

Community development of Palestinian refugee camps:

Analytical support to Jordan's preparations for the June 2004 Geneva conference on the humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees

The Material and Social Infrastructure, and Environmental Conditions of Refugee Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon

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Introduction

Jordan's Department of Palestinian Affairs, being chair of Working group II at the June Geneva conference on the humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees, has asked Fafo for assistance in its preparation. This paper provides a summary of the housing, material and social infrastructure, and environmental conditions found in the refugee camps and Palestinian communities (also called "gatherings") in Lebanon. Fafo's support to the Geneva conference is financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Palestinian refugee' communities in Lebanon are poorly developed from a housing and infrastructure perspective – especially when compared to the national situation and to conditions in Palestinian refugee camps elsewhere in the region. This special situation reflects the special legal and security conditions refugees have faced in Lebanon. Restrictions on Palestinian ownership and construction of permanent housing and infrastructure facilities have existed in the past and continue to exist in the present. Widespread destruction of homes, community service facilities, water, sewage and electricity infrastructures has occurred as a result of earlier armed conflict in Lebanon which has also added to the burden of providing adequate community infrastructure.

The main text of this paper is followed by tables in Annex 1. However, at the outset we shall give a short introduction to Fafo's research on Palestinian refugees and the studies on which this paper for the most part builds.

Fafo and the Study of Palestinian Refugees

Fafo Institute for Applied International studies is a Norwegian not-for-profit research organisation that has carried out statistical and other studies on Palestinian refugees for more than a decade. The bulk of activities have been financed by grants from the Norwegian Government. Other donors such as the governments of Canada, Sweden, the US and Switzerland, along with UN agencies such as UNICEF and United

Nations Special Co-ordinator for the Middle East (UNSCO) have also contributed. Fafó cooperates with Palestinian and host country partners, and in addition to implementing data collection and analysis does its utmost to ensure transfer of competences to local partners.

Over the past few years, Fafó has carried out a number of household living conditions surveys: in Jordan's refugee camps in 1999 (in cooperation with Jordan's Department of Palestinian Affairs and Yarmouk University); in refugee camps and non-camp localities of Lebanon in 1999 (with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Damascus) and in Syria in 2001 (also with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Damascus). Together with Jordan's Department of Statistics (DOS), Fafó conducted a national living conditions survey in Jordan (1996), which also identified Palestinian refugees and allowed comprehensive statistical analysis on them. A similar household survey was fielded late 2003, again together with DOS, and analysis of this material is now under way. Fafó carried out the first-ever comprehensive household surveys in the West Bank and Gaza in 1990 and 1993. Since then Fafó has cooperated with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Ramallah, on a Demographic survey, and implemented qualitative research on the effects of Israel's closure policies during the second *intifada* in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in cooperation with UNSCO in 2001 and 2002. The said fieldworks and studies have resulted in a number of publications, which are listed in Annex 2.

This paper mainly draws on data from the survey of refugee camps and non-camp localities of Lebanon (1999).

Housing and Material Infrastructure

The typical Palestinian refugee dwelling in camps and Palestinian communities in Lebanon is constructed with concrete and concrete block. Temporary or make-shift housing exists in some limited locations, but the majority of dwellings are concrete buildings. The two main problems with the dwelling itself in these areas are limited space and poor environmental conditions within the dwelling.

Crowding and poor indoor environment effects many refugee households

Many Palestinian refugee households live in “crowded” dwellings. This is in addition to already quite dense living space at the community level. About 30 percent of camp refugees live in dwellings with three or more persons per room.

Seven in 10 refugee camp households report multiple indoor environmental problems in their dwelling (two of three problems including difficulty in regulating temperature, poor ventilation and dampness).

In large part, access to basic infrastructure is dependent upon communities’ linking up to national or regional water and sewage systems. In Lebanon, the government has not allowed refugee camps’ sewage networks to link to those serving nearby municipalities. The isolation of Lebanon camps from national infrastructure systems means that camps have not benefited substantially from the large-scale reconstruction in infrastructure that has taken place in Lebanon during the 1990s.

