men responding to individual surveys reported knowing five or fewer people from whom they could expect support (80.56%). More than one in 15 refugee men reported knowing no one who would fall into this category. Data concerning the composition of refugee men's informal networks demonstrates that these are most heavily reliant on extended relatives and friends previously known from Syria.



The number of men reporting formation of new friendships with other Syrians during their displacement in Lebanon was relatively low (18.16%, included in the 'other' category in Figure 13<sup>4</sup>), and actually lower than the number of refugee men reporting friendships with Lebanese individuals (21.37%). Together, these findings suggest that refugee men's relatively greater involvement in the public sphere, particularly through engagement in work, is (at least, in isolation) relatively ineffective in promoting formation of informal support networks.

This aligns with protection monitoring findings that show areas where the only interactions between refugee and host community members are 'transactional' (related to work or purchase of basic items

from supermarkets) are overwhelmingly described as having 'neutral' social cohesion. When refugee respondents elaborate on this description they explain that they use the term 'neutral' because interactions are minimal, include no social interactions with host community members, and every effort

<sup>3</sup> Hassan, G. et al, 2015, *Culture, Context and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Syrians: A Review for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Staff Working with Syrians Affected by Armed Conflict*, UNHCR, Geneva.

<sup>4</sup> In Figure 13, each percentage corresponds to the proportion of respondents reporting informal networks composed of the groups overlapping in the segment where the percentage appears. For example, looking at the "Relatives" and "Friends from Syria" categories, 8.12% of respondents reported informal networks composed only of these two groups of people; 3.63% of respondents reported networks that include relatives, friends from Syria, and Lebanese friends, etc.

is made by refugees to maintain a low profile in public settings in order to mitigate the potential for interactions that they view as more likely to be risky than beneficial. Refugee men's engagement in work is not perceived as an opportunity for forming new informal networks with either other Syrians or with Lebanese. Rather, work-related interactions are perceived as a necessary risk associated with generating income for self-support, which should be mitigated to the extent possible through avoiding any broadening of the interaction away from purely work-related matters.

This is problematic because refugee men may be prepared to undertake some risks in order to access work but are unlikely to feel the same risks are justifiable if undertaken to build or maintain social relationships. Of the refugee men reporting no trusted support persons, more than one in five (21.88%), many of whom work when possible, reported that they have no social interactions through which they can seek to establish such relationships. Some described losing access to trusted friends due to constraints on freedom of movement. A 25 year old refugee man, living in Aabboudiyye/Sahel Akkar (Akkar) stated:

**'The displacement has had a big effect on me and my relationships because I cannot move around freely like before.'**

A further 6.25% explicitly stated that work led to breakdowns in their social relationships. A 21 year old refugee man living in Fanar/El Meten (Mount Lebanon) said:

**'I spend most of my time working, so there is no opportunity to communicate with others and know if I can trust them.'**

The significant extent to which refugee men rely on relatives as trusted support persons in time of need, implies that refugee men lacking contact with relatives may have disproportionately reduced access to informal support networks. Supporting this conclusion, the data indicates that only 28.63% of respondents had access to informal support networks that did not include relatives. Even when other informal support options were identified, separation from relatives commonly remained a key source of concern. A 35 year old refugee man, living in Baouchriye/El Meten (Mount Lebanon) explained:

**'I can only see [my family] maybe every six months. It is not enough, I miss them so much.'**

Interestingly, only 1.92% of respondents to individual surveys reported trusting a Syrian informal leader to support them if they faced difficulties, indicating that either: (a) efforts to support the establishment of refugee self-management structures have been unsuccessful and organically formed structures (including Shawish and other informal leadership roles) are too few; (b) those structures have been successfully established but are not able to deliver the assistance that refugees value; or, (c) those structures have been successfully established and deliver meaningful support but are inaccessible to single refugee men. While a combination of factors is likely, it is reasonable to acknowledge that self-management structures (committees) do remain more prevalent in collective sites managed by NGOs, in which single refugee men are typically not present or present in very small numbers.

