



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

Improving living conditions for vulnerable Syrian households in sub- standard buildings in Arsal, Lebanon

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Independent Evaluation: Improving living conditions for vulnerable Syrian households in sub-standard buildings in Aarsal, Lebanon | February 2017

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1 Executive Summary

This independent evaluation examines the Norwegian Refugee Council's programme to improve living conditions for vulnerable Syrian refugees in sub-standard buildings in Arsal, a Lebanese border town which stands out for its humanitarian needs and security challenges. This report focuses on the period between September 2015 and March 2016, during which 585 beneficiary households received emergency shelter and WASH upgrades. The evaluation's purpose is to support programme learning around upgrading sub-standard buildings in Arsal that will provide guidance for future programme direction.

To investigate the main evaluation question, "Does this intervention sufficiently contribute to meeting the shelter/WASH needs of Syrian refugees living in sub-standard buildings in Arsal?" this study combined a qualitative methods approach with a desk review of previous quantitative surveys. A total of 25 key informant interviews were conducted in order to gather the perspectives of a range of Arsal host community leaders, NRC staff and partners. 8 focus groups with a total of 58 participants were held with Syrian refugees and Lebanese landlords, including both those who had benefited from the NRC programme, and those who had not.

This evaluation finds that the NRC intervention did indeed contribute to improving the shelter and WASH conditions for Syrian refugees living in sub-standard buildings in Arsal. Approximately one year after the project was implemented, more than 90% of beneficiary households report that they are still living in the same shelter, and almost two-thirds are at least moderately satisfied with the intervention. On average, female refugees were more satisfied and appreciated the WASH aspects of the intervention more than males. Tangible improvements in the lives of Syrian refugees included weatherproofing to protect from the elements, dividing rooms to make them warmer and more private, and providing basic WASH items such as sinks, tanks and toilets. However, some beneficiaries say that basic weatherproofing using plastic sheeting and wood is insufficient for their needs, and the host community feels that it does not benefit from the programme. There is strong demand from Arsal community leaders to reintroduce NRC's "Occupancy Free of Charge" modality, as this would provide more substantial rehabilitation to landlords' properties in exchange for a 12-month rent free period for refugee tenants. Increasing the level of investment in each shelter would benefit both refugees and the host community - but a level of programmatic risk remains in Arsal despite recent improvements in the security situation.

Other main evaluation findings include:

- ✓ NRC's intervention is appropriate for refugees' basic short-term needs, but the weatherproofing aspect is more appropriate for an emergency rather than a protracted crisis.
- ✓ The programme meets the "do no harm" test as no negative outcomes were reported for refugees or the host community. The intervention had a positive (although somewhat limited) effect on refugees' living conditions and no discernible impact on the host community.
- ✓ NRC deserves credit for being one of the few humanitarian actors offering assistance in the hard-to-reach context of Syrian refugees living in sub-standard buildings in Arsal. Beneficiary targeting and selection procedures within this context were somewhat ad-hoc, but a retrospective analysis of beneficiary data confirms that the majority of those reached were severely vulnerable.

Main recommendations to NRC Lebanon:

1. **OFC:** Consider reintroducing the core NRC Occupancy Free of Charge modality in Arsal. This should be done at first on a manageable scale, with stringent monitoring by both the shelter and M&E teams (including a 'Plan B' for remote management if the security and access situation deteriorates).
2. **Enhanced SSB:** If reintroducing OFC is not considered viable for the Arsal context, consider upgrading the SSB project by increasing the investment per household to use more sustainable weatherproofing materials than plastic sheeting and timber. For example, if average investment per household in the SSB programme was doubled, it would still be less than half the per-household cost of OFC. This change would have to be carefully messaged to the Arsal community as an upgraded version of SSB rather than as a downgraded OFC project.
3. **Beneficiary selection:** Harmonise vulnerability assessment procedures and targeting strategies as much as possible between Arsal and the rest of Lebanon. If separate procedures need to be devised to suit the local context, ensure that these are clearly documented.
4. **Coordination:** Establish a formal system for referring Arsal shelter beneficiaries to other NRC services such as education and legal assistance, including tracking which beneficiaries are benefiting from multiple programmes.
5. **Strategic communications:** Ensure that Arsal beneficiaries are given clear messages about application processes and stakeholders are briefed on achievements and ongoing efforts (via staff training, printed materials such as brochures, and establishing a reception area at the Arsal office).
6. **M&E:** Expand the rollout of independent spot checks by the NRC M&E unit, prioritising areas such as Arsal which have particular due diligence concerns.



2 List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

FGD: Focus group discussion

LOST: Lebanese Organisation for Studies and Training

HPQ: Household Profiling Questionnaire. Standardised vulnerability assessment questionnaire used by NRC and other agencies to determine socio-economic vulnerability.

ICLA: Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (NRC programme)

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

ITS: Informal Tented Settlement

KII: Key informant interview

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

OFC: Occupancy Free of Charge (core NRC shelter programme)

PDM: Post-distribution monitoring

RAIS: Refugee Assistance Information System (UNHCR vulnerability assessment database)

SSB: Sub-standard building

UNHCR: United Nations refugee agency

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



3 Introduction

3.1 Local context

Shelter situation for Syrian refugees in Lebanon:

As Syria's war enters its seventh year, Lebanon is continuing to host the world's highest proportion of refugees. The estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon (approximately one million of them registered with the UN Refugee Agency), amount to one third of Lebanon's population. There are also more than a quarter of a million Palestinian refugees.¹ With many Lebanese themselves struggling with unemployment, poverty and poor access to basic services, relations between refugees and host communities are often tense. Amid the Lebanese government's resistance to official refugee camps for Syrians, this influx has placed a significant strain on the local housing market. According to the UNHCR 2016 Shelter Survey, 80% of Syrian refugees are living in host communities – renting accommodation ranging from apartments to garages, empty shops and barns. Another 17% live in Informal Tented Settlements (ITS). 71% of Syrian refugees live below the poverty line, defined by the World Bank for Lebanon as less than \$3.84/day. As a result, few can afford quality accommodation. Vermin, lack of access to water, electricity and toilets, and poor insulation in winter are some of the complaints made by Syrian refugees in focus groups conducted for a recent United Nations vulnerability study.² The assessment found that the average rent is \$189 per month, and that 90% of refugee households are in debt by an average of \$857. More than a quarter of their shelters are in a particularly poor condition – either severely damaged, at risk of collapse, or needing urgent repairs. Specific data on average rent and shelter conditions in Arsal is unavailable as the UN assessment did not include the area due to access restrictions.

Arsal context:

Lying in the Bekaa Valley close to the Syrian border, Arsal is a Lebanese cadastral zone³ where refugees outnumber locals. The number of registered Syrian refugees in Arsal is almost 40,000, compared to 35,000 Lebanese. As the UNHCR map on the following page illustrates, Arsal hosts the largest number of refugees of any town in the Bekaa Valley. Taking into account unregistered refugees, the real number is likely to be much higher. Key informants interviewed for this evaluation estimated that at least 50% of refugees in Arsal were unregistered. Refugees live in informal tented settlements (ITS) which are both inside and surrounding the town, and in sub-standard buildings (SSB) such as run-down or incomplete houses and apartments, or even in shops or garages. Infrastructure and access to basic services is poor for refugees and locals alike, as the area has historically been neglected by the Lebanese state.⁴ There is limited data about the humanitarian situation in Arsal due to the security and access restrictions in place since August 2014, when Syrian Islamist militants clashed with the Lebanese army for five consecutive days. The security situation has since improved with the Lebanese army controlling the town, which is surrounded by checkpoints. However, there are still very few international NGOs working in Arsal and the outskirts beyond the checkpoints are considered a “no-go” zone due to the presence of groups such as Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra. Access to Arsal town itself can easily be cut off as it lies in a valley with only one road in and out, and even in normal circumstances travelling to Arsal means a three-hour round trip from the Zahle field office. Due to the town's geographical remoteness, NRC maintains a small office in Arsal, but shelter staff typically commute from Zahle. As will be explored in the 'Findings' section of this report, the combination of weak infrastructure and governance, security threats, and access restrictions has left both refugees and the host community in Arsal especially vulnerable to the effects of the Syrian crisis.

¹ As of March 2017, 450,000 Palestinian refugees from Lebanon (PRL) were officially registered with UNRWA. However, an American University of Beirut survey estimated that only 260,000 to 280,000 still reside there (*Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, December 2010, http://fafsweb.aub.edu.lb/aub-unrwa/files/AUB_UNRWA_report_final_draft.pdf). According to UNRWA, as of December 2016, there were 32,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) in Lebanon - a decrease of almost 10,000 since December 2014.

² World Food Programme, UN Children's Fund, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, December 2016, <http://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon-2016>.

³ Lebanon is divided into cazas (governorates) and within this, cadastral zones (municipalities). The cadastral zone of Arsal is in Baalbek caza.

⁴ For more on this topic and the security incidents in Arsal, see International Crisis Group, “Arsal in the Crosshairs: The predicament of a small Lebanese border town,” February 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/arsal-crosshairs-predicament-small-lebanese-border-town>.



SYRIA REFUGEE RESPONSE

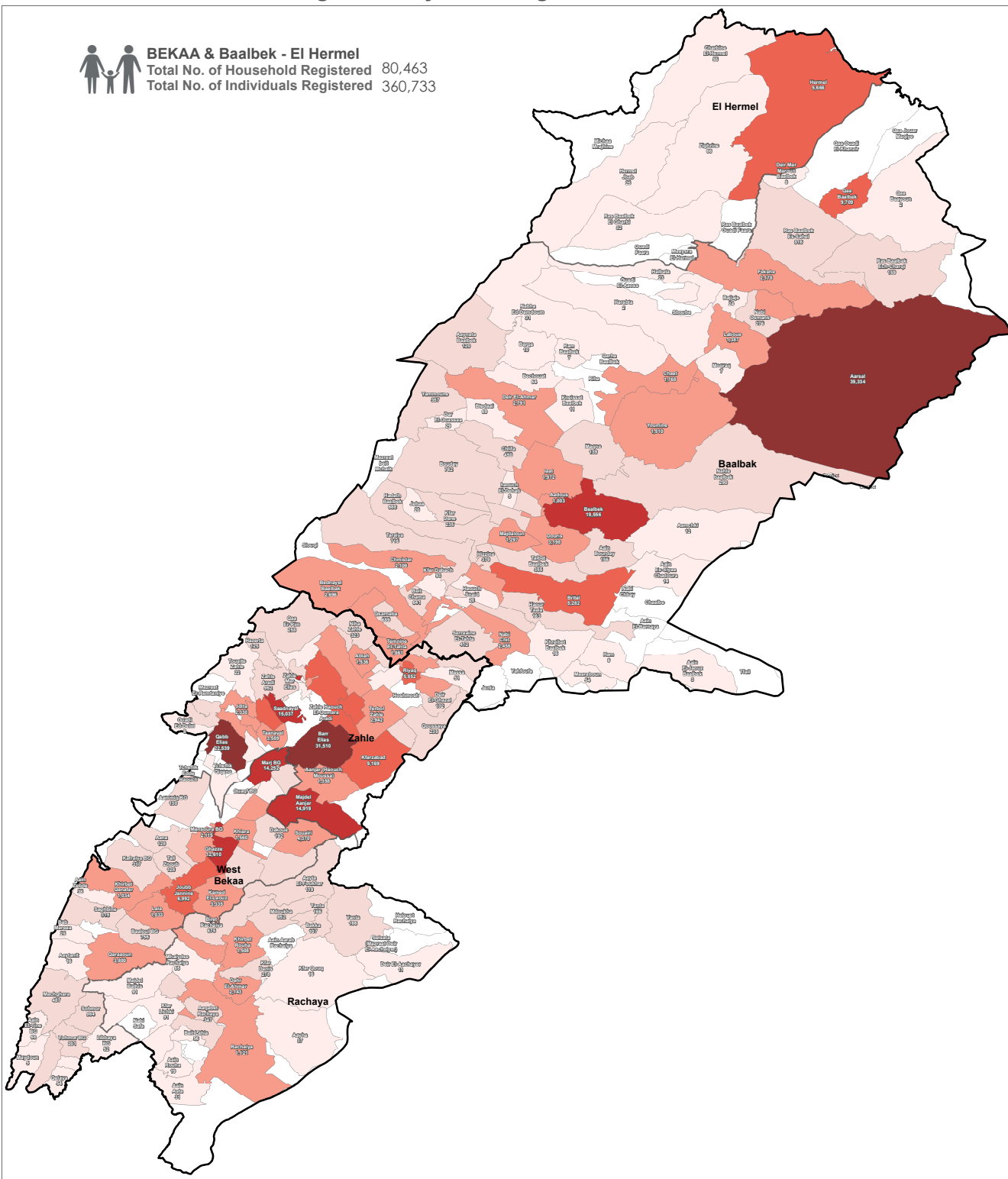
LEBANON, Bekaa & Baalbek-EI Hermel Governorate

Distribution of the Registered Syrian Refugees at the Cadastral Level

As of 30 September 2016



BEKAA & Baalbek - El Hermel
 Total No. of Household Registered 80,463
 Total No. of Individuals Registered 360,733



Notes

This map has been produced by the Inter-Agency Information Management Unit of UNHCR based on maps and material provided by the Government of Lebanon for operational purposes. It does not constitute an official United Nations map. The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Data Sources:
 - Lebanese Border, Caza and Cadastral Boundaries: NPMP/PT 2005
 - Geographic Projection WGS 1984

Registered Refugees Figures by UNHCR as of 30 September 2016.
 For more information contact Diana El Habr at elhabr@unhcr.org

GIS and Mapping by UNHCR. For information and updates contact Jas Chouh ghosn@unhcr.org
 Maroun Sader: sader@unhcr.org

NPMP/PT: National Physical Master Plan for the Lebanese Territory



0 10 20 KM

Legend

No. of Refugees per Cadastral

- 0
- 1 - 100
- 100 - 1,000
- 1,000 - 5,000
- 5,000 - 10,000
- 10,000 - 20,000
- 20,000 - 43,000
- Governorate
- Caza

Location Diagram



3.2 The Aarsal Sub-Standard Building (SSB) programme

The project being evaluated, which provides emergency shelter and WASH upgrades to sub-standard buildings in Aarsal, forms one section of the wider NRC shelter programme. The main approach nationally is the Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) programme. It involves paying Lebanese landlords to rehabilitate their properties (average value of upgrades funded is \$1,650), in exchange for hosting a Syrian refugee household rent-free for a period of 12 months. Unlike the strategy employed by some other aid agencies of providing direct cash assistance for rent to refugees, the NRC approach ensures that shelters meet minimum standards and that the overall amount of housing stock on the market for refugees increases. While cash aid might seem preferable from a beneficiary empowerment perspective, in the shelter sector it risks driving up prices for shelters that do not meet the Sphere standards. In another two modalities of shelter programming, NRC Lebanon in 2016 also offered support for Syrian refugees living in Informal Tented Settlements (ITS), and for Palestinian camps.