Infrastructure at the household level including stable supplies of drinking water and electricity and adequate sanitation is quite poor

Refugee camps in Lebanon have poor water and sanitation infrastructure at the household level. One in three camp refugee households in Lebanon lack access to piped drinking water and 15 percent lack adequate sanitation (septic tank or sanitation system). Together, some 40 percent of camp households in Lebanon lack access to both piped drinking water and sanitation. The situation is especially poor when we include the stability of the water source with the basic access to drinking water and sanitation measure. Among camp refugees, 67 percent of households do not have piped drinking water that offers a stable supply (less than weekly cut-offs) together with adequate sanitation.

While nearly all camp and gathering refugees are connected to some electricity source, these sources are functioning poorly. Upwards of one-half the camp population and at least one-quarter of gathering households experience weekly or daily cut-offs in electricity supply.

As the presence or absence of infrastructure is often linked to geographic placement – how are these facilities distributed among the camps and Palestinian communities across the different areas of Lebanon? One would expect that rural areas in general would have less access to infrastructure. However, in the camps and gatherings, rural areas actually have better overall *access* to infrastructure amenities than do urban areas, however, rural areas have less reliable *supply*. In addition, there are noticeable differences between the northern and southern regions of Lebanon. Across most measures of infrastructure amenities, camps and Palestinian communities in the South have particularly poor conditions, even though the north is more rural (34 percent compared to 19 percent).

Environment

Indoor environment conditions are discussed earlier in the paper. Here we focus on wider issues such as sanitation systems, and environmental problems at the community level.

UNRWA the main provider of sewerage systems in camps

Slightly over one-half of all households live in communities where UNRWA is the only provider of sewer network connection; 14 percent where the community is provided sewer network by multiple providers; 11 percent where the government is the provider; and 4 percent where popular committees provide sewer network connections. Fourteen percent of households live in communities which reported that there are no sewerage facilities provided. The set of sewerage service providers is quite different in camps than in gatherings. In camps, UNRWA is the main provider (70 percent of households live in communities served by UNRWA only) while in gatherings the government is the main provider (50 percent of households in such communities).

Open sewer ditches exist in some camps but are not widespread

Open sewage ditches are infrequently reported to exist by communities, but are more often found in camps than in other Palestinian communities. Overall, seven percent of households live in communities where there are open sewage ditches, and

most of them are in camps. Less than 1 percent of households are in communities where open sewage ditches are filled with solid waste.

UNRWA the main provider of refuse collection in camps

Some 85 percent of households are located in communities where refuse collection services are provided exclusively by UNRWA. In other Palestinian communities, not only is there less often this service provided, but where it is provided, it is done so by a range of providers including UNRWA, NGOs, popular committees and private concerns.

Garbage dumping in ditches common

Open drainage ditches filled with garbage and refuse are present in both camps and gatherings. Forty-five percent of camp refugee households and 33 percent of gathering households live in communities where this is reported to exist. This problem is most evident in city suburbs where some 70 percent of households live in communities where garbage is dumped in drainage ditches.

Outdoor environmental problems common in both camps and gatherings

Sewer and wastewater smell, garbage smell and severe noise from outside are the three most commonly reported outdoor environmental disturbances in camps and gatherings. Close to half of camp and gathering households report sewer smells and 30 percent complain of refuse smell.

Some 40 percent of households are dissatisfied with the outdoor pollution situation where they live.

Social Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Resources

Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon have mostly been established since 1950 and camp refugees mostly reside in neighbourhoods with a majority of Palestinians. Neighbourhood clustering along similar areas of origin in Palestine is also frequently found in the camps. In contrast, gathering communities tend to have more dispersed

establishment dates, more often are communities living in predominately Lebanese areas, and residents have more dispersed areas of origin in Palestine.

Apart from transportation services and grocery shopping, many live in communities without basic cultural, youth, welfare, security and sports facilities.

Camps have more community services than do gatherings, with some half to three-quarters of gatherings living where there are no other services but transportation and shopping. While most camps have youth clubs or children's parks and ration centres, provision of other types of community services vary quite a bit by region. There is an overall lack of some services -- none of the communities have fire stations and only northern camp communities have post offices. Thirty-five percent of northern camps do not have a library, cinema or cultural centre available. Eighty percent of southern camps do not have any sports facilities or police/civil defence centre. Not surprisingly, about 50 percent of households report being dissatisfied with the cultural institutions in their community.