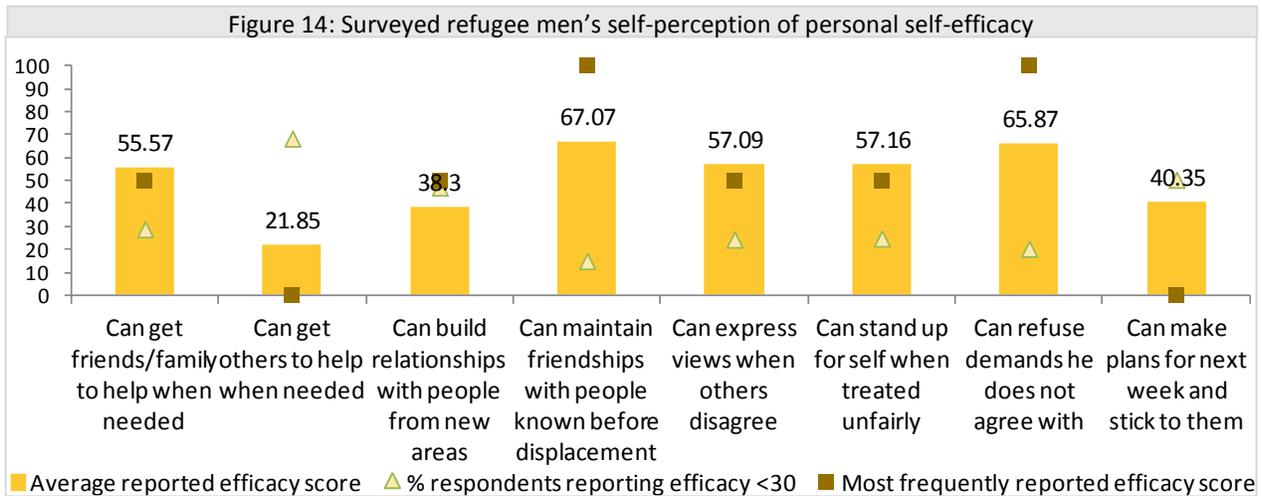
Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the findings already detailed above, a minority of refugee men reported regarding Lebanese as trusted sources of support in times of difficulty. Most strikingly, of the 468 men surveyed, only one reported that he would seek assistance from Lebanese authorities if he faced significant challenges. More positively, 5.98% reported that they would turn to their Lebanese landlords for help, and just over one in five respondents (21.37%) reported that they would turn to Lebanese

friends. Others described difficulty communicating with host community members in their area, with one 19 year old refugee man, living in Aanqoun/Saida (South Lebanon) stating:

**‘I do not trust anyone because I feel I am a stranger here and I do not know any Lebanese people. I feel like they are always looking at me like I am less than them.’**

Agency and Self-empowerment

Vulnerability is a function not only of the external threats characterizing a particular environment but also of the coping capacity of those experiencing that environment. In order to garner insight into the coping capacity of the refugee men surveyed, inquiries were included that asked men to report their perceptions of their capacity to succeed in specific situations or accomplish tasks (personal self-efficacy) related to help-seeking strategies, networking strategies, and agency. This approach was taken because perceived efficacy plays a key role in influencing ‘the courses of action people choose to pursue...how long they persevere in the face of obstacles, their resilience to adversity... and how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands’.<sup>5</sup>

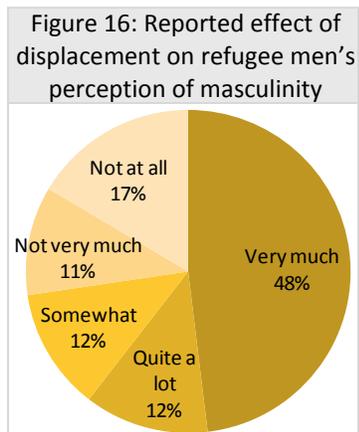
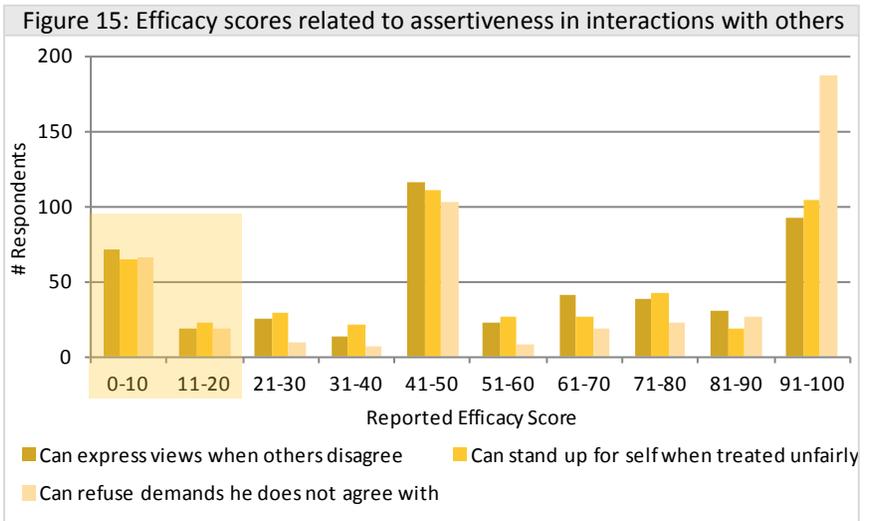


Surveyed refugee men generally perceive themselves as moderately able to obtain support from family and friends, but only minimally able to obtain support from others outside these groups. Interestingly, given the significant percentage of surveyed refugee men pointing to relatives as a key source of informal support, the proportion of the surveyed population that perceive themselves as minimally able or not able to obtain support from family and friends (those reporting an efficacy score in this area of 30 or less, where 0 equals complete lack of efficacy) was close to one in three (28.85%). The proportion of respondents reporting minimal or no capacity to obtain support from those other than family and friends was more than double, at 68.38%. This correlates with findings about refugee men’s common belief that they believe they are ineligible for many types of services and assistance (including, in some cases, UNHCR registration).