The overall objective of NRC shelter programming is *“to ensure that vulnerable households in Lebanon affected by displacement have access to adequate shelter relevant to their context and needs.”* (see NRC Shelter Logframe in Annex 7.2)

The NRC Sub-Standard Building (SSB) programme is a modality of emergency shelter and WASH upgrades, currently only being used in Aarsal. It typically involves weatherproofing using wood and plastic sheeting, dividing rooms with wooden panels to make spaces more private and easier to heat, and the installation of WASH materials such as water tanks or sinks. The SSB programme essentially represents a return to a more basic emergency response approach in Aarsal after the ‘Occupancy Free of Charge’ (OFC) shelter programme was suspended there in 2013 due to lack of regular access for programme monitoring. However, NRC did not want to stop support altogether due to the high level of needs in sub-standard buildings in Aarsal. As such, SSB is seen as a lower risk offshoot of the main OFC programme as it requires a much smaller investment per household and is delivered through a small number of contractors rather than individual landlords.

Contrary to the main OFC shelter programme, landlords are not obliged to offer a rent-free period in exchange for NRC providing funds to upgrade their property. Instead, shelters are assessed as to whether they are in need of emergency shelter and/or WASH upgrades. The average cost for emergency upgrades for each housing unit is around \$400 – less than one quarter of the OFC programme.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NRC’S CORE SHELTER PROGRAMME ‘OCCUPANCY FREE OF CHARGE’ (OFC) AND THE AARSAL SUB-STANDARD BUILDING (SSB) PROGRAMME:

OFC	AARSAL SSB
Sustainable rehabilitation work e.g. aluminium, plastering	Emergency shelter and WASH upgrades e.g. wood, plastic sheeting, water tanks
Average per household investment of \$1650	Average investment of \$400
Brings housing units up to local standards suitable for long-term accommodation ⁵	Brings houses up to minimum standards
Rehabilitates both occupied and unoccupied units according to shelter suitability criteria	Only rehabilitates units that refugees are already living in

⁵ In many cases, the local standards for Lebanon are higher than the Sphere minimum standards. For example, inter-agency shelter sector guidelines for Lebanon specify that each person needs access to 35 litres of water per day for domestic consumption, while the Sphere minimum standard is 15 litres. Likewise, the standard in Lebanon is a maximum 15 people per toilet, compared to 20 under Sphere. For more details on the Lebanon sector-wide guidelines for rehabilitating sub-standard buildings in exchange for a 12 month rent-free period, see <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=12378>.

Landlord signs contract with NRC offering 12-months' free rent to Syrian refugees	No rent-free period or rent freeze agreement offered
Thorough vulnerability assessment of beneficiaries	More limited vulnerability assessment using old NRC 'Mobenzi' questionnaire
Follow up by NRC Social Field Officers and ICLA team to check refugee welfare, connect with other services	Limited follow-up

3.3 Purpose of this evaluation

This evaluation focuses on the performance of the Arsal sub-standard building programme between September 2015 and March 2016 (under the ECHO 1503 grant), reaching 585 beneficiary households.⁶ This report examines the main evaluation question, “Does this intervention sufficiently contribute to meeting the shelter/WASH needs of Syrian refugees living in sub-standard buildings in Arsal?” as well as sub-questions on outcomes, effectiveness and efficiency.

NRC Lebanon has commissioned this independent evaluation to examine the impact on refugees and the host community, whether it is feasible to continue SSB programming in Arsal, and if so, what could be done to improve it. The evaluation is intended not only to be relevant to Arsal but also to examine the modality of emergency upgrades to sub-standard buildings in general, and the challenges of programming and monitoring in contexts where there are security and access issues. All NRC evaluations are followed by a management response and integrated into global institutional learning efforts (for further details, please see the evaluation terms of reference in the Annex 7.2).

4 Methodology

Note: This section is a summary. For a more detailed discussion of evaluation methodology and challenges encountered during data collection, as well as a list of people consulted, please see sections 7.3 and 7.4 in the Annex.

Evaluation approach:

NRC has chosen to conduct an independent evaluation of the Arsal sub-standard building programme, using an external evaluation consultant. No NRC shelter programme staff were involved in data collection.

This evaluation includes the perspectives of Syrian refugees and Lebanese landlords (both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries), host community leaders, Arsal municipal officials, NRC partner organisations and relevant NRC staff ranging from field implementation to senior management level.

The evaluator applies a qualitative methods approach in order to best fill the gaps in programme knowledge and to contextualise the quantitative data NRC has already collected. Beneficiary needs assessment questionnaires and satisfaction surveys had previously been conducted as part of programme reporting and monitoring. Conflict sensitivity is a key reason for avoiding quantitative

⁶ In the NRC’s WASH post-distribution monitoring report of June 2016, the total number of beneficiary households was reported as 575. The figure of 585 is based on the updated programme records submitted to the evaluator by the shelter team in the Bekaa field office.

surveys with the host community, as publicising aid efforts for Syrian refugees can cause resentment among Lebanese who are also struggling economically.

Sampling:

The total evaluation sample consists of 25 key informants (individual interviews) and 58 focus group participants. The Arsal community leaders interviewed were selected in consultation with NRC field staff from different departments, and the humanitarian coordinator at the Arsal municipality. Beneficiary focus group participants were randomly selected from NRC beneficiary contact lists, while non-beneficiaries were opportunistically recruited on a tour of Arsal streets. Focus groups were held at the NRC office in Arsal, with the exception of the Lebanese landlord non-beneficiaries, who were interviewed separately on the spot as they were not available to come to the office.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW BREAKDOWN

Focus Group Type	No. of participants	Key Informant Type	No. of interviewees
1. Syrian refugee female beneficiaries: Group 1	11	1. Arsal municipal officials	3
2. Syrian refugee male beneficiaries: Group 1	9	2. Arsal community leaders	4
3. Syrian refugee female beneficiaries: Group 2	9	3. NRC Lebanon head office staff	7
4. Syrian refugee male beneficiaries: Group 2	9	4. NRC Lebanon field office staff	6
5. Syrian refugee female non-beneficiaries	4	5. NRC partners (UN etc.)	5
6. Syrian refugee male non-beneficiaries	4		
5. Lebanese landlord beneficiaries	7		
6. Lebanese landlord non-beneficiaries (adapted to 5 separate interviews)	5		

Data collection:

The full set of data collection tools used in this evaluation is contained in Annex 7.4. Interviews and focus groups were carried out using a semi-structured approach, with enumerators trained on data collection tools and asking follow up questions as necessary. Field data collection was carried out in Arsal between 19 – 25 January 2017, with enumerators working in pairs (one interviewing and one taking notes). The evaluator attended the Arsal KIIs and beneficiary focus groups, and also conducted the NRC staff and partner interviews between 13 January – 1 February.

Data analysis:

As well as comparing perceptions on programme impact between beneficiaries, NRC staff, partners and community leaders, data gathered in this evaluation was triangulated with the results of the June 2016 WASH post-distribution monitoring survey and other relevant programme records. The evaluator coded interview transcripts using NVivo qualitative analysis software to identify and examine key themes. A data analysis workshop was held with enumerators on 26 January to gather their observations and input. The evaluator also presented her initial findings in a data validation workshop with NRC staff on 7 February 2017 before delivering the final report.

Limitations:

Security and access was relatively good in Arsal during the data collection period, but still represented a limitation. Due to travel time from the Zahle office and security advice to leave before 3pm, the window for data collection in Arsal each day was short. As an international, the evaluator was advised to minimise her presence in Arsal, so was not able to be present for all of the data collection. It is also not possible to use electronic devices such as tablets to record interview responses due to Arsali fears about GPS and intelligence-gathering.

5 Findings:

5.1 Main evaluation question

Does this intervention sufficiently contribute to meeting the shelter/WASH needs of Syrian refugees living in sub-standard buildings in Arsal?

Arsal community leaders, NRC programme staff and beneficiaries consulted for this evaluation consistently indicated that due to the particularly high level of vulnerability in Arsal, any assistance was welcome. Syrians living in SSBs had benefited from receiving emergency shelter/WASH upgrades, and no negative outcomes at all were reported, either for refugees or the host community. However, respondents stressed that the impact of SSB was limited and that there was the need for a more comprehensive and integrated response, such as in the NRC Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) modality. As the Arsal sub-standard building (SSB) modality does not include a rent-free period in exchange for NRC's rehabilitation work, refugees do not benefit from assistance in paying their rent, nor the improved security of tenure associated with a rental contract. Due to the more modest nature of rehabilitation under the SSB modality, Lebanese landlords also said that they did not benefit from weatherproofing items such as plastic sheeting. By contrast, the higher-budget OFC shelter interventions would assist the host community by enhancing the value of landlord's property while also stimulating the livelihoods of Lebanese tradesmen.

In order to examine the question of whether the intervention "sufficiently contributed" to meeting refugees' shelter and WASH needs, it is important to consider that the SSB programme evolved to suit the specific context in this close-knit, isolated community. As security and access challenges in 2013 led to the suspension of the OFC shelter programme in Arsal, NRC returned to the lower investment emergency SSB modality which was more commonly used by agencies in Lebanon at the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis. SSB was seen as a lower risk modality in a context where regular monitoring was not possible. As such, Arsal SSB programme performance needs to be judged against the more modest goal of "improved shelter conditions in sub-standard buildings" rather than the OFC desired outcome of having "safe and *satisfactory* housing options through occupancy free of charge." Focus groups and key informant interviews indicate that SSB beneficiaries' housing conditions improved. Roofs stopped leaking, new doors created more security and privacy, rooms were made easier to heat and people were able to wash their hands thanks to new basins and water tanks. Performance on shelter logframe indicators for SSB is also solid. In-person polling in evaluation focus groups (in addition to telephone surveys previously conducted for the WASH PDM in mid-2016) indicate that beneficiaries are moderately satisfied by the intervention, and almost all are continuing to reside in the same shelter one year after programme implementation. However, the question arising throughout data collection was whether SSB is still the most appropriate shelter modality for the Arsal context in 2017. While security and access challenges continue, Arsal community leaders and NRC shelter programme staff felt strongly that reintroducing the Occupancy Free of Charge modality was the best way to meet the needs of both Syrian refugees and the host community. While there is significant demand for OFC, any increased investment would need to be matched by a system of rigorous, independent monitoring checks. While NRC shelter staff advise that such a monitoring system is already in place for OFC nationally, the challenging context in Arsal requires particular diligence. As well as the monitoring system integrated into shelter programming, this evaluation recommends an additional layer of checks by the NRC M&E unit. For example, this could include 'before and after' visits to 25-30% of shelters by an M&E officer. In times of limited access or M&E resources, remote verification procedures such as phone calls to a sample of beneficiaries or a review of programme records could be used.

Main Conclusions:

- ✓ The NRC intervention has met its objective of providing basic weatherproofing and WASH upgrades to improve shelter conditions in SSB in Arsal. 12 months on, refugees have stayed in their upgraded shelters and satisfaction levels are moderate.
- ✓ The intervention sufficiently contributed to meeting Syrian refugees' short-term shelter needs, **but not** their need for rent assistance and security of tenure. There is little to no impact on the host community.

Main Recommendation:

- **OFC:** Consider reintroducing the NRC Occupancy Free of Charge modality in Arsal. This should be done at first on a manageable scale, with stringent monitoring by both the shelter and M&E teams (including a 'Plan B' for remote management.)
- **Enhanced SSB:** If reintroducing OFC is not considered viable for the Arsal context, consider increasing the investment per household to use more sustainable weatherproofing materials.

5.2 Outcomes

NRC Focus Question 2017-2018: Appropriateness - Are we doing the right things? Is the response tailored to the needs and priorities of the targeted population?

The targeted population for this intervention was vulnerable Syrian refugees living in sub-standard buildings in Arsal. Data on the humanitarian situation in Arsal is more limited than for the rest of the Bekaa as the UNHCR's survey partners do not have access to the town. Information on the numbers of refugees living in sub-standard buildings is also more difficult to obtain as their presence is less visible than in the informal tented settlements (ITS). According to the humanitarian coordinator of the Arsal municipality, there are up to 60,000 Syrian refugees living in SSB, and the NRC shelter team estimates that about 60% are severely vulnerable.

The two focus groups held with non-beneficiaries for the evaluation reinforce current understandings of the needs and priorities of Syrian refugees living in sub-standard buildings in Arsal. Asked to describe the conditions in their shelter, refugees expressed the following concerns:

- **Lack of doors and windows:** This leaves refugees exposed to the elements and potential intruders. A lack of internal doors means there is no privacy for family members inside the shelter.



- **Leaking roofs:** In one case, roof leakage was so bad a family made a tent inside the shelter.
- **No water or electricity**
- **No sanitation facilities:** risk of disease and also protection concerns if refugees have to go to other shelters to find a toilet.
- **Cold:** Properties that are not sealed off and sub-divided into smaller rooms are harder to heat
- Dampness
- Can't afford rent/utilities
- Fear of eviction

The Arsal SSB programme addresses all of these needs, with the exception of helping refugees to pay their rent and enhancing their security of tenure by making a rental contract with the landlord. Each intervention is individually tailored to the needs of each household.

Example of an Arsal SSB intervention:

For 4 Syrian refugee families living in one building (total 11 people) NRC installed:

1. Shelter upgrades: 5 doors, a partition to divide the large room, plastic sheets to cover the bathroom window and roof
2. WASH upgrades: A toilet, wash basin, kitchen sink, pipes, plastic water tank and cesspit.

