

IMPACT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES ON LEBANESE CITIES; A CASE STUDY OF SOLID WASTE MANAGMENT

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Abstract

Lebanon is one of the higher density countries in the world with a total population of four and a half million over an area of 10,000 square-kilometers. Its cities host around one and a half million displaced persons from Syria (including one million officially registered refugees), which is thirty percent of Lebanese population. The Government of Lebanon does not allow permanent refugees camps and the shelter provision is restricted to Informal Tented Settlements (ITS), but only twenty percent of the refugees are living in ITS¹, the majority are integrated within the host population cities in rented housing, un-finished buildings and closed communities within communities. This has an impact on many basic services including solid waste management.

This paper focuses on the solid waste services in Lebanese cities after Syrian crisis. The displaced Syrian population generates waste, which adds to the municipal stream and adds to already burdened collection system, which is politically complex. Hence, any improvements in solid waste management for refugees has to negotiate through the existing challenges. There is a lack of clarity on the responsibility to provide basic services to refugees and their rights to work, stay, travel etc. While there are international and national organisations supporting refugees, there are many limitations on what can or cannot be done with the refugees' population. For example, an organization can provide the communal bins near ITS, but municipality may or may not agree to transport those for further disposal, as the Syrian refugees do not pay taxes directly to Municipalities. This paper is based on author's field work and case study methodology in this context and focuses on the background and complexity of solid waste service in Lebanese cities. The paper explains various institutional tensions in the given context and what can be done to overcome this. The paper concludes that in a situation like Lebanon, refugees supporting interventions must be prepared with a full understanding of the urban complexities, as there are 'cities beyond cities' to address.

Keywords: Syria, Solid waste management, Refugees, Lebanon

¹ Various sources such as UNHCR database and Amnesty international.