<sup>5</sup> Bandura, A. 2006, ‘Guide to Constructing Self Efficacy Scales’ in Pajeres, F. and Urdan, T. (eds.) *Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Adolescents*, vol. 5, pp. 1-43, Information Age Publishing, Greenwich. Note that a preponderance of other experts in the field concur with this position, linking self efficacy to self regulation (Schmidt, A. M., Beck, J. W. and Gillespie, J. Z. 2013. ‘Motivation’ in Schmitt, N.W., Highhouse, S. and Weiner, I. (eds.), *Handbook of Psychology*, vol. 12, pp. 311-340), increased efforts (Colquitt, J.A., Le Pine, J.A. and Noe, R.A. 2000, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 85(5), pp. 678-707), and longer persistence (Multon, K.D., Brown, S.D. and Lent, R.W. 1991, ‘Relation of self-efficacy beliefs to academic outcomes: A meta-analytic investigation’, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, vol. 18, pp. 30–38).

There was a dramatic contrast in the efficacy scores reported for maintaining relationships that existed prior to displacement (average efficacy score of 67.07, with a small proportion reporting minimal or no efficacy), compared to building relationships with others in displacement (average efficacy score of 38.3, with a much higher proportion reporting minimal or no efficacy). This is reinforced by protection monitoring data that consistently indicates refugee communities from different points of origin in Syria seldom mingle when co-located in the same area in Lebanon following their displacement. This suggests that refugee men feel they are ill equipped to form new relationships that are of sufficient strength to be relied upon, or experience a lack of access to spaces in which they feel it would be safe to consider forming new relationships. In either case, the impact is limiting their capacity to network for mutual support and both contribute to and benefit from community based protection mechanisms.

Refugee men’s self-perception of agency provides useful insights into the dynamics that shape their daily lives. The most frequently reported efficacy scores for questions related to the expression of dissenting views and capacity to ‘stand up’ for oneself were, in both cases, 50 (on a scale of 0 to 100). When commenting, respondents drew a sharp contrast between their capacity to do these things in the context of interactions with the refugee community, as opposed to the context of interactions with the host community. The majority reported a significant reduction in capacity to disagree with others, if the ‘others’ were host community individuals. This generally reflected fears of likely outcomes, based on past experience or the anecdotal experiences of others within their communities. Interestingly, a fairly static proportion (about 18%) of refugee men reported efficacy scores between 0 and 20, equating to minimal or no efficacy, for lines of inquiry related to asserting oneself in interactions with others. This suggests a persistent subset of the broader population of refugee men perceive themselves as lacking agency in all their interactions with others (as opposed to only in interactions with the host community, which is typically shown by a score of 50).



Importantly, almost half of refugee men surveyed said displacement had affected their perception of their own masculinity ‘very much’ (48.07%). Of that group, more than one in three refugee men (34.22%) said that they ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ had the chance to talk with others about their experiences. While access to peer support generally cannot change problematic aspects of the external environment, it can offer psychosocial relief for those struggling to cope. Needs in this respect were particularly illustrated by the statement of a 22 year old refugee man, living in Fanar/El Meten (Mount Lebanon):

**‘I can do nothing. I have nothing. I am worth nothing. This makes me approximately zero.’**

## Conclusions and Recommendations

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The data gathered through the community level assessments, individual surveys and focus groups, and analyzed in the preceding section, yields the following conclusions and recommendations:

- **Conclusions**

- ❖ Refugee men face increased risk of threats to personal safety relative to the general refugee population during raids, arrests, checkpoint crossings and due to tensions with the host community. When those threats materialize in violent incidents, they perceive no avenues for genuine redress of the harm that they have suffered and frequently perceive Lebanese authorities as a source of threats to their personal safety.
- ❖ Self-protection measures frequently adopted by refugee men to mitigate threats to physical safety severely inhibit their freedom of movement, with consequent significant negative impacts on capacity to self-support and maintain normal social relationships.
- ❖ Refugee men were not effectively targeted with accurate information about UNHCR registration, and few opportunities exist to address their overrepresentation in the unregistered population while UNHCR registration remains suspended, creating barriers to accessing a variety of services.
- ❖ Refugee men's engagement in informal work creates specific vulnerabilities to abuse and exploitation (including withheld wages, exploitative working conditions, and other forms of abuse) for which effective and consistent responses have not been formulated, while creating few if any meaningful opportunities for the creation or maintenance of informal support networks.
- ❖ A significant proportion of refugee men experience perceived limitations on personal efficacy resulting in limited ability to assert themselves in interactions with others (particularly others from the host community), limited capacity to effectively access support (especially support not provided by family or friends), and minimal confidence that they can plan for the future.