Before:



After:



Under the ECHO 1503 phase of the Arsal SSB programme, 69% of the housing units rehabilitated received both WASH and shelter upgrades, 28% received shelter upgrades and 3% only WASH upgrades. As both focus group participants and Arsal community leaders emphasised the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene issues, it is recommended to tilt the balance more towards WASH upgrades in future. In the words of a local government official in Arsal, “*Sanitation is not just a refugee problem, it is a general problem and there is a decrease in WASH projects.*” Female refugees in

particular appreciated the importance of WASH. One beneficiary stated, “Water and sanitation are the most important things.” Male focus group participants also voiced appreciation for items such as water tanks, but tended to focus more on the need to make the shelter easier to heat in winter. Female refugees’ greater appreciation of the WASH activities could be explained by the fact that they generally use more water and hygiene items (as they are typically responsible for cooking, washing, cleaning and childcare.)

The majority of NRC staff interviewed felt that the weatherproofing aspect of the Arsal SSB programme was no longer an appropriate solution due to the protracted nature of the Syrian refugee crisis.

“I don’t like weatherproofing – it’s repetitive assistance as plastic sheeting only lasts for a year. We get more value with WASH upgrades. I would love us to do the OFC programme in Arsal, the need is unquestionable and the benefits to refugees and locals would be fantastic. The risks in Arsal are the issue.”

NRC staff member

Another staff member stated, *“I believe that the work isn’t necessary. SSB should be just in the time of emergency. Under SSB, the refugee is still paying rent and might leave the house because they can’t afford it.”*

However, the sector lead, UNHCR Shelter Coordinator Ahmad Kassem, believes that the Arsal SSB programme is still a relevant and appropriate response in the Arsal context: *“I agree with NRC on shrinking the budget down to \$400 because of the security and safety concerns over the past years, and also taking into consideration risk management issues so that the investment is not wasted due to security or other reasons. What NRC is doing in Arsal is very well aligned to the shelter sector activities, such as weatherproofing in sub-standard buildings.”*

A wider WASH crisis

Although beyond the scope of household-level interventions, a broader WASH issue that emerged from this evaluation was the need to target the wider WASH infrastructure around SSBs. All seven of the Arsal community leaders and municipal officials interviewed for this evaluation raised the issue of the town’s dangerously overstretched water infrastructure. One stated, *“To improve its work, NRC should focus on sanitation, putting in water treatment plants. We have many cases of disease due to poor sanitation and water systems.”* The water sector lead in Lebanon, UNICEF WASH coordinator David Adams, confirmed that Arsal is facing an urgent water management issue. He added that for Lebanon overall, the established approach is for the shelter sector to address the WASH needs inside sub-standard buildings. *“But there’s a gap in the sector as we need a bigger picture focus for WASH on refugees living in non-residential buildings. It’s assumed that by doing the infrastructure inside houses that you’re addressing the needs in these locations, but that’s not really the case because we’re not properly targeting the sites that are in need.”* While no such programme is yet in place in Arsal, NRC WASH staff advise that the organisation is implementing community support projects in some other parts of Lebanon (where government restrictions allow) to reduce the public health risks of deteriorated water and sewage networks for both refugees and the host community.

What outcome has this intervention had on the refugees and, where applicable, on the host community?

Refugees:

Data collection for this evaluation revealed no reports of negative effects on refugees from the SSB intervention. With shelter programming, the concern is usually that upgrades will cause the landlord

to increase the rent and/or evict refugees from the shelter. No such cases were reported for Arsal SSB, meaning that the intervention clearly met the 'do no harm' test. Out of a random sample of 50 beneficiaries called and invited for focus groups (of which 38 attended), only two had moved out of their rehabilitated shelters.

Focus groups with beneficiaries revealed that the intervention has had a positive, although fairly limited, impact on their living conditions. Many refugees stated that their homes had become warmer due to the sealing off of the shelter and sub-division of rooms, and that they were now able to shower and wash their dishes due to the installation of water tanks and sinks. For example, one male refugee stated, *"This is a great programme, I have benefited a lot. There were no water tanks, there was nothing in the house. They gave me a water tank. There was no door, and now there is a door."*

"It's better than blankets" – Male refugee

"The room became warmer, but the materials are of poor quality" - Female refugee

"With the tap we are now able to wash our hands, before it was a disaster" – Female refugee

"The damp is increasing in the house. The assistance wasn't enough; we didn't benefit" – Female refugee

However, there were several complaints about leaks and damp conditions in the shelters, suggesting that some of the effects from weatherproofing may have worn off. Many refugees also complained about the difficulty in paying rent and utilities. All focus group participants reported that the Arsal SSB modality had had no effect (either positive or negative) on their dealings with the landlord, and almost all said they had a good relationship. These largely favourable reports of landlord-tenant relationships match key informants' opinions that there are generally very few problems between the refugees and host community in Arsal aside from competition over livelihoods. A few refugees mentioned that their landlords "loved money" or would not allow the rent to be paid even a day late.

Interviews with NRC staff highlighted that even minor rehabilitations completed under Arsal SSB can lead to positive outcome for refugees. One staff member stated, *"When you seal the windows and put in partitions, and you check with the thermometer the temperature is a lot different. When you put in a toilet, it makes a huge difference."* Another staff member believes the outcomes were more limited: *"To be honest, SSB enhances the situation they are in, but it doesn't change it. For example, if they are living in a place with no windows, we are putting in some tarps but it's not a proper window. Yes, we are making a change with making separate rooms for each family, and providing WASH items. It's simplifying life."*

Host Community:

The Arsal SSB programme did not have any significant outcomes for the host community. There was little impact on host community livelihoods as only four local contractors were employed to install the shelter and WASH upgrades. For Lebanese landlords, weatherproofing upgrades do not provide lasting improvements to their property, and refugees might take WASH items such as plastic water tanks with them. This focus group comment was typical: *"The situation with the shelter is still the same, as plastic sheeting and wood don't do anything to fix the situation."* In interviews with community leaders, it was clear that they saw no real advantages for the host community from Arsal SSB. *"You should use better quality materials that wood or plastic sheeting - materials that will benefit the Lebanese in the long term,"* said one local official.

An Arsal community leader suggested that the SSB modality was having an indirect impact on Lebanese landlords. He believed that if refugees in SSB did not continue receiving assistance to encourage them to stay, Lebanese landlords would lose a much-needed source of income: *“The refugees would return to the camps [ITS] and the Aرسالis would not be able to rent out their houses – and there’s no work here.”* However, a Lebanese landlord in the focus group stated that stopping the SSB programme would have no impact: *“The refugees have stayed for 5 years, they’ll stay for another 10.”*

Conclusions - Outcomes:

- ✓ The SSB response is tailored to the targeted population’s basic needs of protection from the elements and access to sanitation facilities. However, weatherproofing is only a short-term solution that needs to be repeated on a yearly basis.
- ✓ The Aرسال SSB intervention does not address Syrian refugees’ needs for assistance to pay rent and to obtain tenure security (rental contract) with landlord.
- ✓ The response is not tailored to the needs and priorities of the host community to improve social cohesion and boost livelihoods.

Recommendations – Outcomes:

1. As mentioned in the previous section, options that could be studied for improving the appropriateness of this intervention include either enhancing the SSB modality by using more durable materials for weather-proofing, or reintroducing the OFC modality (with additional checks and balances tailored to the Aرسال context) to address the needs of the host community and provide more comprehensive assistance to Syrian refugees.
2. Due to host community reports of health and sanitation problems affecting the town, assess the feasibility (including any Lebanese government restrictions or security issues) of Aرسال as a site for a future NRC community support project to improve WASH infrastructure.



5.3 Effectiveness

Coverage and Targeting – are we reaching the right people?

Vulnerabilities for Syrian refugees in Arsal:

The first step in answering whether NRC is reaching the right people is to examine the overall needs for Syrian refugees and the host community in Arsal, relative to other areas of Lebanon. Precise, up-to-date data about vulnerability in Arsal is difficult to obtain due to the security and access situation. Key informants advised that it is not possible to carry out a Household Profiling Questionnaire (HPQ) vulnerability assessment using tablets due to community sensitivities about the use of electronic devices. The NRC's beneficiary targeting in the rest of the Bekaa is based on vulnerability data generated by the UNHCR's shelter survey, but this study excludes Arsal as UNHCR's survey partners currently do not have access. Many refugees in Arsal are also unregistered due to fears about their details ending up in the hands of the Lebanese or Syrian intelligence services. Registrations of new refugees have been suspended since May 2015 due to government pressure. Refugees wanting to renew their existing registration must travel to the nearest UNHCR office in Zahle, but those who do not have legal status with Lebanese authorities fear being arrested if they cross the army checkpoints encircling Arsal. The fact that it is extremely difficult for refugees in Arsal to register with UNHCR is in itself a vulnerability, in addition to the fact that the restrictions on their movement mean they cannot go to another town in the Bekaa to work or access assistance. As such, they are dependent on the very scarce livelihood opportunities and few aid organisations that are present inside the town.

“What can I say about the situation here? My husband can't work, we can't go in and out. My husband might be arrested if he goes out of Arsal [through the checkpoints] even though he's not a fighter or a jihadist.”

“Where can you go, to the UN in Zahle? They will give you an appointment in one year's time.”

Women in Syrian refugee focus group

While data is limited, all 18 key informants from the UN, ICRC and NRC stated that both the Syrian refugees and host community need assistance. An ICRC employee stated, *“Refugees in Arsal are considered the most vulnerable in all of Lebanon—there is no work, and they can't go outside.”* One NRC staff member stated, *“The proportion of refugees in Arsal is extremely high. If we know that the economically vulnerable will have difficulty securing shelter at minimum standard—that correlation is exact—the reports from the field team in Arsal also reinforce it. In our current proposal we are proposing to help 300 families, but we are reaching only a tiny proportion.”*

On the surface, refugees living in buildings—even sub-standard ones—might appear to be better off than those living in tents. However, almost all key informants interviewed believed that both groups in Arsal are extremely vulnerable and in need of urgent assistance. NRC programme staff explained that refugees living in SSBs are very hard to reach, as they are dispersed within the host community and less visible than refugees living in camps. One NRC employee called refugees in SSBs *“the forgotten people.”* The UNICEF WASH Coordinator stated, *“If you look at the situation for non-residential buildings, it's worse than for tented settlements.”* Refugees in focus groups felt that they were getting much less assistance than refugees living in ITSs. *“Anyone who lives in a house has money,”* said one male refugee sarcastically. Another said, *“In camps they got 13 gallons of diesel and we didn't get anything.”* Most participants in the male beneficiary focus groups said they were thinking of moving to camps in order to access more assistance.

Due to the generally high level of need among refugees living in SSBs in Arsal, it was difficult to pinpoint any particularly vulnerable groups. When asked about this topic, community leaders and focus group participants invariably said that everyone in Arsal was in a bad situation. A local employee with the

Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs stated, *“There are lot of widows. But if the father is there and hasn’t worked for 2 years, it’s worse. In that case it’s better if the head of the household is absent since the family will receive more assistance. Even local people here can’t find work.”* An official from the municipality said, *“The most vulnerable cases are families suffering from eviction, because of their inability to pay rent and their need for jobs. And I’ve also heard of cases of houses infested with insects. In terms of the transparency of the programme, there are basically no undeserving cases in Arsal.”*

Host community vulnerabilities:

Arsal has been hit particularly hard by the Syrian crisis. The town’s main revenue sources – rock quarries and farmland surrounding the town – are now inaccessible due to the security cordon around Arsal. Arsalis also face difficulties going through checkpoints to work in other areas of the Bekaa, and must compete for scarce livelihoods with Syrian refugees who now outnumber them. *“Chances of finding work have become almost impossible, there are no jobs. Arsalis might still make \$100-200 per month in rent from Syrian refugees, but they lose \$800 in salary. The roads are closed with checkpoints, people can’t easily travel to work in Hermel like before,”* said Arsal’s Mayor, Bassel Houjeiry. Refugees are reportedly opening shops in the town without a permit, pushing locals out of business. Competition for jobs is placing downward pressure on local wages. According to the Deputy Mayor, Rima Kroumbi, *“There are Syrians who work for 3000 lira (\$2) per day. This is the biggest disaster.”*

“Arsal was a rich place before, now the poor have become hungry.”

“Before, no one in Arsal was really poor. The poor had a house, cigarettes, they were able to afford to get married – now there is nothing for them. They can’t earn even \$15-16 dollars a day.”

Arsal key informants

The refugee crisis is also straining Arsal’s already weak infrastructure. The municipality’s humanitarian coordinator explained, *“It [the refugee influx] put a lot of pressure on Arsal. Sanitation is the biggest problem. Even before the refugees came we had a problem, when the refugees came it became worse. Water pollution is making people sick.”*

Some landlords in the non-beneficiary focus group said that they allowed Syrian families to stay on their property without taking rent, as they knew the refugees couldn’t afford to pay. One landlord said, *“There are refugees not benefiting from organisations, and I can’t keep carrying the burden.”*

All key informants and focus group participants reported that there are no problems between refugees and locals, except for competition over scarce livelihoods.

A community leader said, *“If people perceive the Syrians as competition for work opportunities, there are big problems. We’ve reached a really bad financial situation. There was a person who was working in a sawmill for \$3 [per day] and they fired him for a Syrian who would take \$1.”*

The municipality’s humanitarian coordinator stated, *“For Arsal and the seven villages surrounding it, there were close trading relations with Syria, which was a reason why the refugees settled here. At first they were welcomed, the problem started when their numbers got bigger. Now they have affected the security situation, and the Lebanese have been upset with the refugees’ presence since they were prevented from reaching their farmland due to security reasons.”*

From a social cohesion and stabilisation perspective, tensions are running high despite the refugees’ and host communities’ shared religious, cultural and trading ties. To reduce these tensions, the host

community must feel as if they are benefiting from assistance as well as the Syrian refugees. From this perspective, OFC would offer many advantages as the programme would create livelihood opportunities for tradesmen as well as improving landlords' properties.

Beneficiary selection process for Arsal SSB:

Programme staff were upfront in interviews about the need to improve targeting of beneficiaries for Arsal SSB. Unlike other NRC shelter programmes, almost everyone who was assessed for the Arsal SSB programme was accepted. While this is not usually a best practice, NRC shelter staff were dealing with the following challenges:

1. Arsal residents' sensitivity to the use of electronic devices such as tablets to carry out HPQ surveys and NRC's Household Assessment form (the usual NRC vulnerability assessment tools).
2. The additional time and resources required to find and assess SSB beneficiaries compared to ITS.
3. Survey fatigue among beneficiaries. Staff reported comments such as, *"You buy us a \$20 door and then you visit us for 5 days."*
4. Potential for security threats to staff when refugees are assessed for aid and then rejected. This is a particular challenge in Arsal as it is a tense context and underserved by aid agencies.
5. The challenge in pinpointing particularly vulnerable groups in a context where there is a generally high level of need, and traditional categories of vulnerability may not be what they seem – for example, families may register as female-headed households due to the male head of household's fear of registering with UNHCR.

