

LEBANON

MOBILE COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH

KEYWORDS:

REFUGEES, PERI-URBAN, CAPACITY BUILDING OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES, COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES, COMMUNITY LEVEL COORDINATION, REFERRAL PATHWAYS

CAUSE OF DISPLACEMENT	Syrian War	
DATE OF EVENT CAUSING DISPLACEMENT	2012 - ongoing	
PEOPLE DISPLACED	Approx. 1.5 million, 224,000 living in informal settlements ¹	
PROJECT LOCATION	North Lebanon, Bekaa Valley - Informal Settlements	
PROJECT DURATION	2013 - 2018	
NUMBER OF PEOPLE TARGETED BY THE PROJECT	Approx. 40,000 people	
CCCM COORDINATION MECHANISM	No cluster activated	

SUMMARY:

The Collective Site Management and Coordination (CSMC) programme started in 2013 as a Camp Management response to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. UNHCR established the term ‘Collective Site Management and Coordination’ in early 2014 to describe the informal nature of the camp response in Lebanon and to include collective shelter and collective centre management and coordination. The CSMC programme used a mobile approach centred around Community Capacity Building (CCB), in order to hand over site management and coordination responsibilities to refugees and local authorities, and thereby to reduce dependence on NGOs. The project was implemented in more than 250 Informal Settlements in the Bekaa Valley and North Lebanon, the implementing agency reaching nearly 40,000 refugees.²

The project involved the focus areas of establishing and training settlement committees; coordinating with service providers for service delivery at community level as well as referral of individual cases; and building the capacity of local authorities through staff secondment and training.

NOTE: project was implemented at a municipal or site level, and therefore milestones took place at repeated and various points throughout the 5+ years of programming, according to a phased approach whereby the programme gradually added more Settlements to its ‘portfolio’.

<p> September 2013 Project start date</p> <p>1 1 - 4 weeks</p> <p>2 1 - 4 weeks</p> <p>3 1 - 4 weeks</p> <p>4 1 - 4 weeks</p>	<p>Municipal area selection according to the following criteria: number and density of Settlements in the area; accessible in terms of security; potential for other NGOs to provide services; and presence of other NRC services.</p> <p>Assessments: mobile teams visit sites to collect basic information and to ascertain interest of the residents in the project.</p> <p>Site profiling and community meetings: mobile team collects population data and starts disseminating information about the project</p> <p>Committee Selection: mobile team facilitates FGDs with different demographic groups in the site to select a representative by consensus</p>	<p>5 2 - 12 weeks</p> <p>6 4 - 8 weeks</p> <p>7 1 week</p> <p>8 3 - 24 months, depending on needs</p>	<p>Committee meetings and follow-up on issues: Weekly meetings with committee commence, during which mobile team identifies key problems affecting the site and refers these as well as individual cases to relevant service providers</p> <p>Committee training/capacity building: Mobile teams begin to deliver core ‘Community Capacity Building’ (CCB) training modules, which are based heavily on the NRC CM Coaching Guidelines</p> <p>Stakeholder capacity building: NRC invites around 2 members of each committee to participate in a full 2 day CSMC training (adapted camp management training), which is also attended by service provider staff, host community, and local/national authorities</p> <p>Coaching and community projects: Mobile teams provide ongoing coaching support for committees through regular site visits and meetings – ideally fortnightly and then monthly. In addition, in most sites NRC provided resources and support for committees to implement a project to address a communal problem in the site</p>
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 Ongoing



A view of a refugee settlement of the Ghazzeah informal tented settlement in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

CONTEXT

Due to the no-camp policy of the Lebanese government, and no formal or subsidized housing support, Syrian refugees self-settled in private rented accommodation spread throughout the country. The implementing agency's CSMC project targeted the 17-20%³ of refugees that were residing in around 4,000 Informal Settlements. The remaining Syrian refugees were scattered in urban and peri-urban areas renting private buildings.

The scattered and informal nature of the accommodation of displacement made coordination of services and identification of the most vulnerable extremely challenging. At the same time, achievement of humanitarian minimum standards in the Informal Settlements was constrained by restrictions on site and shelter improvement imposed by government, local authorities, or landlords. This was further exacerbated by a lack of accountability mechanisms to highlight the under-performance of service providers. Moreover, basic municipal services and infrastructure could barely meet the needs of existing host communities, let alone the additional refugee population. Particularly waste collection, safe water provision, and sanitation networks were most critically overstretched.

The refugees faced chronic needs, linked to reduced availability of cash and food support, combined with Government restrictions in livelihoods opportunities compounded by the depletion of savings and assets. Refugees were constrained in their movement due to fear of arrest linked to invalid residency, limited resources due to lack of livelihoods, and in some cases due to fear of harassment by neighbours. In some areas, local authorities would impose further restrictions, such as curfews or bans on use of motorbikes by refugees.