- **Recommendations**

- ❖ **Greater recognition by the humanitarian community that single and working refugee men have specific protection needs, and strengthened efforts to ensure their inclusion in holistic assessments of the protection environment.**
- ❖ Establishment of community dialogue and mediation mechanisms designed both to build trust between the refugee community and local law enforcement personnel, and strengthen accountability of State actors responsible for ensuring access to justice.
- ❖ Enhanced outreach by legal service providers to refugee men engaged in work, and a broadly targeted awareness campaign on rights in the workplace for informal workers.
- ❖ Establishment of dedicated safe spaces for peer support activities targeting refugee men (including measures to mitigate authorities' concerns about security risks associated with gatherings of men), and proactive efforts to involve single and working refugee men in community based protection initiatives undertaken by humanitarian actors.
- ❖ Capacity building and practical sensitization of Lebanese local level law enforcement authorities on international humanitarian principles and refugees' rights in asylum.
- ❖ High level advocacy with Lebanese authorities to prosecute Lebanese citizens who perpetrate violent criminal acts against Syrian nationals, and to enforce safeguards against exploitation of informal workers that already exist in Lebanese labor law.

## Annex I: Individual Survey Tool

ASSESSMENT DATA	
Date of Survey	Location
Operational Area	GPS of Location
District	Interlocutor Age
Type of Location	Interlocutor Phone #
SURVIVAL SKILLS	
How often do you feel that your personal safety is threatened?	
For all responses except "Never – no impact": From whom do you most frequently perceive these threats to come?	
What steps/actions have you taken in the last 30 days to keep yourself safe?	
We know that there are 'scams' or dishonest people who try to take advantage of others. Have you been affected by anything like that?	
IF "Yes": provide additional details: How many incidents of exploitation mentioned? Did one or more incident involve a financial loss for the respondent? Did one or more incident involve physical harm for the respondent?	
How many people are you regularly in touch with, whom you trust to help you in difficult situations?	
IF "0": why is that?	
IF ANY ANSWER OTHER THAN "0": Who are the people you trust to help you?	
Additional notes:	
If you needed help for a health problem, what would you do?	
BASIC NEEDS	
Have you received any food or shelter assistance in the last 30 days?	
PERSONAL SELF-EFFICACY (Respondents' scores for each statement)	
You can get your friends or family to help you when needed.	
You can get people other than your friends or family to help you when needed.	
You can build relationships with new people from different areas.	
You can maintain friendships with people you have known for a long time.	
You can express yourself when other people disagree with you.	
You can stand up for yourself when you are treated unfairly.	
You can refuse when someone demands you do something that you do not agree with.	
You can make plans for the next week and stick to them.	
SELF-PERCEPTION	
What do you consider to be the most important aspect of 'being a man'?	
Has displacement affected [ <i>answer to previous question</i> ] for you?	
If *ANY ANSWER EXCEPT "NOT AT ALL": How does it affect you and your relationships? Do you have the opportunity to talk about it with other men?	

## Annex II: Focus Group Discussion Note-Taking Tool

Self-perception of vulnerability and exposure to risk			
Risk (Transcribe the risks described by the participants.)	Level of agreement (Minimal/1-3; Some/4-6; Most/7-9; All).	Seriousness (Not serious; somewhat serious; serious; very serious.)	Likelihood (Not likely; somewhat likely; likely; very likely.)
Notes & Quotes:			

Men's coping strategies		
Risk (Copy and paste from the original list above.)	Easy or difficult to manage this risk?	Coping strategies (Transcribe the coping strategies described by the participants.)
Notes & Quotes:		

Perception of agency and experience of displacement (1)		
Type of change	Level of agreement (Minimal/1-3 men; Some/4-6 men; Most/7-9 men; All/10+ men).	Description (Transcribe changes described by participants.)
Work situation:		
Living situation:		
Social situation:		
Other situations:		
Notes & Quotes:		

Perception of agency and experience of displacement (2)		
Access to support networks?(Yes/No)	Participant number	Description (Transcribe description of network/s provided by participants.)
Support that would make most difference	Participant number	Description (Transcribe description of support type/s provided by participants.)
Notes & Quotes:		