When focus group participants were asked to describe the process of applying for the Arsal SSB programme, beneficiaries had come via different sources:

1. Calling an NRC hotline number after being referred by the UNHCR office in Zahle
2. Receiving the NRC hotline number from other contacts (fellow refugees or a Lebanese NGO)
3. Seeing the NRC team around their shelter
4. Visiting the NRC office in Arsal

Those who come to NGO offices to ask for assistance are rarely those who are the most vulnerable - for example, disabled refugees, older people or single-headed households with many small children might not be able to move from their shelter. As such, it is a positive practice that NRC conducted community outreach in areas with many sub-standard buildings to reach vulnerable people. A hotline is also helpful for those refugees with limited mobility, but relies on word of mouth and personal networks to hear about the programme, in addition to access to a phone and call credit.

Vulnerability of Arsal SSB beneficiaries:

While very few or no potential beneficiaries were screened out during the Arsal SSB application process, pre-assessment data on vulnerability was still collected. Staff used the NRC's Household Assessment form survey (an older NRC system) in order to avoid the use of electronic devices necessary to carry out the HPQ. The data is useful to gain a general picture of whether NRC reached the right people for the Arsal SSB programme.

Vulnerability profile of Arsal SSB beneficiaries using NRC's Household Assessment form data:

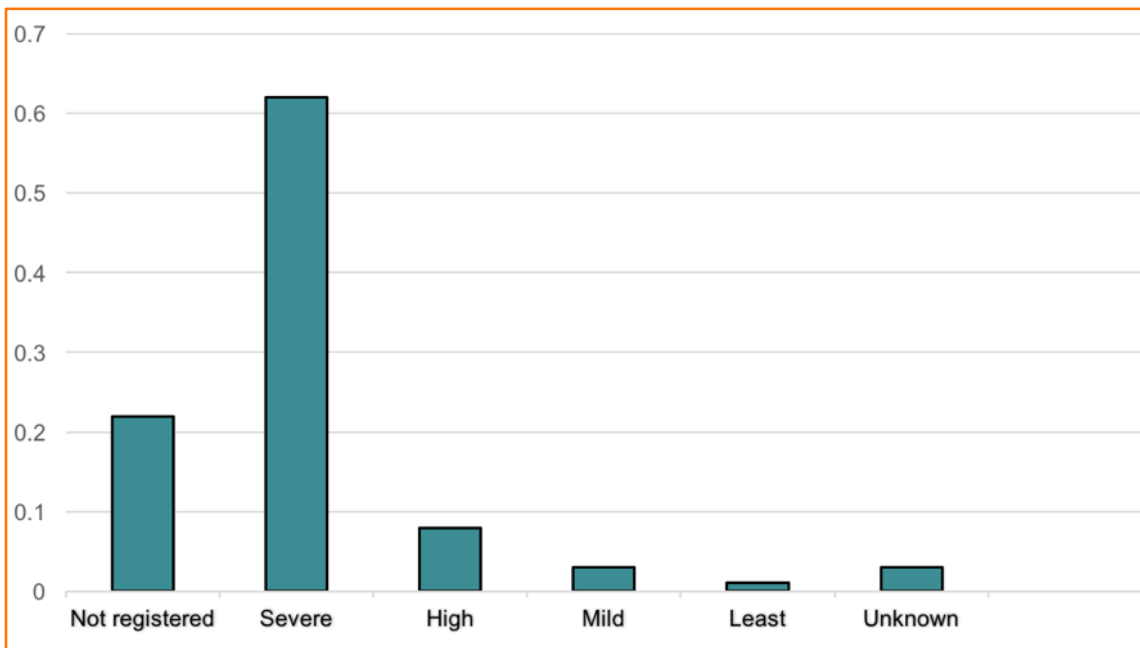
- 66% of beneficiaries were paying rent. Of those who paid rent, almost half reported paying over \$100/month.
- All households report income of less than 100,000 LL (\$66) per month.

- 97% say no one in their household is working.
- 18% are female-headed households, 3% are disabled-headed households and 10% are headed by a person over 60.
- 16% of heads of household have children under 12 months and 32% include pregnant or lactating women.

It can be noted from the data above that almost a third of refugee households report paying an amount of rent that is higher than their monthly income. It is unclear whether some refugees may be under-reporting income and over-reporting rent payments to maximise their chances of accessing assistance (the evaluation team noted that refugees and landlords often gave conflicting accounts of the amount of rent paid.) However, other refugees are likely to be living on their savings or falling into debt.

Another source of vulnerability data for Arsal beneficiaries is the UNHCR ‘desk formula’ for those beneficiaries who were registered. This information was pulled from the UNHCR RAIS database during January 2017, representing refugees’ situation approximately one year after the ECHO 1503 SSB programme was implemented. Nevertheless, it still provides a useful snapshot of the vulnerability level of the people that NRC reached with this intervention.

UNHCR Vulnerability Scores for Arsal SSB Beneficiaries (total beneficiary households = 585)



We see that more than 60% of those reached are considered severely vulnerable and a further 8% highly vulnerable under the UNHCR’s current system. 22% of Arsal SSB beneficiary heads of household were not registered with UNHCR, and 3% had unknown vulnerability status due to incomplete survey data. Only a combined total of 4% were considered only mildly vulnerable or least vulnerable. Therefore, despite the blanket approach taken to beneficiary selection, due to the generally high level of need in Arsal it appears that the majority of people reached were indeed severely vulnerable.

Current approach – is programme implementation functioning? What should/could be done differently or in addition to what’s already being done to improve programme effectiveness?

The 2016 logistical framework for NRC shelter programming sets two performance indicators to measure the success of the Arsal SSB programme. One involves whether refugees are continuing to

reside in their rehabilitated shelters 3 months after the intervention. The second is beneficiary satisfaction. These indicators were measured in the WASH post-distribution monitoring survey of June 2016, where it was found that more than 90% of refugees were still residing in the same shelter, and that almost two thirds of beneficiaries ranked the programme as good or excellent. The WASH PDM survey was carried out by telephone with a sample of 57 beneficiaries.

While this evaluation is based on qualitative methods, a small quantitative element was included in the focus groups in order to triangulate the findings from the WASH PDM. It should be noted that both M&E exercises only provide a snapshot, as sample sizes are not large enough to be statistically significant. In this evaluation, the total number of participants in the refugee beneficiary focus groups was 38. Each person was asked individually about residence status and satisfaction, and to briefly explain their answer. In the case of residence, the sample size is the 50 beneficiaries who were originally called and invited to attend the focus groups. The findings of both the WASH PDM and evaluation against the two programme indicators are summarised in the table below:

NRC SHELTER LOGFRAME

SSB Outcome (Programme Objective): Vulnerable households affected by displacement have improved shelter conditions in sub-standard buildings	
Outcome Indicator #1: % of beneficiary households occupying housing units 3 months after emergency weather proofing and WASH upgrade installation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The evaluation triangulated the finding of the WASH PDM that more than 90% of the ECHO 1503 SSB beneficiaries were still living in their rehabilitated shelters (the figure from this evaluation was 96%) ✓ Out of a random sample of 50 beneficiaries, the evaluation found that only 2 had left their shelters
Outcome Indicator #2: % of targeted households reporting satisfaction with the support received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Focus group participants gave the programme an average rating of 3 out of 5, and 32% ranked the programme as good or excellent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BUT this evaluation found lower satisfaction ratings than the WASH PDM survey conducted 6 months earlier, where 65% of beneficiaries rated the programme as good or excellent.

The evaluation found that 48/50, or 96% of beneficiary households were still living in their rehabilitated shelter. Of the two who had moved out, one cited continuing damp issues and another had moved to north Lebanon to join other family members. While this finding suggests extremely strong performance against the first logframe indicator, it should be interpreted with caution to avoid the assumption that refugees are staying due to the SSB programme. One man in the focus groups did say he had chosen to stay specifically due to the improvements that NRC had made to his shelter. However, other focus group participants all said that they had chosen to stay because they had a good relationship with the landlord and neighbours, or because they could not afford to move anywhere better. These answers do not preclude the possibility that NRC's work to improve their living conditions may have contributed to their reasons for staying.

For the second logframe indicator, beneficiary satisfaction, the evaluation findings differ from the WASH PDM, which found that almost two-thirds of respondents ranked the programme as good or excellent. In this evaluation, which also asked respondents to rank their satisfaction level from 1 to 5, only 32% gave a rating of good or excellent. This difference could be explained by the small sample sizes in question, or it is also possible that beneficiaries were less satisfied a year after the intervention because their memory of its impact had faded, or because some of the weatherproofing benefits had reduced (for example, by plastic sheeting wearing out.)

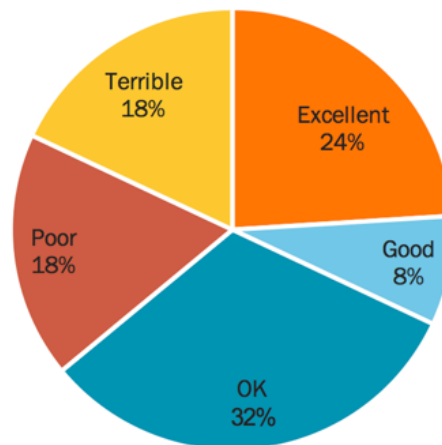
Overall, the average beneficiary satisfaction rating was 3 out of 5 or 'OK'. There were differences in satisfaction along gender lines, with women giving an average rating of 3.5 and men of 2.4. Only one male refugee out of 18 focus group participants gave the SSB programme a rating of 'excellent' but 8 out of 20 women did.

While evidently the sample size from the focus groups is too tiny to be statistically significant, combined with the beneficiaries' explanations, the ratings provide a qualitative snapshot with clear gender differences.

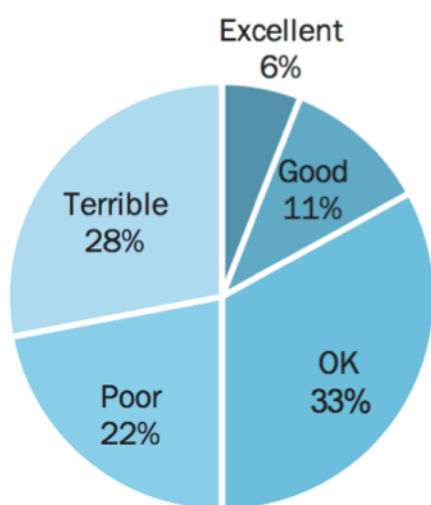
Asked about the differences that NRC's intervention made to their shelter, men tend to focus on the weatherproofing and the basic quality of the materials. Women, however, frequently mention the provision of WASH materials and the importance of sanitation in the home. It is likely that the WASH intervention made more of an impact on women's lives, thus explaining why they are generally more satisfied than the men.

To measure the impact of the programme, this evaluation also included focus groups with non-beneficiaries to observe any differences in their living conditions. Those who had benefited from the programme still faced problems such as damp, and a few complained that their roofs were still leaking. However, non-beneficiaries generally described more serious issues such as leaking throughout the

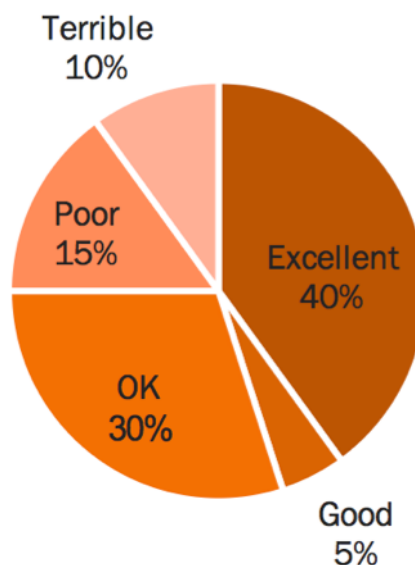
Beneficiary satisfaction with Aarsal SSB (n=38)



Male beneficiary satisfaction (n=18)



Female beneficiary satisfaction (n=20)



shelter, complete absence of doors or windows, and lack of water and sanitation facilities. Thus, while most beneficiaries still wanted further improvements to their shelter, they were not facing the same level of shelter challenges as non-beneficiaries. Along with the reasonably good performance against the logframe indicators, this difference between non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries demonstrates that the programme has been effective in improving shelter conditions in sub-standard buildings in Arsal. Programme effectiveness could be further improved by a move towards more durable materials for shelter upgrades, but this would require a higher investment and careful assessment of due diligence risks.

This evaluation also finds that the current modality of delivering SSB assistance via a contractor is the most effective. Under a previous iteration of the programme in 2014, refugees were given the weatherproofing materials directly to install themselves. NRC programme staff involved in this phase of the SSB programme said that this was not a successful modality as some refugees sold the materials, and vulnerable families faced having to pay a contractor to install the items. Feedback from refugees in focus groups confirmed a preference for a contractor to install the weatherproofing and WASH materials rather than doing it themselves.

How receptive are key stakeholders to this type of project?

To gauge host community leaders' opinions, this evaluation consulted municipal and local government officials, a local religious leader and the head of a local NGO.

Arsal community leaders:

As discussed in the Coverage and Targeting section, host community leaders feel that their town is getting very little assistance with the refugee crisis compared to other areas in Lebanon. As a result, they appreciate NRC's presence as one of the few international NGOs with an office in Arsal. In the words of a local Lebanese NGO leader, *"The idea of funding going down or NGOs leaving Arsal bothers us a lot because we're really in need."* In this context, any assistance is vital.

"We shouldn't stop it [the SSB programme] It's something necessary. If the refugee left because the house isn't in a good condition, the government or Ministry of Social Affairs won't be able to make him a house elsewhere. On the humanitarian side, we can't allow someone to live without a roof, he has a family and children. We don't have solutions, either for the Syrian refugees or for the host community."

Arsal Mayor Bassel Houjeiry

However, all community leaders stated that while refugees benefit from SSB, the host community does not. A local official from the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) stated, *"The SSB service is good, but the old programme [OFC] was much more useful to refugees and the host community. The landlord isn't benefiting from timber and plastic sheeting, when it's outside it doesn't last."*

The humanitarian coordinator at the Arsal municipality also expressed his preference for the OFC program: *"Under the current programme, refugees are only benefiting for a short time."*

Key informant interviews also revealed a layer of frustration towards the more modest nature of the SSB intervention. *"Why don't you put in a decent door?"* asked the Arsal Mayor. *"If the materials aren't good, Aarsalis don't benefit."*

Lebanese landlords:

Arsal landlords displayed a neutral attitude towards the SSB programme, regarding it as somewhat helpful for the refugees but not for the host community. All participants in the Lebanese landlord beneficiary focus group stated that there would be no impact on them personally if the Arsal SSB

programme stopped. One remarked, *“The refugees have been here for five years and they’ll stay for another ten.”*

The landlords said it would be better if NRC could repair their houses with metal panels and cement blocks, rather than wood and plastic sheeting. *“Three-quarters of the [SSB] rehabilitation will break after a few months,”* said one.

All participants in the focus group, as well as the five non-beneficiary landlords interviewed, said that they were happy to continue hosting Syrian refugees. Not all landlords were charging rent. *“I don’t ask for rent because they don’t have money. There are no organisations that come to them, no one is helping them.”* No landlord reported having major problems with his Syrian refugee tenants, and often they expressed solidarity. *“I feel bad for charging them rent,”* said one Lebanese landlord about a family of 10 refugees living in his garage without a door or electricity.

According to NRC field staff, only a couple of landlords in each programme cycle have refused to have an SSB intervention on their property, apparently because they fear that the Syrian refugees will stay indefinitely. While data collection did not find any landlords who were opposed to their refugee tenants receiving assistance, one of the non-beneficiary landlords interviewed was reluctant to be seen as a recipient of charity himself: *“It does not matter to me, and there is no problem if the NRC comes to fix the house or not. If they give me \$200 million, I will not go to them or any other offices.”*

Syrian refugees:

Non-beneficiaries, and most of the beneficiaries living in SSBs, spontaneously expressed the desire for NRC shelter assistance. Focus group participants asked several times when the programme would be re-starting, and how they could apply for assistance.

Many also asked if they could receive aid to pay the rent. Two male focus group participants said they would have to move out of their shelters soon because they could not afford to keep paying rent.

Conclusions – Effectiveness:

- ✓ Coverage and targeting: NRC took a blanket approach to beneficiary selection for security and logistical reasons, but due to the generally high level of need in Aarsal most people reached were indeed severely vulnerable.
- ✓ Effectiveness: 96% of refugees are still living in their rehabilitated shelter and almost two-thirds are at least modestly satisfied with the intervention.
- ✓ Receptiveness: Community leaders feel that the SSB programme is not enough to meet the needs of the host community and Lebanese landlords feel the SSB programme has no impact on them. There is strong demand from Syrian refugees for further SSB interventions but they would prefer if it included better quality materials and rent assistance.

Recommendations:

1. Clarify the beneficiary targeting strategy and selection process for future iterations of the SSB programme. Continue to conduct outreach in areas with sub-standard buildings to reach the most vulnerable.
2. To improve beneficiary satisfaction and host community receptiveness, consider investing in more sustainable materials for shelter rehabilitation.

5.4 Efficiency

How have NRC's Shelter/WASH programmes worked together?

Coordination of Arsal SSB with other shelter programming:

The SSB modality is the only NRC shelter/WASH intervention for Syrian refugees in living in sub-standard buildings in Arsal. (Other NRC shelter/WASH programmes there serve informal tented settlements.) Arsal is currently the only area in Lebanon where NRC operates an SSB modality. As the NRC's OFC, SSB and Sealing off kits for ITSs modalities target separate geographic areas, coordination between them would appear to be a non-issue. In Arsal, informal tented settlements and sub-standard buildings often lie side by side, which according to programme staff can lead refugees to be upset if aid is being distributed to SSBs and not to ITS (or vice versa.) However, observations of the Arsal office at the time of data collection indicated that this is even an issue between different camps, as a stream of refugees arrived at the office to ask why an ITS distribution had not yet reached their area. Possibilities for further coordination between NRC shelter interventions on the ground are clearly limited, as the team does not have the resources to coordinate distributions in all locations at once.

However, as described earlier in the Coverage and Targeting section, key informant interviews with NRC staff do reveal the need for more coordination and consistency between NRC shelter programmes regarding beneficiary selection. While there are specific constraints in Arsal regarding the use of electronic devices necessary to carry out vulnerability assessment surveys, the process for Arsal should be harmonised as much as possible with the approach for shelter programming in the rest of the country. Where it is necessary to adapt the main system to suit the local context (such as security risks), any separate processes should be formalised, with transparent criteria for beneficiary selection. Several NRC staff interviewed for this evaluation described the beneficiary selection process in Arsal as 'vague', indicating the need to ensure that there are common standards and procedures that are fully documented and understood across the organisation.

Coordination with other strands of NRC programming:

Another issue raised in interviews was the need to increase coordination between the Arsal SSB modality and the NRC's other programmatic areas (known internally as 'core competencies'). The NRC's goal is for shelter programming to lead to other services that improve refugees' lives, such as legal assistance and education.

"The choice is between quality and quantity. We can reach a lot of people but it doesn't have a lot of impact on their life. So as NRC we are trying to do integrated programming. ...I think shelter is a perfect starting point. You provide people with shelter and then can come with follow-up services such as hygiene promotion and Information Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA)."

Jeroen Quanjer, NRC Shelter Specialist

"The question is really what level of integration is achieved through the SSB programme – how much NRC is able to leverage a shelter intervention to make sure children's births are registered and that they have access to education. If we see a shelter beneficiary with children not going to school, we're not doing our job. Shelter is not just bricks and mortar, it is supposed to be about making sure that refugees rights are secured."

Niamh Murnaghan, NRC Lebanon Country Director

Shelter programme staff in the Bekaa reported that a notable difference between the SSB and OFC modality was the lack of social or ICLA follow up in SSBs to link refugees to other services. This is due to the more difficult access in Arsal, in addition to the more modest scale of the SSB intervention. As such, although information was collected from all SSB beneficiaries using the NRC Household Assessment questionnaire on whether babies were registered and children were in school, the ICLA and SSB programmes in Arsal have separate beneficiary lists and there is no formal referral system. According to the ICLA team in Beirut, referrals from other core competencies often happen informally, and this may also have been the case in Arsal. The current approach nationally is to hold workshops with mixed teams to encourage them to refer families who need assistance registering births and marriages, but the ICLA team believes that further staff training is needed.

Coordination with other shelter actors in Arsal:

Another issue that emerged during data collection was the need for improved coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which is the only other humanitarian actor working in Arsal SSB rehabilitation. Their programme, which is due to be repeated for a second time this year, is similar to NRC's OFC. In exchange for the ICRC carrying out significant rehabilitation work on the landlord's property, the Syrian refugee receives at least a year of free rent (depending on the scale of the rehabilitation and ICRC negotiations with the landlord.) Due to its independent mandate, the ICRC is not part of the UN-led shelter sector in Lebanon, and works with the Qatari Red Crescent.

There have been a few reports of potential duplication involving the ICRC and NRC projects. In the first intervention last year, ICRC staff reported that they had selected a few of the houses that had already received NRC SSB interventions. Similarly, two beneficiaries in focus groups mentioned that the NRC worked on their shelters after the ICRC did. While these interventions might have been complementary in nature, if NRC were to re-establish the OFC programme in Arsal it would be especially important to increase coordination to avoid any cases of duplication. Both NRC and ICRC key informants reported that while there had been some initial meetings to share programmatic approaches to improving conditions in SSBs in Arsal, there was room for more ongoing coordination.

What should/could be done differently or in addition to what was already done to improve programme efficiency?

Procurement challenges:

Due to the close-knit nature of the Arsal community and the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanese livelihoods, NRC has faced strong pressure to both recruit and procure locally. This issue does not affect weatherproofing supplies (wood and plastic sheeting) which are not available in large quantities in Arsal. However, for WASH items, NRC has been forced to procure only in Arsal rather than take the most competitive price nationally. While not regarded as an ideal solution by the NRC operations team, a fixed-price list of items has been produced, based on a market survey done by NRC procurement staff. Prices also factor in labour costs for installation. Competition for the fixed-price tender is available only to contractors in Arsal. As the contractors in Arsal are often individual tradesmen rather than officially registered companies, this can also complicate tax compliance procedures for NRC in Lebanon. However, if a transparent procedure is in place for local contractors to bid, procuring in Arsal supports the town's struggling economy. There are also advantages to procuring locally in terms of logistics and transport. Transporting the weatherproofing supplies sourced from outside Arsal can also be challenging, as the goods have to go through army checkpoints that may shut at short notice due to security operations. From a purely logistical and procurement standpoint, OFC is simpler than SSB as the landlord is responsible for implementing the work. However, OFC comes with its own set of due diligence issues, which require strong monitoring to ensure that the landlord has both carried out the required upgrades and is honouring the rent-free period.

Staffing challenges:

NRC faces strong pressure to recruit as well as procure locally. Hiring Arsali staff brings with it a range of benefits in terms of security, access and local knowledge. Employing staff from influential local families ensures increased credibility and community buy-in for NRC efforts, and local employees are

less likely to face threats to their own safety or to NRC supplies. Arsali staff are familiar with community dynamics, and importantly in an area where the reach of the Lebanese state is limited, they know which landlords are 'of good reputation' and are most likely to honour agreements not to evict refugees. However, the flip side is that this can be viewed as favouritism. Operating the Aرسال office with staff drawn from the town (especially from prominent local families) can leave NRC open to questions about lack of independence at best, and at worst conflict of interest and corruption. Hiring at least some local Arsali staff is essential for access, but should be supplemented with independent oversight from the Zahle-based shelter and M&E teams.

SSB Programme Monitoring:

Challenges to due diligence programme monitoring in Aرسال include:

- Aرسال is a close-knit community dominated by a small number of powerful families.
- Security operations by the Lebanese army in the area are ongoing, meaning checkpoints can be closed at short notice to NRC staff or goods.
- Staff have been harassed and threatened for using tablets or other electronic devices to collect beneficiary data.
- Access is especially limited for international staff for security reasons.
- Lebanese staff may be reluctant to work in Aرسال due to the commute and potential security risks.
- The town is a 3-hour round trip from the main Bekaa field office in Zahle and staff need to leave by 3pm, reducing the window for access each day.

In this challenging context, it is the personal opinion of the evaluator that independent monitoring checks by dedicated M&E staff are essential. NRC Lebanon has only recently set up a separate M&E unit, and the main approach nationally is to integrate programme monitoring into the work of project implementation staff. As such, shelter staff, rather than M&E officers, carried out the routine monitoring for the Aرسال SSB programme. While this approach has the advantage of encouraging programme staff to have more ownership over the monitoring process, there is a risk of bias from staff involved in implementation, and beneficiaries may be afraid of voicing criticism to NRC staff members who have personally delivered the aid. In the context of Aرسال SSB, this evaluation recommends spot checks by the M&E team (in addition to senior programme staff) of at least 25% of beneficiary households to verify that the upgrade has indeed taken place, report any red flags and assess the outcome of the intervention. Where the M&E unit's resources are not sufficient to carry out spot checks on all NRC programmes, those in more challenging locations such as Aرسال and Wadi Khaled should be prioritised.⁷ If access is cut off for security reasons, the M&E team could establish remote verification procedures (such as reviewing 'before and after' photos of completed work and signatures on documentation) and phone calls to beneficiaries to check that work has been completed. During focus groups, few SSB beneficiaries said that they had received a monitoring visit, but all expressed the desire for more checks. There were a number of complaints about the quality of the installation and one woman said that the landlord had taken her water tank. To avoid such cases, it is worth considering adding a clause to the rehabilitation agreement signed with the landlord that WASH items are for the sole use of the refugees while they remain in the shelter. Additionally, the transparency of the SSB programme would be improved if Aرسال beneficiaries had access to NRC Accountability/Complaints Response and Feedback Mechanism staff, whether in person or via a hotline. The evaluator noted the presence of a complaints box in the NRC's Aرسال office but no hotline number was displayed, nor the procedures for making a complaint.

⁷ During the data collection period NRC was in the process of filling new positions in their M&E unit, which NRC key informants in both the Beirut and Bekaa offices said had been under-resourced. As of March 2017, NRC Lebanon advised that their unit was fully staffed and consisted of one M&E technical specialist and two M&E field assistants in each of the NRC's main three field offices (Bekaa, North and South Lebanon) overseen by an M&E manager and assistant in Beirut.

Strategic communications:

As one of the few international organisations with an office in Arsal, the NRC presence is high profile. But while the NRC is highly visible, there is a need for better communication with host community stakeholders and beneficiaries about what aid NRC has delivered to the community, and the services it currently offers.

Upon two visits to Arsal, the evaluator observed a constant stream of refugees visiting the office, to ask about how to apply for aid. (While a large scale distribution underway in the ITSs during the data collection week may have been behind some refugees' visits, Arsal-based NRC staff advised that the office was usually extremely busy.) The office reception area was empty of furniture, staff, or any information brochures (it contains an orange feedback box and an ICLA banner, but no signage about hotline numbers or hours that various services are available.) As a result, the refugees walk through the back offices to try to find a staff member to answer their questions, often getting frustrated at responses like "the shelter team is only in Arsal on Wednesdays and Fridays" or "the ICLA lawyer is only in on Tuesday". Due to the volume of beneficiaries coming in to the office (at least 10-15 per hour), there is a need for a staff member to be in the reception area who is capable of providing information and referrals about the full range of NRC services. This could be supplemented with printed information about NRC services, and a sign with the hours and days that specialised staff are available. According to three NRC key informants, if beneficiaries receive varying information about selection criteria and processes from different staff members, this can fuel misconceptions of unfairness in aid distribution. In an atmosphere where tensions are already running high, this can increase threats to staff safety.

Such issues could be largely avoided with further staff training and information sharing across components, or by hiring a receptionist/operations assistant who is able to explain all programmes. Making sure the reception area is stocked with brochures about NRC assistance, and having a sign with hours that various services are available would also be a useful step.

There is also a need to communicate effectively with host community leaders about what NRC has already achieved in Arsal, and how it is doing everything possible within funding constraints. The evaluator observed a general lack of awareness among community leaders about the WASH aspects of the SSB programme, as the weatherproofing elements were more visible (as they can be seen from outside the house). As weatherproofing is less popular due to its temporary nature, it would be useful to highlight the more sustainable WASH interventions to landlords' properties. The municipality was also under the impression that NRC had assisted only 400 households under the SSB programme over the past year, when the combined total from the ECHO 1503 and 1603 grants is almost 850.

In almost any aid context, beneficiaries will always want more assistance than an organisation is able to deliver. However, the strategic communication needs in Arsal are particularly acute due to NRC's high profile in this needy and underserved context. The office is the face of NRC in Arsal and small, inexpensive changes such as providing training and brochures are likely to go a long way in improving the receptiveness of key stakeholders and reducing frustration among refugees.

Conclusions – Efficiency:

- ✓ NRC shelter/WASH programmes currently target different geographic areas, with the SSB modality currently only present in Aرسال. However, there is room for greater coordination and harmonisation of vulnerability assessment and beneficiary application procedures.
- ✓ The wider NRC strategy is to use shelter as a gateway for connecting refugees with other services, however it is unclear what process is in place for referring SSB beneficiaries to other core competencies, and how this system is tracked.
- ✓ There are few other shelter actors targeting SSB in Aرسال, but those that are present (ICRC, Islamic charities) are not part of the UN-led shelter sector. There is a need for greater coordination to avoid duplication, especially if OFC is introduced.

Recommendations:

1. As far as is possible with the restrictions on electronic survey tools in Aرسال, harmonise vulnerability assessment and beneficiary selection criteria to match other NRC shelter programming in Lebanon. Formalise selection procedures when adapting them specifically to the Aرسال context.
2. Ensure that shelter team members are trained in referring SSB beneficiaries to other NRC core competencies, such as ICLA (legal advice) and education.
3. Reach an agreement with the ICRC to avoid any duplication of shelter work.

6 Lessons

The following improvements are 'lessons learned' that are already being implemented by NRC:

SSB Modality:

- **Contractor vs. refugee self-installation:** In a previous iteration of the SSB programme (pre-2015) refugees were given kits of weatherproofing materials to install themselves. However, NRC programme staff said that this was an unsuccessful approach as refugees would often sell the materials, or vulnerable groups would be forced to pay someone to install them.
- **Tailoring intervention to each shelter:** NRC programme staff said the SSB modality has been adapted from a one-size-fits-all kit of materials, to an intervention specifically tailored to the needs of each household. This has reduced wastage of materials and allowed the delivery of more targeted assistance.

Arsal context:

- **Staffing:** NRC experience operating in this challenging context since 2012 has demonstrated the need to balance recruitment of staff from Arsal, and staff from elsewhere in the Bekaa. Employing Arsali staff (particularly from influential families) increases security of the office and supplies, and buy-in from local stakeholders. It also ensures that NRC has knowledge of the local community dynamics and can continue to implement programming during times that access to the town is cut off. However, as having only Arsali staff leaves the programme open to allegations of conflict of interest, a balance has been struck between local staff and staff who travel in from the Zahle office for programme management and monitoring.
- **Procurement:** NRC has come under intense pressure to procure WASH supplies locally, which leaves the organisation vulnerable to price inflation when there are a limited number of suppliers in a close-knit community. To overcome this challenge, NRC produces a fixed price list for WASH items in Arsal (inclusive of labour costs) based on a market survey by NRC procurement staff. Tenders are then advertised within the community with a pre-agreed price, and assessed based on contractor capacity.
- **Monitoring:** NRC staff described several improvements that have been made to the monitoring of the programme. This includes the practice of NRC staff visiting the shelters with the contractor before and after the work has been carried out, and taking photos to document conditions. The beneficiary, contractor and NRC staff member now also have to sign that the work has been properly completed, and the Zahle-based shelter coordinator then conducts monitoring visits to a 20-30% sample of shelters.

7 Annexes

7.1 Evaluation terms of reference

EVALUATION OF NRC LEBANON ARSAL SUB-STANDARD BUILDING PROGRAMME:

“Improving living conditions for vulnerable Syrian households in sub-standard buildings in Arsal through emergency shelter and wash upgrades”

WORK STATIONS: Zahle, Lebanon, with field trips

REPORTING TO: Head of Programmes

DURATION: The contract will be for 25 working days over a period of 6 weeks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background
<p>Lebanon currently hosts an estimated 1.5 million refugees from Syria, 45,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), and 270,000 Palestinian refugees (PRL). While Lebanon opened its borders to civilians fleeing conflict at the beginning of the Syrian crisis, it has become increasingly difficult to enter the country and to maintain legal stay. In January 2015, the Government of Lebanon introduced new measures that have effectively closed Lebanese borders for refugees and made it increasingly difficult for those already in Lebanon to renew or regularise their legal stay in the country. The burdensome conditions and procedures for maintaining legal stay have resulted in approximately 70% of refugees from Syria currently living without valid stay in Lebanon.</p> <p>Five years into the crisis, refugees state that the biggest challenge they face since coming to Lebanon is securing adequate and sanitary accommodation for their families. In Lebanon, almost all Syrian refugees had to find private accommodation owing to the Government's decision not to create large-scale formal camps. As a result, 18% have settled in Informal Tented Settlements (ITSs), 3% in collective centres, and 20% in Sub Standard Buildings⁸ (SSBs), including garages or rooms in unfinished buildings. The remainder are living in finished buildings. UNHCR's Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS) data illustrates that the most socio-economically vulnerable refugees are residing mainly in SSBs and ITSs. Despite the large number of refugees living in SSBs, only 36% of the 2015 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) target for weatherproofing and rehabilitation of SSBs was reached; in contrast, 91% of the target for weatherproofing of ITS was covered. Depleted savings and lack of work opportunities for all refugees means they are struggling to pay the rent, putting them at risk of eviction. NRC has noted an increasing number of disputes between refugees and landlords leading to (unlawful) evictions, where refugees have little means to defend themselves due to, among others, barriers to justice linked to lack of legal stay and absence of written lease agreements.</p> <p>In response to the Syria crisis, NRC's Shelter programme aims to improve the housing and living situation of refugees in Lebanon. NRC does this through the provision of cash grants for the rehabilitation or upgrade of housing units in unfinished or inadequate buildings, which will be brought to minimum living standards, thus increasing the housing stock. These housing units are provided rent-free for a period of one year to vulnerable households, selected among registered or refugees pending registration from Syria. The NRC Shelter programme works closely with the ICLA programme on Housing, Land and Property (HLP) issues, especially those pertaining to eviction prevention. This is the so-called Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) programme.</p>

⁸ The Lebanon Shelter Working Group defines a sub-standard building as: A structure that is physically sub-standard. Sub-Standard Building is a general category that includes: unfinished houses, dilapidated / damaged houses, converted garages/shops work sites, etc. Sub-Standard Buildings include built structures originally intended for human habitation or built structures not originally intended for human habitation but are currently occupied

In addition to this, NRC has undertaken weather proofing and WASH upgrades support to those in sub-standard buildings (scope of this evaluation) and in Informal Tented Settlements (ITS). The shelter and WASH programmes collaborate on both housing rehabilitation as well as in support to ITSs. Lastly, since early-2000, the shelter programme has been supporting the Palestinian caseload in the camps and gatherings in both the North and South of Lebanon.

1.2 NRC's Presence and Shelter activities in Arsal

The cadastral of Arsal is located in the North Eastern tip of Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, and has absorbed refugees to a level unparalleled by any other area of Lebanon. As of June 2016, there were 39,385 refugees registered (UNHCR⁹), with an estimated 29,278 living in 96 Informal Settlements. The remaining families live in rented accommodation (sub-standard or not). It has to be noted that the likely population is significantly higher due to the unregistered refugees.

As a result of the influx of refugees, existing infrastructure has been stretched to critical limits and the local population is now a minority. Social stability has also suffered, with the descent into local armed conflict and kidnappings in the Autumn of 2014 that lead to increased security measures.

In late 2012, NRC launched its Bekaa Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) Shelter Programmes in response to the Syria crisis. In total, 512 housing units (HU) were rehabilitated; however, in response to the deteriorating security situation in Arsal in the autumn of 2014, NRC suspended its activities within the area. In early January 2015, NRC resumed its sub-standard building (SSB) response, an emergency Shelter-WASH upgrade programme consisting of the distribution and installation of weatherproofing kits and WASH upgrades. Under a 2015 ECHO funded project (September 2015 until end of March 2016 – scope of this evaluation) 2,534 individuals (574 families) benefited from the SSB response, by intervening in 644 housing units (the difference in number is due to the fact that larger families occupied multiple units). Currently, as part of the 2016-17 ECHO-funded programme, NRC is supporting 2,500 families with weatherproofing kits across 29 Informal Tented Settlements (ITS) in Arsal, and 250 families in SSBs in preparation for the 2016-17 winter season.

The emergency shelter-WASH upgrade undertaken in Arsal has, understandably, less of an impact than the Occupancy Free of change (implemented in other areas of the Bekaa Valley) on the living standard for beneficiaries, and this is reflected in the post-action survey data. Outcomes monitoring has shown a 3-months occupancy rate of 90% which is a good proxy indicator that the intervention does not compromise tenure security of beneficiaries. Overall, 65% of respondents rated their satisfaction levels with assistance provided as 4/5 or higher; families also highlighted the improved access to water and sanitation as the main impact on their living standard. However, only 44% of the targeted 2015 beneficiaries reported having access to more than 35 litres per person per day and reported not having sufficient water supply for drinking, cooking, personal and domestic hygiene.

To date, the OFC programme has not been re-instated in Arsal due to concerns over not having the required stable access to the area that would ensure an accountable and transparent programme. Nonetheless, NRC remains a key shelter actor for Arsal.

1. PURPOSE OF EVALUATION AND INTENDED USE

The main purpose of the evaluation is to support programme learning around upgrading sub-standard buildings in Arsal that will provide guidance for future programme direction. The primary user of the evaluation is the NRC management team; they will use the evaluation findings to adjust programme implementation and improve its quality. Secondary users will include be the global shelter and WASH technical advisors, peer Shelter/WASH agencies, project managers, and donors (specifically ECHO).

⁹ file:///C:/Users/103222ezag/Downloads/UNHCR_LBN_REF_MAP_2016-06-30_A1_Bekaa-Baalbek_HermelGovernorateSyrianRefugeesRegisteredbyCadastral.pdf

2. SCOPE OF WORK AND LINES OF INQUIRY

3.1 Evaluation Scope

The evaluation will cover the ECHO funded shelter/ WASH rehabilitation interventions in SSBs implemented in Aarsal between September 2015 and March 2016 (a total of 644 housing units). Under this project, NRC provided support to displaced Syrians in sub-standard buildings through Weatherproofing/WASH upgrades, with the aim of improving access to Shelter, WASH and Protection rights for vulnerable refugees from Syria living in Lebanon.

In particular, this evaluation should take into consideration the major limiting factors of security and access. These two criteria critically influence NRC's capacity to adequately implement and supervise programme implementation (staffing level, no international staff member access, logistics in a high-risk security area, etc.).

3.2 Main questions

Does this intervention sufficiently contribute to meeting the shelter/WASH needs of Syrian refugees living in sub-standard buildings in Aarsal?

Sub questions:

Outcomes

- How appropriate and relevant is the NRC SSB response in Aarsal?
- What outcome has this intervention had on the refugees and, where applicable, on the host community. This includes outcomes that are both intended and unintended and that may be either positive or negative.¹⁰

Effectiveness

- Coverage and Targeting – are we reaching the right people?
- Current approach - is current programme implementation functioning? what should/could be done different or in addition to what already done to improve programme effectiveness.¹¹?
- How receptive are key stakeholders to this type of project? At a minimum this must include the perception of beneficiaries, landlords and local municipality authorities.

Efficiency

- How has NRC's Shelter/WASH programmes worked together?
- What should/could be done different or in addition to what already done to improve programme efficiency?

3. METHODOLOGY

The evaluator is invited to propose a methodological approach that directly addresses each of the questions above. As a minimum, the methodology should include a desk review of key documents, semi-structured interviews, and/or focus group discussions with shelter programme beneficiaries. Landlords, beneficiaries and municipality officials must all be incorporated into the proposed methodology.

¹⁰ At a minimum, this must include exposure to risk such as health and protection.

¹¹ Specifically, this consultancy should ensure that it examines NRC's current work with contractors (external to the landlords) that do all/the majority of the upgrading works.

Please note that there is very limited direct access for non-locals and for internationals. The consultant will have to manage this process remotely from the Zahle office with possibly a limited number of visits to Aarsal. Some NRC staff can be made available to support the evaluation as enumerators.

4. EVALUATION FOLLOW UP AND LEARNING

NRC follows up all evaluations with a management response, and its implementation is subsequently tracked. This will include the documentation of key learning which will be shared with the relevant head office technical advisor for circulation to NRC country offices.

In Lebanon the result of this evaluation will be used to inform the upcoming design of the Shelter strategy for 2017. Additionally, the evaluation will be shared with the Shelter Working Group and with relevant donors supporting NRC Shelter interventions.

This evaluation, including the case studies, will contribute to an annual learning review which feeds into annual strategic planning processes. Key findings will be reported to NRC's senior management in Oslo.

5. EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

The views expressed in the report shall be the independent and the candid professional opinion of the evaluator. The evaluation will be guided by the following ethical considerations:

- Openness – of information given, to the highest possible degree to all involved parties
- Public access – to the results when there are not special considerations against this
- Broad participation – the interested parties should be involved where relevant and possible
- Reliability and independence – the evaluation should be conducted so that findings and conclusions are correct and trustworthy

6. COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation is managed in country by the Head of Programmes who assigns a steering committee for this evaluation consisting of:

- Lebanon Shelter Specialist
- Lebanon WASH specialist
- Monitoring and Evaluation Manager

The Shelter Specialist is responsible to facilitate access to information, documentation sources, travel, and field logistics.

The Steering committee in country will oversee administration and overall coordination, including monitoring progress. The main functions of the Steering committee will be:

- To establish the Terms of Reference of the evaluation;
- Select external evaluator(s);
- Review and comment on the inception report and approve the proposed evaluation method;
- Review and comment on the draft evaluation report;
- Formulate a management response
- Establish a dissemination and utilisation strategy.

7. DELIVERABLES AND REPORTING DEADLINES

The evaluation team will submit three reports and two presentations:

- **Deliverable1: Inception report and finalised data collection tools** - Following the desk review and prior to beginning field work, the evaluation team will produce an inception report subject to approval by the NRC Evaluation Steering Committee. This report will detail a draft work plan with a summary of the primary information needs, the methodology to be used, and a work plan/schedule for field visits and major deadlines. With respect to methodology, the evaluation team will provide a description of how data will be collected and a sampling framework, data sources, and drafts of suggested data collection tools such as questionnaires and interview guides.

Once the report is finalised and accepted, the evaluation team must submit a request for any change in strategy or approach to the NRC Evaluation Steering Committee.

- **Deliverable 2: Completed data collection process and presentation of initial findings** – at the end of the field research, the evaluation team will present preliminary findings to validate and prioritise learning at the Lebanon level.
 - o **Draft final report:** A draft evaluation report will be submitted to the Evaluation Steering Committee, who will review the draft and provide feedback within two weeks of receipt of the draft report.
- **Deliverable 3: Final report accepted by NRC steering committee and all Annexes are submitted** - the Final Evaluation Report will follow NRC's standard template for evaluation reports. The final report should include an executive summary (6-page maximum) that summarises the key lessons learned and should also include best practices case studies that can be shared with NRC's technical and management staff. After the Final Evaluation Report is submitted, the evaluation team will provide a final presentation for relevant stakeholders.

NB: All material and raw data collected in the undertaking of the evaluation process should be transferred to NRC Shelter Specialist prior to the termination of the contract.

8. TIMEFRAME

Proposals should present a budget and the number of expected working days over the entire period. The consultant is expected to provide a suggested timeline and work plan for the assessment based on these scheduling parameters and in keeping with the scope of the research questions and assessment criteria.

It is estimated that there will be 25 working days in a period of 4 to 6 weeks. Breakdown is projected to be as follows:

- 1-week setup and tools and training
- 2-weeks data collection
- 1 week of data review and analysis
- 1 week of report writing

The evaluation is scheduled to start in October and fieldwork is projected tentatively in the 3rd and 4th week of October, depending on the availability of the evaluator; however, a draft report should be submitted by February, 12th 2017 and finalised by February 28, 2016.

In event of serious problems or delays, the Evaluation Consultant should immediately inform the Steering Committee. Any significant changes to review timetables shall be approved by the Steering Committee in advance.

Projected dates of Evaluation Implementation

Date	Evaluation Step / Deliverable
4 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official start of the evaluation contracting period. • Drafting of inception report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Desk review ○ Data collection tool development ○ Finalization of methodology / evaluation approach • Background documents and relevant project-related information should have already been compiled and shared with Sarah.
11 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant arrives in Lebanon
12 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of Inception Report (first draft)
16 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant Travels to Zahle (Bekaa)
17 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enumerators are trained on Tools • Tools are adjusted based on enumerator feedback • Inception report final draft
18 – 27 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field data collection
30 Jan – 3 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation data analysis
7 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Workshop Presentation of preliminary findings
10 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant departs Lebanon
12 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Report Submission: First draft
19 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Report Submission: Second draft
28 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Report Submission: Finalised draft

9. EVALUATION CONSULTANT (TEAM)

NRC seeks expressions of interest from people with the following skills/qualifications and expertise:

- Background in delivery of Shelter programmes (process rather than engineering focus)
- Understanding programming in of high risk security areas and limited access
- Social protection and other comparable experience with camp or informal settlement settings
- Demonstrated experience in conducting evaluations, particularly those focused on utilisation and programme improvement.
- Expertise in qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques.

7.2 Logical Framework for NRC shelter programming

	Country Office: Lebanon	Core Competence: Shelter	Date of this version: 9 March 2016	
	Intervention Logic	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI)	Sources of Verification (SOV)	Assumptions
RESULTS	OVERALL OBJECTIVE (IMPACT)			
	Through both advocacy and programming, NRC Lebanon's overall shelter objective is to ensure that vulnerable households in Lebanon affected by displacement have access to adequate shelter relevant to their context and needs			
	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE (OUTCOME)	Outcome	Outcome	
	<u>Emergency and transitional shelter solutions</u>	% of beneficiary households occupying single shelter units (SSUs) assigned to them after the occupancy free of charge (OFC) agreement begins (GL-SB2) ¹²	OFC monitoring visit reports - captured for each HH at each monitoring period (1, 3, 9, 11 months after OFC starts), and 3 months after the expiration of the OFC.	Host community continues to host people affected by displacement.
	Outcome Vulnerable households affected by displacement have safe and satisfactory housing options through occupancy free of charge within the host community	% of targeted households reporting satisfaction with the support received % of targeted households reporting that the OFC period helped them to improve their standard of living		Building owners honour their hosting agreements With over 70% of refugees living below the poverty line, vulnerable houses are less and less likely to be able to pay rent post OFC hosting.

¹² Disaggregation by Sex (head of household)

<p>Outcome</p> <p>Vulnerable households affected by displacement have improved shelter conditions in sub-standard buildings, or around private homes in the host community (max 3 shelters per home).</p>	<p>Outcome</p> <p>% of beneficiary households occupying housing units 3 months after emergency weather proofing and WASH upgrade installation (GL-SB2)</p> <p>% of targeted households reporting satisfaction with the support received</p>	<p>Outcome</p> <p>PDM – undertaken with WASH</p>	
<p>Outcome</p> <p>Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon (PRL) enjoy minimum standard shelter through the reconstruction of TDB and PDB, or minor rehabilitation of properties</p>	<p>Outcome</p> <p>% of beneficiary households continuing the works on their reconstructed properties assigned to them after 3 months (GL-SB2)</p> <p>% of beneficiary households occupying repaired properties assigned to them after 1 month (GL-SB2)</p> <p>% of targeted households reporting satisfaction with the support received</p>	<p>Outcome</p> <p>PDM – undertaken with WASH</p>	
<p>Outcome</p> <p>Vulnerable households affected by displacement have adequate emergency/temporary shelter conditions in the <u>Informal Tented Settlements</u></p>	<p>Outcome</p> <p>% of beneficiary households who are observed using weather proofing materials 1-month after distribution (GL-SB7)</p> <p>% of targeted households reporting satisfaction with the support received</p>	<p>Outcome</p> <p>PDM</p>	

<p>Outcome</p> <p>Vulnerable households affected by displacement have sufficient essential household items to address their acute needs during an emergency, whether <u>sub-standard buildings or ITS</u></p> <p><u>Infrastructure</u></p> <p>Outcome</p> <p>Learners from Syria and host community benefiting from improved/new learning spaces</p> <p>Outcome</p> <p>Refugees and Lebanese have access to public infrastructure.</p>	<p>Outcome</p> <p>% of households who are observed using NFIs 1-month after distribution (GL-SB7)</p> <p>% of beneficiary households reporting that NFIs or cash/voucher used for original purpose (GL-SB6)</p> <p>% of beneficiary households reporting NFIs distributed were appropriate to needs</p> <p>% of beneficiary households reporting that cash/voucher distributed were appropriate to needs.</p> <p>Outcome</p> <p>% of learning spaces built/rehabilitated during last 3 months observed to be in use for intended purpose (GL-SB3)</p> <p>% of learning spaces observed to be maintained according to MEHE standards (GL-SB4)</p> <p>Outcome</p> <p>% of infrastructures built/rehabilitated during last 3 months observed to be in use for intended purpose (GL-SB3)</p> <p>% of learning spaces observed to be maintained according to Lebanese standards (GL-SB4)</p>	<p>Outcome</p> <p>PDM</p> <p>Outcome</p> <p>PDM – undertaken with WASH</p> <p>Outcome</p> <p>PDM – undertaken with WASH</p>	
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<p>OUTPUTS</p> <p><u>Longer term shelter solutions (OFC):</u></p> <p>Output 1</p> <p>Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) hosting period is provided in a host community, whether occupied or unoccupied units</p> <p><u>Emergency and transitional shelter solutions</u></p> <p>Output 2</p> <p>Emergency/temporary shelter is provided in <u>host community</u> (i.e. T-shelters on private land, or emergency shelter-WASH upgrades)</p>	<p>Output</p> <p># OFC housing units handed over to beneficiaries (GL-S1/PM)</p> <p># Females and males receiving OFC housing units (GL-S2/PM)</p> <p># Households benefiting from OFC housing units (GL-S3/PM)</p> <p># of agreements signed with property owners</p> <p>Output</p> <p># of temporary shelters built on homeowner's land handed over (GL-S1/TM)</p> <p># of females and males receiving temporary shelters on homeowner's land (GL-S2/TM)</p> <p># of households receiving temporary shelters on homeowner's land (GL-S3/TM)</p> <p># of housing units receiving emergency weather proofing and WASH upgrades handed over (GL-S1/TM)</p> <p># of females and males receiving emergency weather proofing and WASH upgrades (GL-S2/TM)</p> <p># of households receiving emergency weather proofing and WASH upgrades (GL-S2/TM)</p>	<p>Project documentation, including signed agreements, BoQs and BoQ trackers, and beneficiary lists, where required and appropriate</p>	<p>Host community and other stakeholders remain supportive of NRC programme</p> <p>NRC staff is able to access all beneficiaries in a timely fashion</p> <p>Given the dynamic security situation, NRC continues to have adequate access to potential beneficiaries</p> <p>Government allows programming in camps and Informal Settlements</p> <p>Government, including municipalities, continues to support the housing rehabilitation model</p>
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	<p>Output</p> <p>Properties are reconstructed (TDB and PDB) or repaired (minor repairs) in the Palestinian Camps and Gatherings</p>	<p># of agreements signed with property owners</p> <p>Output</p> <p># of reconstructed properties handed over (GL-S1/PM)</p> <p># of females and males receiving reconstructed properties (GL-S2/PM)</p> <p># of households receiving reconstructed <u>properties</u> (GL-S3/PM)</p> <p># of repaired properties handed over (GL-S1/PM)</p> <p># of females and males receiving repaired properties (GL-S2/PM)</p> <p># of households receiving repaired <u>properties</u> (GL-S2/PM)</p> <p># of agreements signed with property owners</p>		
	<p>Output</p> <p>Emergency/temporary shelter is provided in <u>informal tented settlements</u></p>	<p>Output</p> <p># of <u>weather proofing kits</u> handed over (GL-S702)</p> <p># of females and males receiving <u>weather proofing kits</u> (GL-S71)</p> <p># of households receiving <u>weather proofing kits</u> (GL-S71)</p> <p># of individuals trained in shelter construction (GL-S802/TM)</p>		

<p>Output</p> <p>Essential household items, or NFIs, are provided (or cash equivalent), appropriate to the living situation or context</p>	<p>Output</p> <p># of NFI kits distributed (GL-S701/N)</p> <p># of females and males receiving NFIs (GL-S71/N)¹³</p> <p># of households receiving non-food items (GS-S72/N)</p> <p>Value of cash/vouchers distributed (GS-E96/C)</p> <p># of males and females receiving unconditional cash (GL-E91/C)</p>		
<p>Output</p> <p>Learning spaces are rehabilitated/constructed, including WASH facilities</p>	<p>Output</p> <p># of learning centres constructed/rehabilitated</p> <p># of classrooms constructed/rehabilitated (GL-S5/PMS)</p> <p># of classrooms furnished (GL-S6/SC)</p> <p># of agreements signed with property owners</p> <p># of individuals trained in shelter maintenance (school/classroom) (GL-S802/SC)</p> <p># of maintenance/repair kits distributed (GL-S702/N)</p>		

¹³ Disaggregation by response type: temporary, transitional or permanent shelter response, or stand alone.

	<p>Output</p> <p>Community level infrastructures are rehabilitated/constructed</p>	<p>Output</p> <p># of infrastructures constructed/rehabilitated (GL-S14/INF)</p> <p># of agreements signed with municipalities</p> <p># of individuals trained in Care and maintenance (GL-S802/INF)</p> <p># of maintenance/repair kits distributed</p> <p># estimated number of individuals benefiting from infrastructure provision (GL-S14/INF)</p>		
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7.3 List of people consulted for the evaluation

KEY INFORMANTS

	Name	Position	Organisation	Interview date
1.	Bassel Houjeiry	Mayor	Arsal Local Council	19/1/17
2.	Rima Kroumbi	Deputy Mayor	Arsal Local Council	19/1/17
3.	Mohamad Fleety	Humanitarian coordinator	Arsal Local Council	19/1/17
4.	Ahmad Houjeiry	Religious leader	Arsal Sharia Commission	19/1/17
5.	Talal Houjeiry	Arsal Branch Coordinator	LOST (Local NGO)	19/1/17
6.	Naji Fleety	Arsal official	Ministry of Social Affairs	19/1/17
7.	Zuhair Fleety	Arsal official	Ministry of Social Affairs	19/1/17
8.	Ahmad Kassem	Shelter Coordinator (sector lead)	UNHCR Beirut	13/1/17
9.	David Adams	WASH Coordinator (sector lead)	UNICEF Beirut	25/1/17
10.	Bobbie Baker	WASH and Shelter Officer	UNHCR Zahle/Bekaa	26/1/17
11.	Ghina Faour	Engineer/Arsal field officer	ICRC Zahle/Bekaa	26/1/17
12.	Younis Alshalwi	Delegate	ICRC Beirut	25/1/17
13.	Niamh Murnaghan	Country Director	NRC Lebanon	12/1/17
14.	Mohamad Zeinedine	Procurement Officer	NRC Beirut	12/1/17
15.	Nicolas Winn	Shelter Project Manager	NRC Bekaa	17/1/17
16.	Naji Allam	Shelter Coordinator	NRC Bekaa	19/1/17
17.	Omayma Braidy	Shelter Social Field Assistant	NRC Bekaa	19/1/17
18.	Nidal Houjeiry	Shelter Technical Field Assistant	NRC Bekaa	23/1/17
19.	Ziad Al Hindi	Shelter Technical Field Assistant	NRC Bekaa	23/1/17
20.	Nisrine Ali	Shelter Social Field Assistant	NRC Bekaa	23/1/17
21.	Karel Chromy	M&E Manager	NRC Beirut	18/1/17
22.	Jeroen Quanjer	Shelter Specialist	NRC Beirut	30/1/17
23.	Pilar Romero-Ardoy	WASH Specialist	NRC Beirut	30/1/17
24.	Tina Gewis	ICLA Specialist	NRC Beirut	31/1/17
25.	Aleksandra Todorovic	Head of Support	NRC Beirut	1/2/17

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

	Participant Type	No. of participants	Date
1.	Syrian refugee female beneficiaries: Group 1	11	24/1/17
2.	Syrian refugee male beneficiaries: Group 1	9	24/1/17
3.	Syrian refugee female beneficiaries: Group 2	9	24/1/17
4.	Syrian refugee male beneficiaries: Group 2	9	24/1/17
5.	Syrian refugee female non-beneficiaries	4	25/1/17
6.	Syrian refugee male non-beneficiaries	4	25/1/17
5.	Lebanese landlord beneficiaries	7	24/1/17
6.	Lebanese landlord non-beneficiaries (adapted to 5 separate interviews)	5	23/1/17

7.4 Discussion of methodology

Data collection tools:

Enumerator introduction (informed consent):

Hi, I'm [insert name] and I'm here as part of an independent evaluation of NRC's shelter/WASH upgrade program for Syrian refugees in Aarsal. The program included activities such as sealing windows and doors to improve security and protection from the weather, and installing toilets and wash basins to improve hygiene. We would like to gather your feedback about the program, particularly about the time between September 2015 and March 2016. [For non-beneficiaries] If you are not familiar with the program, we would still like your views on the general situation.

We would like your honest opinion so that NRC can improve its work here in Aarsal. Your name will not be recorded. Participation is entirely voluntary and will not affect your ability to receive aid from NRC. The focus group will take no more than one hour. Is it OK if I start?

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide: NRC staff and partners

1. Compared to other areas hosting Syrian refugees in Lebanon, how would you describe the shelter, WASH and general humanitarian situation in Aarsal?
2. Do you think the Aarsal SSB programme was an appropriate and relevant response? Why/why not?

3. During programme implementation, what do you think the effects (including positive and negative, intended and unintended) were on the refugees?
4. What do you think the effects of the programme were on the host community (includes Lebanese landlord beneficiaries and other community members?)
5. If the Aرسال SSB programme stopped tomorrow, what impact do you think this would have on refugees and the host community?
6. Please describe the process of selecting beneficiaries for the Aرسال SSB programme.
7. In your opinion, did the right people receive assistance? Why/why not?
8. Please describe the programme implementation process of:
 - a) Assessing what emergency rehabilitation work is needed
 - b) Procuring and bringing the necessary materials
 - c) Arranging for a contractor to install the materials
 - d) Checking that the emergency upgrade has been successfully completed
 - e) Following up with the beneficiaries on their social needs
9. What do you think have been the biggest achievements of the Aرسال SSB programme so far? Can you give an example?
10. Looking back, can you think of any 'lessons learned' – ways that the Aرسال SSB programme has improved due to past experience? [More specifically for NRC shelter staff] Please explain the changes made between ECHO 1407 and ECHO 1503 (including advantages and disadvantages of using contractors to install upgrades instead of the refugees doing it themselves)
11. Looking forward, which aspects of the programme do you think could/should be improved? Can you give an example?
12. How would you improve the programme? (Please offer specific suggestions)
13. What kind of feedback have you had from beneficiaries, landlords and local municipality officials about the Aرسال SSB programme? Please give examples.
14. What was the level of coordination of the Aرسال SSB programme with the Aرسال ITS programme?
15. What was the level of coordination between the NRC and other shelter actors working in Aرسال? (and is Aرسال well-served by other humanitarian agencies in relation to the needs?)
16. Do you have any suggestions for how we could improve coordination and programme efficiency?
17. Overall, is there anything I've left out that you think it's important to know about the Aرسال SSB programme?

KII Guide: Aرسال municipal officials

1. Can you tell us how many Syrian refugees are currently in Aرسال (compared to how many Lebanese?)
2. Please describe the current general humanitarian and housing situation for Syrian refugees.

3. Please describe the effect of the Syrian refugee crisis on Lebanese people in Arsal.
4. What are the biggest challenges that Syrian refugees face with housing?
5. What are the biggest challenges for the host community, especially regarding housing (could be either Lebanese landlords or other community members)?

Arsal SSB programme [ask these questions if respondent is aware of the programme]:

6. What did you think of the NRC programme to offer emergency shelter/WASH upgrades? What were the effects on refugees and local people? Please give an example.
7. What would be the effects (if any) on the refugees and host community if the NRC SSB programme stopped tomorrow?
8. What do you think is the most useful thing NGOs could be doing here in Arsal to improve the shelter and WASH situation for Syrian refugees living in sub-standard buildings?
9. How well do you think NRC is coordinating with the municipality and other NGOs conducting shelter activities in Arsal? How could the level of coordination be improved?
10. Is there any important issue about shelter that we haven't covered?

Ask these questions if the respondent is NOT aware of the Arsal SSB program:

1. In principle, what do you think of the idea of NRC carrying out small improvements to buildings where Syrian refugees are living? For example, this can include sealing windows and doors to improve security and make it warmer in winter, or installing toilets. We buy the bathroom materials locally and Lebanese contractors install them.
2. Is there anything else you want to tell us relating to the issue of Syrian refugees renting basic accommodation here in Arsal?

KII Guide: Arsal community leaders

1. Please describe the current housing situation for refugees and for local people in Arsal (for example: what are the general standards like and what are the challenges?)
2. Please describe the relations between refugees and local people (both landlords and others) in Arsal.
3. When it comes to shelter, are there any groups in Arsal that are particularly disadvantaged? E.g. female-headed Syrian refugee households?

Arsal SSB programme [ask these questions if respondent is aware of the programme]:

4. [If they are aware of the NRC Arsal SSB programme] Do you think the process of selecting beneficiaries was fair and transparent? Are we reaching those most in need?
5. What do you think the effects (both positive and negative) of the programme are on refugees and locals? Please give an example.
6. If NRC stopped its SSB programme Arsal tomorrow, what would be the effect on refugees and the host community?
7. How do you think NRC could improve the Arsal SSB programme next time?

8. On the issue of shelter in Arsal, how do you think NRC could improve coordination with the local community and other NGOs?
9. Is there anything else you want to tell us related to the Arsal SSB programme or to shelter?

Ask these questions if the respondent is NOT aware of the Arsal SSB programme:

10. In principle, what do you think of the idea of NRC carrying out small improvements to buildings in Arsal where Syrian refugees are living? For example, this can include sealing windows and doors to improve security and make it warmer in winter, or installing toilets. We buy the bathroom materials locally and Lebanese contractors install them.
11. Is there anything else you want to tell us relating to the issue of Syrian refugees renting basic accommodation here in Arsal?

Focus Group Guide: Syrian Refugee Beneficiaries

1. How would you describe your housing situation? What are the biggest challenges? (including for females, children, older refugees, disabled)
2. How would you describe your relations with Lebanese people in Arsal? (landlords/local authorities/host community and neighbours/ordinary people)
3. What did NRC do to improve your shelter? (Did it have any effect on your living conditions? How/Why/why not?) (NOTE FOR EACH PERSON)
4. SATISFACTION: On a scale of 1 to 5 (one being 'terrible,' and five 'excellent') how would you rate your satisfaction with the NRC programme? Please explain the main reasons for your rating. (SCORE 1-5 + OPEN QUESTION. ASK EACH FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT AND WRITE DOWN THEIR SCORE AND EXPLANATION USE THE SAME DESCRIPTION E.G. "Person 1" TO WRITE DOWN THE ANSWERS TO THE NEXT QUESTION)
5. CONTINUED RESIDENCE: Please describe:
 - Are you still living in the same shelter? (YES/NO)
 - IF YES, why did you choose to stay? (OPEN QUESTION)
 - IF NO, when did you leave? (MONTH/YEAR; SEASON/YEAR)
 - IF NO, why did you leave? (OPEN QUESTION)
6. Did the NRC programme have any effect on your relationship with the landlord, or the amount of rent you pay?
7. Please describe the process of applying for and receiving shelter assistance with NRC.
8. Was the process of applying for shelter assistance with NRC fair? (Why/why not? Who in the community is missing out?)
9. What do you think NRC should be doing to improve the programme?
10. Currently NRC is hiring contractors to install the materials (e.g. washbasins), but would you prefer to do it yourself? Why/why not?
11. Is there any other important issue about the programme that we haven't covered?

Focus Group Guide: Syrian refugee non-beneficiaries

1. How would you describe your housing situation? What are the biggest challenges with your living conditions? (including for females, children, older refugees, disabled)

2. How would you describe your relations with Lebanese people in Arsal? (landlords/local authorities/ordinary people)
3. When there is a problem like a leaking roof or broken toilet in your house, how does this affect your life? How do you find solutions?
4. Have you ever applied for shelter support with NRC? Please describe the process.
5. Are you aware of any shelter services in Arsal for Syrian refugees? Please describe.
6. If you received assistance from an NGO such as plastic sheeting for your roof or new washbasins or toilets, would you prefer that the NGO just gave you the materials to install yourself or that they brought a Lebanese contractor to do it?
7. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us related to shelter?

Focus Group Guide: Lebanese landlord beneficiaries

1. Please describe the building that you are renting to Syrian refugees (e.g. barn, apartment)
2. Do you face any challenges with renting to Syrian refugees?
3. What effect did the NRC intervention have?
4. What do you think worked well, and what didn't?
5. What could we do to improve the programme?
6. If the Arsal SSB project was stopped tomorrow, what effect would this have?
7. Would you recommend renting buildings to Syrian refugees to other Lebanese landlords?
8. Anything else that's important for us to know?

Focus Group Guide: Lebanese landlord non-beneficiaries

1. Please describe the building that you are renting to Syrian refugees (e.g. barn, apartment)
 2. Do you face any challenges with renting to Syrian refugees?
 3. What effect did the NRC intervention have?
 4. What do you think worked well, and what didn't?
 5. What could we do to improve the programme?
 6. Do you need any emergency assistance to improve the property you are renting to Syrian refugees? What kind of assistance?
 7. Are you willing to continue hosting/renting to Syrian refugees? Why/why not?
 8. Anything else that's important for us to know?
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7.5 Challenges faced during data collection:

- *Lack of information due to small programme size:* One of the biggest challenges with this evaluation was that SSB is essentially an off-shoot of the core NRC shelter programme, and is only implemented in one (relatively remote) location in Lebanon. It evolved largely as an ad-hoc response to the situation in Arsal. Security and access challenges made the main OFC programme too high-risk to continue, so NRC started the SSB programme as it did not want to pull out of Arsal altogether due to the high level of humanitarian need. As a result, there were limited programme records available for the desk review specifically focusing on SSB, and many key informants did not have detailed knowledge of the programme or the situation on the ground in Arsal. To adapt to this challenge, the evaluator routinely adapted the NRC staff and partner KII guide to suit the knowledge and experience of each key informant.
- *Staff turnover:* Related to the above, only a limited number of NRC staff could speak to the history of the SSB programme and lessons learned.
- *No current SSB programme implementation:* As the latest cycle of the Arsal SSB programme had finished, it was not possible for the evaluation team to accompany the shelter team on site visits to observe programme implementation first-hand.
- *Survey fatigue:* Beneficiaries had reportedly expressed frustration at the length of the June 2016 WASH PDM telephone survey, which contained more than 100 questions. To avoid this issue, data collection tools for this evaluation were kept as succinct as possible, and respondents were advised in the introduction that they were free to leave at any time.
- *Conflict sensitivity:* The situation in Arsal is tense due to the high proportion of refugees and effects of the Syrian crisis on the host community. To avoid publicising aid efforts for Syrian refugees while Lebanese people are also struggling economically, quantitative data collection with host community members was avoided and beneficiary landlords were separated from non-beneficiaries in focus groups.
- *Security:* The security situation was relatively good during the data collection period, but as an international the evaluator was advised to restrict her presence in Arsal to one to two days. NRC security rules stipulate that all staff must leave Arsal by 3pm, which (along with the 3-hour return trip from the Zahle office) limited the daily window for data collection. Another security-related restriction was that due to residents' fears about the use of GPS, electronic devices could not be used to record interviews or conduct surveys.
- *Demand bias:* While it is an issue in all evaluations that beneficiaries may avoid voicing criticism for fear of reducing their chances of receiving further aid, demand bias was a particular risk in this underserved location. To minimise this challenge, enumerators carefully explained to focus group participants that their feedback was anonymous and designed to improve programme quality in the future.
- *Data collection environment:* All focus groups and most KIIs with Arsal community leaders were conducted in the NRC's Arsal office, which was extremely busy with refugees coming in to ask how to apply for assistance. Due to the lack of a receptionist, refugees would enter directly into offices where focus groups were being conducted and additional refugees would try to join focus groups. To ensure the integrity of the sample in beneficiary focus groups, the evaluation team did a roll call to ensure that those attending were the correct participants.

7.6 Team biographies

Sarah Drury, Independent Evaluator: Sarah is an M&E and research consultant specialised in the Middle East. She has managed evaluations of cross-border Syria programming with Adam Smith International and Integrity Global in Gaziantep, Turkey, and conducted research for the Brookings Institution on the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on neighbouring countries. She holds a Masters in Arab Studies and a Certificate in Refugee and Humanitarian Emergencies from Georgetown University in Washington D.C., and studied Arabic in Damascus for two years prior to 2011.

Ezzat Agha, NRC M&E Technical Specialist: Ezzat is based in the NRC's Bekaa field office and managed the field coordination and enumerator training for this evaluation.

Omar Modallali, NRC M&E Assistant: Omar led the men's focus groups and Aarsal community leader KIIs for this evaluation. He holds a full-time position in the NRC Bekaa field office and has previously worked for three years with Save the Children.

Rosette Tannoury, Enumerator: Rosette works on a freelance basis for the NRC M&E department in the Bekaa Field Office in Zahle, and led the women's focus groups. She has also worked for World Vision's M&E team. Her previous professional background is in accounting.

Wael Nahhas, Enumerator: Wael also as a freelancer for the NRC M&E team. Previous projects include conducting focus groups for an evaluation of an NRC education project. He is a volunteer with the Lebanese Red Cross ambulance and emergency team and has previously worked in the hospitality field.

Yara Kazoun, Enumerator: Yara is also a freelance M&E officer with NRC's Zahle office. She has worked with the Lebanese Red Cross's Disaster Management Unit and as a teacher for the Libanel Institute.



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