Prior to the CSMC intervention⁴, there were no representative governance structures in place in informal settlements, and most service providers resorted to working through pre-existing self-appointed 'leaders' known as Shawish. The Shawish tended to exploit their position of power, interfering with impartial distribution of assistance for their own gain.

PROJECT

PROTECTION RISKS

Governmental restrictions meant that the vast majority of refugees were not permitted to work. This led many to resort to negative coping strategies – including amassing further debts increasing their vulnerable to extortion and exploitation, taking on low-paid and harmful work which included sex work, and engaging in early marriage practices.

Even though the informal settlements were on private land, very few refugees had any written lease agreements, making them particularly vulnerable to evictions by landowners, and forced many to resort to negative coping strategies to avoid eviction. Furthermore, the Lebanese Armed Forces evicted many displaced from the informal settlements in northern governorates.

CCCM ACTIVITIES

By the end of the project in 2018, the CSMC programme had supported around 40,000 refugees living in more than 250 informal settlements, ranging in size from just 3 to 200 households. The large number, small size, and geographical disbursement of settlements rendered it unfeasible to establish a full Camp Management (CM) set-up in every (or indeed any) single settlement. Moreover, authorities initially denied the need for any kind of Camp Management response⁵, due

to sensitivities around the existence and future of the informal settlements and refugee population. Given this context, the implementing agency – along with other agencies⁷ - adopted a mobile community-based approach to be able to improve access to assistance and protection for refugees. Principally, the approach involved the following two elements:

1. Establishment and training of representative community governance structures at the Settlement level
2. Building the capacity of local authorities to undertake coordination of Informal Settlements.

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

The implementing agency coordinated with other agencies on which areas and sites to target. Despite several agencies implementing CSMC projects⁷ there was still a lack of capacity to cover all the settlements in Lebanon: more than 4,000 scattered across 380 cadastrals. As such, the coordinated targeting strategy focused on cadastrals with the highest density and/or largest size of settlements in order to reach as many individuals as possible. This meant that the implementing agency could reach around 17-20% of Informal Settlement residents despite working in only 6% of the sites.



Jamile Hussein, 35, a mother of five who fled to Lebanon almost two years ago from her home in Idlib in Syria, is now the representative for women on the Community Capacity Building (CCB) committee at the Arab Rajab informal tented settlement in Al Marj, in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.



A woman carries waste water through the Arab Rajab informal tented settlement in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

IMPLEMENTATION

The CSMC programme involved the establishment and training of community governance structures - "Committees" by mobile teams. These teams visited the selected settlements on a regular basis. In the beginning of the intervention, the visits were multiple times a week and gradually reduced to monthly visits as the community became more able to manage without the mobile team's support. Team members were trained in basic principles of camp management, with a particular focus on community engagement and community capacity building. Different members of the mobile team were assigned different sites and committees to support involving the following core responsibilities:

- Facilitating a participatory process to establish Settlement Committees – comprised of men and women from different demographic groups (youth, adults, elderly, persons with specific needs).
- Training and providing ongoing support/coaching to Committees to enable them to take on site coordination and management responsibilities. The core "Community Capacity Building" modules were: Service mapping (including presentations by local service providers); concept and importance of participation; problem

identification; action planning to address problems; and internal/external representation and reporting. In addition, committees received training in fire safety/firefighting.

- Facilitating coordination meetings within the settlements or at area level (e.g. for clusters of settlements), bringing together community members alongside local authorities and service providers.
- Facilitating the development and implementation of Community Projects with Committees.
- Identifying and referring vulnerable individuals and households in need of emergency support or specialized protection services.

Complementary to the work of the mobile teams, the programme also involved secondment of staff to local authorities. "Municipal Support Assistants" were trained and mentored by the implementing agency, however retained an official reporting line to the Head of Municipality. The "Municipal Support Assistants" functioned as the Municipality focal points for all refugee related issues – coordinating with service providers, host community, refugees, and other authorities.



Members of the Community Capacity Building (CCB) committee meet at the Arab Rajab informal tented settlement in Al Marj in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

- Initially, 'CSMC' was coordinated under the Shelter Working Group, then became a taskforce reporting to the Protection Working Group. This allowed for:
 - Geographical division of labour for CSMC activities
 - Shared strategy, with Theory of Change and indicators
 - Harmonisation of tools and approaches, including minimum standards for Community Capacity Building trainings, guiding principles for referrals, common CSMC training package, and standardised reporting tools
 - Promotion of the work of CSMC agencies among other sectors as well as highlighting the role of the Settlement Committees as local coordination actor.
 - Coordination with other sectors to limit the potential 'mushrooming' of committees – i.e. through integration of sectoral focal points into the CSMC-led committees.
- Besides participating in NGO and UN-led coordination, the programme also supported the role of municipalities in coordinating at the local level –through the secondment of Municipal Support Assistants (MSAs) to municipalities. MSAs were responsible to support the refugee response in their areas through coordination with NGOs, UN agencies, host community, the refugee committees and other government authorities/ministries. Interaction of committees with authorities seems to have been greatly improved by the presence of an MSA, where 80% of committees in areas with an MSA reported having contact with the authorities, versus just 40% from areas without an MSA.⁸

ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

ACHIEVEMENTS

- An external evaluation of the CSMC approach⁹ concluded that it helps to coordinate and optimise service provision and hold duty bearers to account. In this context of increased need and more limited response options, it is a particularly valuable intervention for directing limited resources to the most needy.¹⁰
- The project enhanced the role of women. A greater proportion of female committee members compared to men reported an enhanced ability to improve the site situation and influence service providers.¹¹ Moreover, the external evaluation found that overall female refugees were more positive than male in their perceptions of improvements in information availability since the committee was established.
- Many committee members highlighted the importance of being able to participate in the humanitarian response and to feel they themselves contributed. By far the most frequently reported rewards of being a committee member were (1) being able to help and make a difference, (2) being able to communicate and coordinate better with service providers, and (3) feeling equal to staff from NGOs, because they were helping other refugees to reach services and respond to their needs, underlining the value of the CSMC programme in protecting and enhancing people's dignity despite displacement.
- After the closure of the project¹², committees continued to play a critical role in management and coordination of humanitarian activities in their sites, for example, supporting assessments and distributions, and referring vulnerable cases.

CHALLENGES

- Although the programme improved the inclusiveness of coordination by linking refugee community members to service providers, committee members noted that it was most challenging to receive feedback from service providers. In some cases, this led to residents mistrusting them, blaming them for the lack of response, or even perceiving that the committee was personally benefiting.
- During Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with committees, members noted the lack of follow-up by the implementing agency during the 'exit' phase. This made it harder for them to solve problems and influenced service providers. Generally, they felt that their ability to influence service providers was very much linked to the mandate given to them by the implementing agency.



Marya Bakkar fled to Lebanon from Syria a month ago. She now lives with her husband and three-month-old daughter in the Ghazzeah informal tented settlement in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

LESSONS LEARNED

- One of the key assumptions of the programme was that training would be sufficient to enable refugees to become the camp managers and 'independent' from service providers. However, external conditions undermined this assumption; namely, the on-going social and economic vulnerability of refugees, lack of durable solutions, inadequate service provision, and inability/ unwillingness of service providers to facilitate participation of refugees. A key finding of an external evaluation of the programme¹³ suggested that full independence of the refugee governance structures was a 'fantasy' given these external constraints. The traditional 'camp manager' role should be emphasised even without the formal mandate. Suggesting that the CSMC agencies should be recognised as responsible for undertaking coordination, referrals, and advocacy for needs/gaps to be covered, and not only concentrating on building capacity of communities to take on this role.
- The external CSMC evaluation found that the approach was quite "heavy" and inefficient in responding to the small scattered settlements. As the mobile team expended similar effort on sites of five households as one with two hundred households. It was recommended to 'cluster' sites together under one committee with single focal points from each small site, and/or task committees from larger sites to follow up with smaller neighbouring sites. The evaluation recommended to take an area-based approach to support municipal-level coordination and action planning, where there was a high concentration of settlements within the same municipal area, in conjunction with the authorities, ideally with the help of an MSA.

¹ As of 2017

² More than 100,000 refugees were reached by all agencies combined.

³ The proportion varied at different times during the five years of programme implementation.

⁴ By NRC and other agencies.

⁵ Regardless of terminology used to describe Camp Management activities.

⁶ Solidarités, Concern, IRC, Première Urgence-AMI, UNHCR.

⁷ Five at the program's peak.

⁸ External evaluation of the CSMC

⁹ Implemented by NRC and two other INGOs.

¹⁰ **Joint Evaluation:** Collective Site Management and Coordination (CSMC) in Informal Tented Settlements (ITSs)

¹¹ 94% and 91% (compared to 81% and 76% for men). This was corroborated by comments made by female committee members in FGDs, who noted that being in the committee helped them to be recognized by and make a contribution to their community.

¹² The project closed in March 2019; however, the same teams continued working with committees under another project relating to emergency response.

¹³ External evaluation of the CSMC