Good coverage of health and youth education facilities in refugee camps, but not gatherings

Nearly all camp households live in communities in which there are basic health facilities and health personnel. Most camp refugees have an NGO, UNRWA or a religious primary school, and an NGO, UNRWA or religious secondary school (approximately 80 percent). Other Palestinian communities have worse access to health and education facilities than do the camps. Adult literacy programs are lacking for both types of areas, with 18 percent of gathering and one-quarter of camp households having such a program in their community.

Poor work opportunities in camps and limited opportunities elsewhere

Half of camp and gathering refugees in the labour market have their workplace outside of the camp or community they are living in. The main opportunities for employment are working with private Lebanese companies, and in this regard Palestinians face legal limitations. Work opportunities are limited in camps in part due to construction work being prohibited here and little space available to engage in

agricultural activities. Due to the limitations on Palestinians' employment options, there is significant underemployment and more narrow occupational diversity than would normally be the case. Thus, the characteristics of employment are to work in jobs below one's skill level, for long hours and without job security in the form of employment contracts. Most report the chances of creating business opportunities in the camps and gatherings to be unsatisfactory.

Annex 1: Tables

Table 1: Household Crowding by Type of Location (percent of households)

	City Center	City suburb	Urban Area	Rural Area	Total
3 or more persons per room	26.6	25.7	21.6	37.4	28.0
Less than 3 persons per room	73.4	74.3	78.4	62.6	72.0
<i>n</i>	611	1304	750	916	3581
<i>uwn</i>	630	1282	810	877	3599

Table 2: Infrastructure Amenities by Regional Location (percent of households)

	Camp North	Camp South	Gathering	Total
Water piped into residence	70.02	62.67	52.65	63.14
Stable water supply	46.38	52.26	80.42	56.37
Independent kitchen	94	97	95	95
Private bath/shower	56	72	68	65
Toilet inside living quarters	96	94	95	95
Sewage network/septic tank	96	78	85	86
Garbage collected	89	78	36	73
Drinking water piped into residence	39	61	49	50
Stable drinking water supply	57	57	84	63
Connected to electricity network	96	99	99	98
Stable electricity supply	36	71	75	59
Room heating	32	25	27	28
<i>n</i>	1321	1478	802	3601
<i>uwn</i>	1334	1423	860	3617

Table 3: Dissatisfaction with Indoor and Outdoor Environment
(percent of households)

	Camps	Gatherings	Total
Unsatisfied with noise	43	36	42
Unsatisfied with indoor environment	23	26	23
Unsatisfied with outdoor pollution	35	47	37
<i>n</i>	2799	802	3601
<i>uwn</i>	2757	860	3617

Table 4: Household Exposure to Garbage Smell (percent of households)

	Camps	Gatherings	Total
Usually exposed to garbage smell	72.5	63.1	70.4
Not exposed	27.5	36.9	29.6
<i>n</i>	2799	802	3601
<i>uwn</i>	2757	860	3617

Table 5: Dissatisfaction with Housing and Neighbourhood (percent of households)

	City Center	City Suburb	Urban Area	Rural Area	Total
Unsatisfied with space/size	40.6	36.8	33.8	42.9	38.4
Unsatisfied with privacy	37	26	29	38	31
Unsatisfied with housing cost	50	36	47	43	42
Unsatisfied with safety for children	46.8	29.2	32.2	24.4	31.6
Unsatisfied with traffic	39	23	26	20	26
Unsatisfied with water supply	25	23	30	33	27
Unsatisfied with water quality	39	31	43	32	35
Unsatisfied with neighbours	8	5	6	6	6
<i>N</i>	<i>611</i>	<i>1305</i>	<i>750</i>	<i>916</i>	<i>3582</i>
<i>uwn</i>	<i>630</i>	<i>1283</i>	<i>810</i>	<i>877</i>	<i>3600</i>

Annex 2: Fafo Publications on Palestinian Refugees

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- Sletten, Pål and Pedersen, Jon 2003. *Coping with Conflict: Palestinian Communities Two Years Into the Intifada*, Fafo-report 408, Oslo: Fafo.
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