

For Immediate Release



Beirut, Lebanon- 27/10/2015

A critical call for an inclusion of the forgotten: AUB and UNRWA report calls for including Palestinian refugees from Syria in international emergency response planning

At a time of dwindling international funding while the need for it increases, a report published by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at the American University of Beirut calls for the inclusion in international emergency response planning of an often forgotten subgroup of refugees: Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS).

The report, “Profiling vulnerability of Palestine refugees from Syria living in Lebanon” highlights the vulnerability that these refugees are in and calls for ensuring that Palestinian refugees from Syria are included in any emergency response planning. Co-authored by Associate Professor and Chair of FHS’s Department of Health Promotion Community Health Sawsan Abdulrahim and AUB alumnus Jana Harb who is currently a consultant in the World Bank’s Macroeconomics and Fiscal Management Unit, the report provides information on the living conditions of Palestinian refugees from Syria that help shape efficient and well-targeted programmatic activities. It is a multi-sectorial analysis of the vulnerability experienced by the Palestinian refugees from Syria according to the following eight sectors: economic; education; food security; health; protection; non-food items; shelter; water; as well as sanitation and hygiene.

The survey is based on a ‘Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon’ and has been adapted to UNRWA’s specific context utilizing the same tools. Data was collected from all registered PRS in Lebanon through a household survey conducted by UNRWA in August 2014 on a sample of 12,735 (out of an estimated 16,000) families, rounding up 44,227 individuals at the time, living both inside and outside the 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Almost 60% of PRS families live in households with at least one other family. The largest proportion of PRS live in Saida both inside and outside camps.

The report is accompanied by data-visualizations that profile an increased dependency on cash-assistance and resulting negative coping mechanisms, as well as the risks and impact of the lack of valid legal residency for PRS families in Lebanon.

According to the report:

- “Even though the overwhelming majority of PRS entered Lebanon legally, they lost their legal status inside the country. The main reason for falling into illegal status is the inability to pay the \$200 to renew residency papers for each family member. Palestinian refugees from Syria report experiencing limited mobility because of their illegal status. A quarter of PRS families experience severe vulnerability in the protection sector, and a larger proportion of PRS families in Beirut experience this vulnerability compared to those in other regions.”

- “The PRS in Lebanon face extremely limited work opportunities coupled with high expenditures on food and rent. Half of PRS families do not have a working family member. In comparison to the \$27 World Food Program food voucher per person per month, the assessment revealed that the average food expenditures are \$85 per PRS person per month. As such, the overwhelming majority of PRS (91%) reported experiencing lack of food or money needed to buy it during the 30-day period preceding the assessment. These Palestinian refugee families spend \$257 on rent every month but experience poor housing conditions such as damaged doors/windows, physical inaccessibility, and humidity or leaks.”

- “Only 58% of 6-18 year old PRS children are enrolled in school (49% in Beirut) and PRS families face barriers to enrolling their children in first grade. School dropout begins at the early age of 12 (especially among boys) and, by age 16, only 30% of children are still enrolled in school. The majority (87%) of PRS children attend UNRWA schools. Half of children who are not enrolled in school cited war and emigration as the main reason and 14% cited poverty.”

- “A large proportion of PRS are moderately vulnerable on the overall vulnerability measure. This highlights that many may slip into severe vulnerability category if cash assistance is reduced or cut. The largest proportion of the moderately vulnerable PRS are in Tyre, Bekaa, and the North governorates.” The report analyzes the vulnerability assessment data carried out and comes at a time when this data on this subgroup is crucial. The Palestinian refugees from Syria are a protracted refugee population who do not have access to re-settlement programs or protection offered by UNHCR. As such, and according to the report, without continuing international support, the social and economic conditions of this group will only deteriorate.

“The Faculty of Health Sciences at AUB is committed to responding to the refugee crisis in Lebanon through its teaching, research, and practice. The technical expertise put into the analysis of the PRS vulnerability assessment data and the writing of the report is one of many examples of how the Faculty is contributing to facilitating the work of local and international refugee relief organizations,” said Dr. Abdulrahim in an interview. “Whereas the faculty does not engage in efforts on-the-ground, it contributes through providing scientific evidence about the needs and gaps and ways to address them through the tremendous efforts of international NGOs such as UNRWA and UNHCR.”

The report is available on UNRWA website: <http://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/profiling-vulnerability-palestine-refugees-syria-living-lebanon>.

ENDS

For more information please contact:

Office of Communications, information@aub.edu.lb, 01-75 96 85

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's,

master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:

Website: www.aub.edu.lb

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>

Twitter: http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon