



# DISPLACED SYRIANS IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS WITHIN SYRIA AND IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

Regional Thematic Report

August 2014

## SUMMARY

Millions of Syrians have now fled their homes in search of safety as the conflict inside the country enters its fourth year. There are currently an estimated 6.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside Syria<sup>1</sup> and another 2.7 million are believed to have left the country. Many displaced Syrian households have integrated into host communities or settled in formally established camps – but a large proportion of displaced Syrians has resorted to living in informal settlements within Syria and in neighbouring countries.<sup>2</sup>

**Informal settlements will remain a feature of the regional Syria crisis as it gets more protracted.** Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries who are unable to afford living costs in host communities and are reluctant to live in official camps due to intra-communal tensions and security concerns, are left with no alternative options. In this context, **there is an urgent need to understand the specificities of informal settlements** both in Syria and neighbouring countries. To address this need, REACH has developed a regional overview of primary and secondary data on informal settlements to support the response for settlement populations.

This regional thematic report presents an analysis of available household level data collected by REACH across five governorates and 87 settlements in Jordan, and key informant data collected in three governorates and 62 settlements inside Syria. This data was collected within the framework of partnerships with the United Nations' Fund for Children (UNICEF) and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). REACH primary data was complemented with the most recent secondary data available on informal settlements in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

**High proportions of displaced Syrian households are staying in informal settlements within Syria and in neighbouring countries.** Findings indicate that in Jordan, northern Lebanon and northern Syria<sup>3</sup>, the total informal settlements population is estimated to be 172,000; at 510 sites and 94,841 individuals, the largest number of settlements was found to be in Lebanon, based on UNHCR data. No information was available about potential informal settlements hosting Syrian refugees in Turkey and Egypt, while very little information is available about settlements that are known to exist in southern Syria. Large proportions of settlement populations are aged less than 18 years old, pointing to the importance of children's need to be mainstreamed across all aid programming for informal settlements.

**Displaced Syrian households staying in informal settlements appear more vulnerable and less resilient than those who live in official camps or within host communities.** In general, informal settlements are affected by poorer sanitation and housing infrastructure, intermittent or non-existent basic service provision and given their often geographic remoteness, receive minimal, if any, humanitarian assistance<sup>4</sup>. Whilst important differences were found in access to shelter between countries, the quality of shelter infrastructure is inadequate overall, with makeshift shelters evident across the region. The prevalence of medical ailments such as diarrhoea, skin disease and fever, was disproportionately concentrated amongst children under 5 and minors in general and poor sanitation infrastructure and water provision were found to contribute to this. Although livelihoods were found to be a key determinant of site selection and settlement longevity, access to income generating opportunities proved to be intermittent and constantly hampered by effectively non-existent labour and social protection rights.

**This regional analysis aims to enable aid actors to better target and plan assistance programmes for displaced Syrian populations staying in informal settlements,** taking into account their specific needs and vulnerabilities. It comprises an overview of assessed settlement populations, followed by sector-specific findings related to Education, Food, Health, Livelihoods, Shelter, and Water, Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH).

<sup>1</sup> Found at: <http://syria.unocha.org/>

<sup>2</sup> The exact figure at the time of writing was 2,709,605, with 136,512 in Egypt; 219,579 in Iraq; 589,792 in Jordan; 714,552 in Turkey; and 1,029,473 in Lebanon (UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response portal. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, last accessed 26 April 2014)

<sup>3</sup> Data collection was conducted across 62 settlements in the governorates of Aleppo, Al Hasakeh and Idleb.

<sup>4</sup> This is based on key informant interviews and field observations; for example, aside from WFP assistance and *ad hoc* WASH assistance in certain settlements in Al Mafraq, Jordan, official humanitarian assistance is minimal. In Lebanon, UNHCR Shelter Updates indicate that shelter weatherproofing is on-going and that WFP assistance is readily available for all registered refugees.

## CONTENTS

<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Abbreviations and acronyms.....	3
Geographical classifications.....	3
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Defining informal settlements.....	5
Data collection, analysis and limitations.....	5
<b>FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Settlement population .....	7
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene .....	7
Food security.....	8
Health.....	9
Education.....	11
Livelihoods.....	11
Shelter.....	12
Land and Services .....	12
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>14</b>

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IS	Informal Settlement
RRP	Regional Response Plan
SHARP	Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

## GEOGRAPHICAL CLASSIFICATIONS

Governorate	Across the region, the highest administrative boundary below the national level.
District	Governorates are divided into districts

## MAPS

Map 1: Location and population of refugees and IDPs in informal settlements .....	6
---	---

### About REACH

REACH is a joint initiative of two international non-governmental organizations - ACTED and IMPACT Initiatives - and the UN Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT). REACH's mission is to strengthen evidence-based decision making by aid actors through efficient data collection, management and analysis before, during and after an emergency. By doing so, REACH contributes to ensuring that communities affected by emergencies receive the support they need. All REACH activities are conducted in support to and within the framework of inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms.

In support of the response to the regional Syria Crisis, REACH established in 2012 a regional team in Amman, Jordan, as well as country-level teams in Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey. Applying a collaborative approach, REACH teams are undertaking sector specific and multi-sector assessments in camps, informal settlements and host communities to identify the needs and challenges of populations affected by the Syrian crisis, with the aim to inform the response provided by local, national and international aid actors.

For more information about REACH and to access our information products on the Syrian crisis, please visit: [www.reach-initiative.org](http://www.reach-initiative.org). You can also write to us at: [geneva@reach-initiative.org](mailto:geneva@reach-initiative.org) and follow us @REACH\_info.

## INTRODUCTION

There are currently an estimated 6.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside Syria<sup>5</sup>. The total number of these IDPs who are living in informal settlements is currently unknown. REACH data gathered in 62 settlements across the northern governorates of Aleppo, Al Hassakeh and Idlib, indicated that more than 70,000<sup>6</sup> IDPs were living in informal settlements. In addition to this, there are indications that numerous informal settlements exist in the southern governorates of Syria.<sup>7</sup> The Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster<sup>8</sup> is currently not accessing these areas, which leaves settlements in these locations outside the scope of ongoing common response strategies. The CCCM cluster identifies informal settlements to provide assistance and services, hence any settlement not yet acknowledged is effectively excluded from any common response strategies.

Around 102,000<sup>9</sup> Syrian refugees are believed to live in informal settlements across Jordan and Lebanon. In Jordan, this figure amounted to more than 7,000<sup>10</sup> in April 2014, representing a 113% increase in the number of informal settlement residents since December 2013, according to longitudinal analysis of UNICEF/REACH data<sup>11</sup>. Overall, the informal settlement population in Jordan amounts to 1.2% of all registered Syrian refugees residing in Jordan. The proportion is higher in Lebanon, where a survey conducted by UNHCR in February 2014 found that 13% of registered refugees, or approximately 94,841 individuals, live in informal settlements<sup>12</sup>.

Informal settlements are predicted to remain a feature of the protracted regional Syrian crisis. Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries who are unable to afford living costs in host communities and are reluctant to live in official camps due to intra-communal tensions and security concerns<sup>13</sup>, are left with few alternative options. Increasing reports of government-approved evictions across both Lebanon and Jordan – resulting from escalating tensions between the refugee and host communities, security concerns and a will to maintain a coherent registrar of their respective refugee populations – is a further indication of the extreme challenges facing this vulnerable group of Syrian refugees<sup>14</sup>. Internally displaced Syrians that have sought refuge in informal settlements are reportedly living in highly precarious situations. Qualitative data key informant data collected by REACH indicates that informal settlements are often disparate since this enables mobility and protection from shelling. Tightly clustered settlements are believed to represent a convenient target for regime and opposition forces.

Overall, there is an urgent need to understand the specificities of informal settlements both in Syria and neighbouring countries. This report aims to address this need by providing a regional overview of available primary and secondary data on informal settlements, to better inform humanitarian actors of the particular vulnerabilities and needs of settlement populations within Syria and neighbouring countries.

<sup>5</sup> Found at: <http://syria.unocha.org/>

<sup>6</sup> The assessment estimated the total population of assessed camps to include 71,124 individuals.

<sup>7</sup> This is indicated by data collected by REACH that is currently pending permission to release by partner.

<sup>8</sup> The overall goal of the CCCM Cluster is to improve living conditions of internally displaced persons by facilitating the effective provision of protection and services in camps and camp-like settings, advocate for durable solutions and ensure organized closure and phase-out of camps upon the IDPs' relocation, return, resettlement or local integration. The Cluster primarily supports all IDP operations in which the CCCM Cluster has been activated. IS support also extends to any IDP operation without a formally activated CCCM cluster but which has camp or camp-like IDP population. Found at: <http://www.globalccmcluster.org/about/who-we-are>

<sup>9</sup> Estimated total Syrian refugees living in informal settlements was 129,938. 94,841 in Lebanon (UNHCR, March 2014 IS density map) and 7,028 in Jordan (UNICEF/REACH, April 2014)

<sup>10</sup> 7,028 as of April 2014

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF/REACH (December 2013): "Informal Tented Settlements in Jordan: A Multi-Sector, Baseline Assessment" and UNICEF/REACH: "Informal Tented Settlements in Jordan: A Multi-sector Needs Assessment Report".

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR March 2014, Lebanon IS density map.

<sup>13</sup> There is a general perception that intra-communal and sectarian tensions in Al Za'atari camp in Jordan – which is largely populated by people from Dara'a Governorate in Syria – contribute to families and households from other governorates leaving the camp.

<sup>14</sup> (RRP6 326).

## METHODOLOGY

### DEFINING INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

There is no consensus about what actually constitutes an “informal settlement” either in policy-making or academic circles. For the purpose of this analysis, REACH used the generic definition published by the UN Habitat Programme: “unplanned settlements and areas where housing is not in compliance with current planning and building regulations”. Although useful, it does not address the full spectrum of factors which lead to the establishment of informal settlements within the context of the Syria crisis.

In the context of the proposed analysis, informal settlements are best understood in terms of two inter-related factors: a) settlement size<sup>15</sup> and b) the land tenure pattern, both of which interact to determine welfare and vulnerability outcomes across settlements. In Jordan and Lebanon, for instance, REACH used a standardised settlement size of *four* households to determine target settlements. In Syria, this was understandably different due to the on-going conflict and the key informant methodology that REACH used, meaning that only the largest collectives of IDPS forming settlements were included in data collection. Informal settlements were here distinguished from formal camps by not yet being accessed by the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, which leaves them outside of the scope of common humanitarian response strategies. For this reason, northern governorates were largely excluded from data collection<sup>16</sup>, given that humanitarian activity has been primarily concentrated to these, targeting camp-like settlements located near the border.

Whilst settlement *size* was a necessity in terms of programmatic needs<sup>17</sup>, the definition is best understood in terms of land tenure patterns which are unique to each settlement. Here, effectively non-existent land and labour rights, the lack of official cost-recovery mechanisms for the utilisation of municipal services as well as minimal social protection under the law mean that settlements are necessarily transient by nature and settlement locations are often determined by the availability of income generating activities and the availability of access to municipal services. As such, once either are unavailable or exhausted, settlements may migrate to other areas once residents determine where access to these can be re-established.

### DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND LIMITATIONS

The analysis in this report focuses on governorates in northern Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, as no information regarding Syrian refugee informal settlements in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), Turkey and Egypt were available at the time of this report. The analysis is based on household level data collected by REACH across five governorates and 87 settlements in Jordan, and key informant data collected in three governorates and 62 settlements in Syria. This primary data is complemented with the most recent secondary data from Lebanon, in addition to Syria and Jordan, to provide the most comprehensive overview possible. A list of the secondary data sources used for this analysis is included at the end of the report.

Where available, the analysis presented here is derived from primary data collected by REACH across the target countries. Whilst this is the first attempt at consolidation of data on informal settlements across the crisis and the coverage of the primary data is regional, differences in methodology, targeted sectors and geographical coverage *between countries* remain, meaning that the comparability of data is not always consistent. For instance in Jordan, a multi-sectoral, household-level census allowed REACH to conduct comprehensive statistical analyses of findings whilst in Lebanon and northern Syria, the reliance on key informants as well as differences between data collection tools<sup>18</sup> meant that statistically significant comparisons could not be conducted across all sectors. As such, secondary data was used, where appropriate, to supplement information gaps and ensure a holistic analysis.

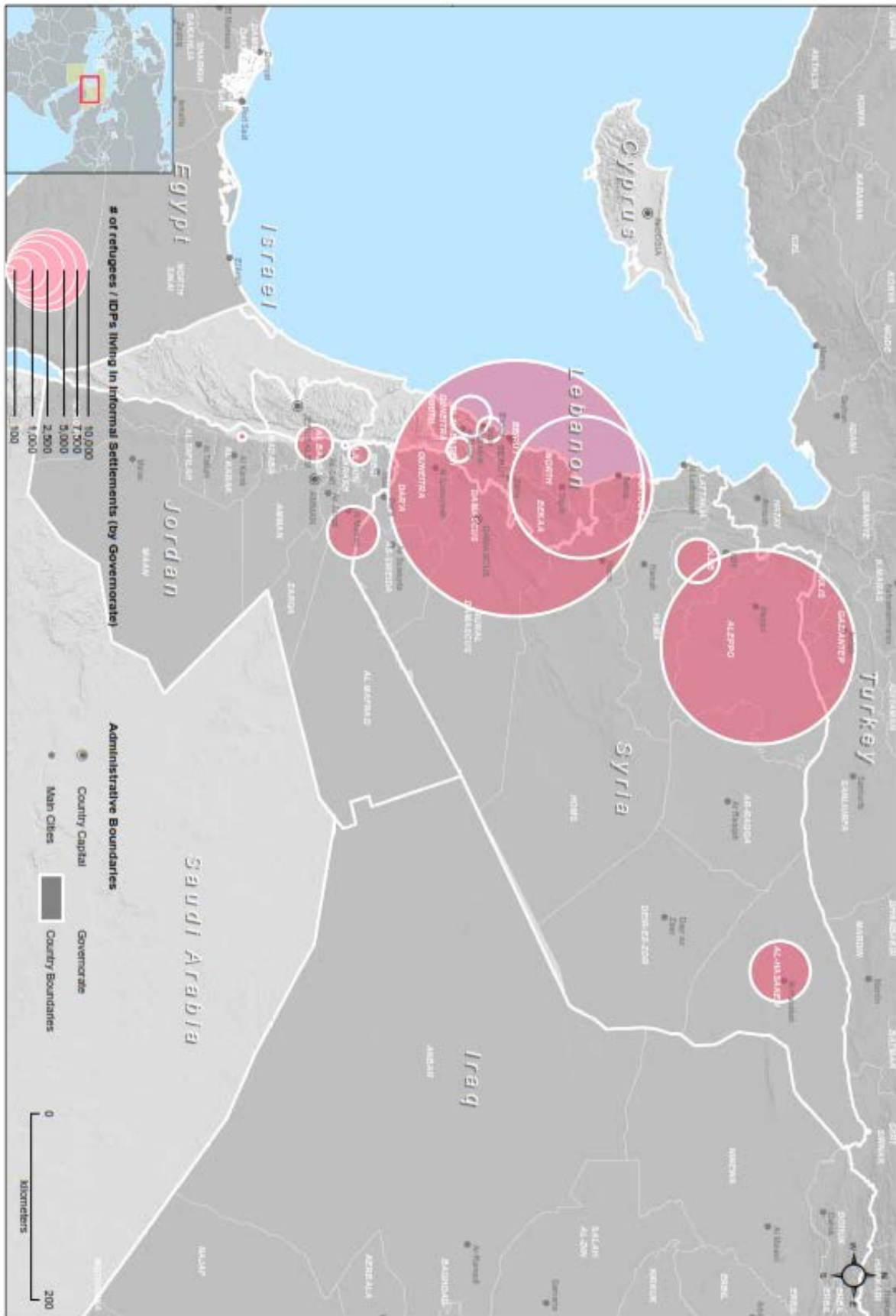
<sup>15</sup> Which varies according to programmatic needs of humanitarian organisations.

<sup>16</sup> With the exception of Jarablus Governorate

<sup>17</sup> Smaller settlements are more mobile and therefore more difficult to track and deliver assistance to, hence the regional standard of four households.

<sup>18</sup> The data collection tools which were used across these countries were designed in-country in coordination with partners and stakeholders, meaning that needs, and therefore the questions asked of respondents, were understandably different.

Map 1: Location and population of refugees and IDPs in informal settlements



## FINDINGS

This section provides an overview of the key characteristics, challenges and need faced by informal settlement populations in northern Jordan, northern Syria and Lebanon; including demographics, WASH, food security, health, education, livelihoods, shelter, land and services.

### SETTLEMENT POPULATION

**Informal settlement sizes vary widely across the region, with the largest settlements located in Syria.**

In northern Syria, settlement sizes were markedly larger than elsewhere in the region, with the number of families being on average 191 per settlement<sup>19</sup>. In Jordan, the average number of households was 13,<sup>20</sup> although the deviation from this average was considerable with settlements hosting up to 30 households found to be common across all assessed governorates. Given the sheer scale of the IDP crisis in northern Syria, this observable difference between settlement sizes could be partly attributed to the use of clustering as a coping mechanism to overcome acute needs and service gaps inside conflict-affected areas. UNHCR figures from Lebanon estimate the number of informal settlements hosting Syrian refugees to be approximately 510 sites,<sup>21</sup> primarily located in the Beka'a Valley and the northern regions. A survey coordinated by UNHCR in March 2014 found that 13% of registered refugees, or approximately 94,841 individuals across 14,777 households, live in informal settlements. This translates to an average settlement size of approximately 30 households per assessed settlement.

Findings from informal settlements in Jordan indicate an equal male to female ratio (1:1), with a high proportion of children aged less than 18 (54%). Approximately 3% of informal settlement residents were found to be living with a disability<sup>22</sup>, amounting to 214 individuals. Detailed data on household demographics was not located for informal settlements in Lebanon and Syria at the time of the report.

UNICEF/REACH data from April 2014 indicates that an estimated 1.3% of IS residents are not registered in Jordan. Although minor, this still means that approximately 91 Syrian refugees are not entitled to the services or the assistance that a registration document carries. Although there are an estimated 48,351 unregistered Syrian refugees in Lebanon, REACH could not locate any data on the proportion of unregistered refugees that live in informal settlements.

### WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

**WASH infrastructure was found to be severely inadequate across the region as a whole and open defecation appears to be widespread, laying the ground for long term public health problems.**

In Jordan and Lebanon, cyclical migration and/or displacement patterns and limited financial resources reduce incentives to invest in sanitation infrastructure. Furthermore, private water vendors are the primary source of drinking, washing and cooking water for the majority of assessed settlements across the region and without access to sanitised water storage facilities, there appears to be a correlation between the consumption of this water and the prevalence of diarrhoea amongst settlement residents.

<sup>19</sup> 62 settlements were assessed, hosting an estimated 71,124 individuals. Although REACH did not collect population data at the individual level, the number of families found to reside in each settlement was recorded. This was then multiplied by the regional average family size of 6 to yield the figure of 71,124.

<sup>20</sup> Given the proximity of certain clusters of settlements, REACH used GIS capacity to apply a buffer of 400m around settlements found to be in close proximity to each other in order to facilitate the targeting of interventions and prevent the exclusion of smaller settlements from assistance programmes. 87 settlements were identified using this method, including a total of 7,028 individuals and 1,169 households.

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR "Lebanon IS Density Map", March 2014

<sup>22</sup> Including physical, mental, visual or auditory disabilities



In Syria, approximately 48% of all assessed settlements reported not having access to functional latrines, thus pointing to an acute need for sanitation infrastructure provision. In Jordan, 12% of settlements were found to have no access to latrines. However, across all settlements, 57% of households reported no access to private or communal latrines<sup>23</sup>. Amongst the remaining 43% of households that reported access, 22% were found to have access to communal latrines<sup>24</sup>. Latrine access was higher in informal settlements in the Zgharta and Minieh-Denniyeh districts of northern Lebanon, where only 7% of households reported practicing open defecation, whilst 28% were using private latrines and 65% used communal latrines<sup>25</sup>.

The extreme variation in level of access was particularly apparent across settlements in northern Syria. A mere 303 latrines were reported as functional across a total of 14 settlements which in turn translates to 35 individuals per functioning latrine across all assessed settlements *where functional latrines were reported to exist*. This, however, conceals considerable inequalities across individual settlements. For instance, 56% (or a total of 170) of functional latrines were found in one of the settlements that reported latrines, whilst the remaining 133 functioning latrines were scattered across the remaining 13 settlements.

Regional comparison suggests that access to sanitation infrastructure is profoundly inadequate across settlements in all three countries and even when present, overcrowding and overuse are clearly widespread. Moreover, the extreme inter and intra-settlement inequalities which emerge from the data indicate that equitable access is effectively non-existent even amongst those settlements which report having latrine infrastructure.

Findings at the regional level indicate that private water vendors are the primary source of drinking, washing and cooking water for the majority of assessed settlements. In Jordan, 53% of households reported private vendors as their primary source of cooking, drinking and washing water<sup>26</sup>, and 34% relied on municipal connections as their primary sources of water for the household. This represents a marked shift amongst IS in Jordan where, at 14%, previous UNICEF/REACH data placed the proportion of IS households relying on municipal connections considerably lower in December 2013. This increase in reliance on municipal connections may be a coping strategy applied by households due to intermittent water provision which was comparatively higher in December 2013.

In stark contrast, only 2% of households assessed by Solidarités International in northern Lebanon reported using private vendors as their primary source and 38% had access to municipal connections, 33% relied on water from fixed sources such as boreholes and wells and 17% relied on store or market bought bottled water<sup>27</sup>. In northern Syria, trucked in water was designated as the primary water source for an estimated 70% of settlements. Similar to Jordan, water from a fixed source was the most frequently reported secondary source for an additional 70% of settlements. As with food sources, diversification of water sources may ensure that settlement residents are better placed to absorb shocks or interruptions to the provision of the service.

## FOOD SECURITY

**Food emerged as one of the most acute unmet needs across informal settlements at regional level, although the level of humanitarian assistance reaching Syrian refugees in settlements varied considerably.**

In Jordan, 41% of settlement households were reportedly food insecure and FCS analyses indicate pervasive micronutrient deficiencies. In Lebanon, 82% of households across 46 settlements in northern Lebanon reported removing essential food items such as meat from their diets.

<sup>23</sup> Indicating a potentially high incidence of open defecation.

<sup>24</sup> Based on field observations, communal latrines are shared by multiple households or by the entire settlement, although this depends on IS size.

<sup>25</sup> Solidarités International, "Lebanon IS Vulnerability Assessment Report", August 2013

<sup>26</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that IS residents in Jordan do not, or do not have the resources to, distinguish between drinking and cooking/washing water.

<sup>27</sup> Solidarités International, "Lebanon IS Vulnerability Assessment Report", August 2013

In Jordan, 62% reported WFP assistance as their primary source of food. Despite this, 62% of households relying primarily on WFP assistance also reported buying food on credit and/or borrowing food from family and neighbours to cope with shortages in the 30 days prior to the assessment. Key informant interviews indicate that the large distances from some settlements to food distribution points form a major barrier in accessing assistance for households in remote locations in Jordan. Furthermore, findings indicate that in Jordan, 41% of informal settlement households had an "Acceptable" Food Consumption Score and 59% were classified as "Poor" or "Borderline". In Al Za'atari, however, REACH data found that 95% of households had an acceptable Food Consumption Score. This indicates a wide gap in access to food between official and non-official camp settings in the country.

The urgency of need for food assistance amongst informal settlements in northern Syria was reflected by 70% of settlements identifying food assistance as their primary priority, whilst 90% of settlements considered it to fall within their top three priorities. According to REACH data, over the course of 2014, food assistance needs have consistently received the highest degrees of prioritisation by key informant respondents from northern Syria. Access to food assistance was dramatically lower compared to Jordan. Findings indicate that only 7% of individuals in northern Syria settlements had received food distributions. This may be an indication of the fluid front lines of the conflict which often block food deliveries<sup>28</sup>. Similar emphasis was placed on food needs across settlements assessed by Solidarités International in northern Lebanon, where 41% of households reported food assistance as a primary need<sup>29</sup>.

This was despite reports of regular access to WFP assistance. At present, REACH has no data on the % of households accessing WFP assistance in informal settlements in Lebanon.

Overall, negative coping strategies in the face of food shortages were reported across Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. In Syria, 70% of settlements reported IDPs resorting to negative coping strategies; of these, 67% indicated that settlement residents resorted to selling household items and personal belongings to meet basic food needs. Even amongst settlements that reported receiving food assistance, settlement residents resorted to begging and borrowing money for food, thus indicating that the supply of food – through distributions or otherwise – remains insufficient. Households in informal settlements across Jordan were also reporting use of coping strategies. 80% of households reported borrowing money or purchasing food on credit over the course of the 30 days prior to the assessment and 31% of these households in turn also reported the sale of household and personal assets. In Lebanon, 82% of households reported removing food items from their diet. This included 68% of assessed households that reported cutting back on the consumption of meat.

## HEALTH

Health problems amongst informal settlement residents were found to be widespread across the region and overall, **minors below the age of five appeared to be disproportionately affected by medical ailments**. Furthermore, the rate of access to health services appeared to be low across the region, although the reasons for this are highly dependent on context. Equally, the incidence of open defecation creates a fertile breeding ground for the spread of infectious diseases to which minors in particular are vulnerable

In Jordan, 15% (a total of 1,074) of assessed individuals were reportedly affected by health problems such as diarrhoea, fever, skin disease and/or respiratory disease during the 30 days prior to the assessment. Although settlements in northern Syria displayed a comparatively lower rate of medical conditions at approximately 5%, in absolute terms, at 3,763 people the number of Syrian informal settlement residents afflicted by medical problems was much higher than in Jordan. It should be noted that data was collected from key informants in northern Syria, who may not be fully aware of the extent of health problems experienced on the household level, hence these figures may over or under-represent actual figures. No comprehensive data on health problems in informal settlements in Lebanon could be located at the time of drafting this report.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/09/us-syria-hunger-aleppo-idUSBRE96800520130709>

<sup>29</sup> Solidarités International, "Lebanon IS Vulnerability Assessment Report", August 2013.

**Regionally, findings indicate that the distribution of medical ailments across demographic groups is largely uniform** and overall, that the prevalence of health problems is disproportionately higher amongst children under 5 than amongst older cohorts. This is illustrated by the prevalence of diarrhoea and fever amongst settlement populations, where the proportion of minors aged 0-4 years affected by this problem is higher than the remaining age brackets combined. This holds true for both Jordan and Syria, although as Figure 1 above illustrates, this varies somewhat across the four health problem types. In Syria, children are consistently afflicted by health problems more than their older cohorts, whilst in Jordan, this was only the case for diarrhoea and fever.

In light of the data on water provision presented above, this rate of medical problems is not surprising. In Jordan, for instance, a cross-tabulation of data revealed a 26% higher prevalence of diarrhoea amongst minors aged 0-4 in settlements which reported exclusively relying on water provision by private vendors, indicating that diarrhoea incidence could at least partially be attributable to poor water treatment and storage standards of private water providers and settlement water storage infrastructure.

The effect of factors such as lack of access to safe water and poor hygiene practices on health may be further aggravated by lack of access to medical care. Of those households which reported health problems during the 30 days prior to the assessment in Jordan, only 34% reported accessing professional healthcare services to aid them with their conditions. In Lebanon, Solidarités International data indicated that only a quarter (24%) of households accessed professional healthcare services when a member of the household was sick. In Syria, settlement level data indicated that less than half (44%) of settlements (or a total of 29) had access to medical services.

**Whilst the rate of access to health services is low across the region, the factors which determine these rates are likely to vary depending on context.** Key informant interviews indicate that residents in informal settlements across Jordan have misconceptions or are completely unaware of the free health services to which they are entitled. Solidarités International reached a similar conclusion in northern Lebanon.<sup>30</sup> Hence in both countries, lack of knowledge about subsidized healthcare services may hinder access to health care for registered refugees, who fear that they would be unable to pay for healthcare service fees.

Interestingly, previous UNICEF/REACH<sup>31</sup> data for Jordan suggests that there are no major institutional or cost-related impediments to accessing healthcare services. Whilst challenges such as perceived healthcare costs (which were cited as a primary challenge by 20% of households) and distance (by 41% of households) do exist, the lack of available services does not seem to be a problem. Rather, physical barriers such as distance and lack of information regarding the free provision of healthcare seem to be the main impediments. In Syria, the destruction of the country's health system infrastructure has inevitably had negative consequences for public health<sup>32</sup>.

Vaccination rates amongst informal settlement households were only available for Jordan at the time of this report, although the need for vaccination programme coverage was highlighted as a priority medical need across 85% of settlements in Syria. Thus far, no data for vaccination rates is available for informal settlements in Lebanon. In Jordan, vaccination rates for polio and measles were found to be 64% and 70%, respectively, amongst children aged below 5. In terms of polio vaccination caseload, this amounts to a total of 393 at-risk children in settlements across five governorates who have may still need to receive polio vaccinations<sup>33</sup>. This is of concern especially considering recent reports of polio outbreaks within Syria<sup>34</sup> and the relatively high mobility of settlement residents across Jordan.

<sup>30</sup> Solidarités International, "Lebanon IS Vulnerability Assessment Report", August 2013

<sup>31</sup> UNICEF/REACH: "Informal Tented Settlements in Jordan: A Multi-sector, Baseline Assessment"

<sup>32</sup> <http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrias-healthcare-system-latest-war-casualty>

<sup>33</sup> As these vaccinations are not marked on a health card there is no way of verifying the veracity of the head of household's statement, although REACH did take measures to ensure that polio vaccinations were explained properly to the respondents. For instance, OPV was described as "two drops".

<sup>34</sup> World Health Organisation: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2013/polio-syria-20131113/en/>

## EDUCATION

**School attendance for school-aged children was found to be low in informal settlements across the region as a whole.**

In Jordan and Lebanon, cyclical migration patterns and the combined costs of schooling appear to reduce incentives to enrol despite settlements residing in close proximity to education facilities. In northern Syria, this appears to be largely attributable to the on-going conflict and the fact that the majority of settlements do not have education facilities.

In Syria, almost 79% of children did not attend school within the 41% of settlements with access to education infrastructure<sup>35</sup> Jordan, 60% of the school-aged settlement population was reported to not be attending school at the time of the assessment. This becomes even more significant when we take into account that in Jordan, at least, the majority of assessed settlements were found in close proximity to urban or peri-urban areas where education facilities exist.

Contrary to popular perceptions, Syrian children residing in informal settlements in Jordan do not necessarily abandon formal schooling because of child labour, which was cited as a reason for non-attendance by only 6% of assessed households which hosted school-aged children. Instead, they are predominantly deterred from attending by schooling costs – 52% of households reported this as the predominant access barrier.

Furthermore, cyclical migration patterns may render access to formal schooling intermittent, thereby reducing incentives to enrol. Although no data could be located on school attendance amongst school-aged children specifically in informal settlements in Lebanon, the similar context and challenges facing Syrian refugee households in the country may indicate that similar underlying factors drive lack of attendance in settlements in the two countries. While schooling in Lebanon and Jordan may thus be available if not necessarily accessible, in Syria, the ongoing conflict, as well as the remoteness of certain settlements, act as powerful physical barriers to the provision of education services to settlements.<sup>36</sup>

## LIVELIHOODS

**Overall, access to livelihoods or sporadic income-generating opportunities for settlement residents varies significantly at both regional and country level.**

In Jordan and Lebanon, access to income generating opportunities is integral to site selection. In Syria, however, the on-going conflict renders access to sustainable employment extremely difficult. Settlement residents were reported to be working to cover basic needs in 37% of settlements in Syria, perhaps indicating that livelihoods options do not figure as prominently as they do in Jordan and Lebanon in site selection. **Casual and often intermittent agricultural labour seems to be the predominant form of employment for settlement residents.**

Findings from northern Syria suggest that some IDPs were earning some level of income to cover basic needs such as food across 23 out of the 62 assessed settlements, although data is not available on specific types of livelihoods and frequency of access. In Syria as in Jordan and Lebanon, informal settlement residents were found to be drawn from the poorest socioeconomic strata of Syrian society; essentially poorly educated, unskilled agricultural labourers and migrant workers unable to support themselves in formal rented housing.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, employment opportunities available to them within host countries or in Syria proper are effectively confined to pre-conflict professions such as casual agricultural labour. In Jordan, the most common primary source of income was casual agricultural labour, reported by 52% of settlement households.

<sup>35</sup> The number of children

<sup>36</sup> REACH: "Informal Settlements in Northern Syria: A Multisector Humanitarian Baseline Survey", March 2014.

<sup>37</sup> REACH (forthcoming), "Informal Settlements in Northern Syria"

A time-series analysis of UNICEF/REACH data indicates a 3 percentage point decrease in the proportion of households reporting agricultural labour as a source of income between December 2013 and April 2014. This relatively stable trend thus illustrates the continued and heavy reliance on casual agricultural labour. A similar reliance on casual agricultural labour was reported in northern Lebanon, where 40% of Syrian refugees across 46 settlements relied on this as a primary source of income. The remaining 60% of households reportedly relied on a mixture of savings (20%), borrowed money (18%) and humanitarian assistance (29%). This lends further credence to the hypothesis that settlement residents originate from the poorest socioeconomic strata of Syrian society.<sup>38</sup>

## SHELTER

Whilst significant differences were found in access to shelter across the region, **the quality of shelter infrastructure is inadequate overall, with makeshift shelters, tents and other non-durable shelter options evident across the region.** A small proportion of households in northern Syria were found to be living in the open air, with no protection from extreme weather conditions.

In Jordan, 97% of households resided in either provided by UNHCR or privately purchased tents, while only 3% of households were found to be living in makeshift shelters, constructed from corrugated iron, tarpaulin and plastic sheeting. Anecdotal evidence indicate that families or households that were living in makeshift shelters had been forced to sell their UNHCR-provided tents to cover basic needs and were left without adequate resources to purchase a replacement. These shelters were observed to be structurally weak, offering minimal protection from extreme weather and only prevalent amongst the poorest, most vulnerable, settlement residents. Although relatively uncommon in the Jordan context, makeshift shelters could here serve as a relatively effective proxy for acute household vulnerability. This proxy is particularly concerning in the Syrian context, where almost a third (31%) of informal settlement households in assessed governorates in the northern parts of the country were found to be living in makeshift shelters of a similar type observed in Jordan and 1% were reportedly living without shelter.

Families had also settled in manufactured tents (42%) and 26% were sharing shelters with other families, although no specific shelter type was recorded. Similarly in Lebanon, a large majority (82%) of households in informal settlements were found to be living in makeshift shelters whilst the remaining 18% were found to live in privately purchased tents<sup>39</sup>. Although shelter construction materials here included tarpaulin and canvas, the large proportion living in makeshift shelters may be a further indication of the relative vulnerability of informal settlement residents in the country.

## LAND AND SERVICES

Although land tenure types are diverse across the region, what holds true across Jordan, Lebanon and Syria is the informal and often ad hoc settlement pattern. Informal land tenure grants settlement residents a degree of mobility, and in the absence of established cost-recovery mechanisms for the use of municipal services (which are a key, but not the sole, driver in site selection, ensuing tensions with the adjacent host community often lead to sporadic evictions and the rapid exhaustion of basic services.

Although **data on shelter type was largely uniform across all five governorates in Jordan**, land tenure patterns displayed a degree of diversity. Given that settlements tend to cluster in close proximity to private farmland as a means of accessing income-generating opportunities and informal municipal services, **private land tenure is the predominant form of occupancy at 94% of assessed households.**

<sup>38</sup> Solidarites International, "Lebanon IS Vulnerability Assessment Report", August 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Solidarites International, "Lebanon IS Vulnerability Assessment Report", August 2013.

A minority of settlements were found to reside on public land (6%), including four settlements in Al Balqa and Al Mafraq governorates. Key informant interviews indicated that these sites were chosen with the explicit approval of the local authorities and were not subject to the concomitant rent costs that private land tenure incurs.

The need to be located in close proximity to sources of livelihood provides landowners with leverage that in turn renders informal settlement residents susceptible to predatory pricing practices. Whilst a significant proportion of households reported not paying rent at all (87%) which represents a 53 percentage point increase in the number of households reported as not paying rent in comparison to UNICEF/REACH data from December 2013. The average cost of rent per month for the majority that did pay rent was placed at approximately 20JOD per household across all five governorates. This represents a decrease of 7JOD in the average cost of rent for those households reported as paying rent, which is associated with a reduction of 56% in the proportion of household reported as paying rent between December 2013 and April 2014. Finally, it should be noted that 96% of households reported having access to electricity, hence proximity to livelihoods opportunities cannot be considered the sole pull factor. Establishing access to municipal services may also be a key driver in site selection.

Inside Syria, key informant interviews suggest that the key criterion for the selection of settlement sites was that of available or unclaimed land, which was reported as the primary reason for site selection across 55% of settlements. An additional 48% of settlements were found to have been established simply because the site was considered safe. In stark contrast to Jordan, only one camp amongst the 62 assessed was reportedly established because of proximity to services.

Whilst settlements in Lebanon have been authorized on public land despite a governmental moratorium on formal refugee camps, obtaining approval from local authorities and finding adequate sites can be a formidable challenge<sup>40</sup>. Consequently, settlements are often established without prior authorization on public land, whilst sectarian tensions with host communities are a constant source of tension on private land. Within the more impoverished northern regions of Lebanon, the increasing number of refugees moving to informal settlements is placing an additional burden on already overstretched housing and municipal service infrastructure<sup>41</sup>. In the absence of a public cost-recovery mechanism for the use of basic utilities by refugees residing in informal settlements, communities and municipalities are becoming less collaborative and more hostile towards settlement residents, often leading to *ad hoc* evictions<sup>42</sup>. In light of this, migration patterns become sporadic and often seemingly random which in turn hampers the sustainable targeting of shelter assistance and other forms of aid.

---

<sup>40</sup> RRP6 pg 59

<sup>41</sup> UNHCR Shelter Sector Strategy, February 2014.

<sup>42</sup> UNHCR Shelter Update, January 2014.

## CONCLUSION

**This thematic analysis highlights the acute vulnerability and needs of displaced Syrians residing in informal settlements, whose situation has yet to be met with a comprehensive response across the region.** With so many barriers to accessing basic services, the list of needs and vulnerabilities in informal settlements identified by REACH across the region thus far is extensive; from sporadic loss of access to food, water and electricity, poor school attendance rates for school-aged children to widespread lack of access to sanitation there are multiple and often overlapping areas where humanitarian assistance could be effectively targeted. Whilst needs are pervasive across all sectors, overall, they are greatest across the sectors of food security and WASH.

Where water is wholly provided by private vendors and where this has an identifiable impact on public health, this dependence, as well as the associated costs, could potentially be relieved through water supply programmes or further cash assistance. Additional research would need to be conducted to assess the suitability of such interventions. Similarly, although sanitation and other WASH needs are highly context-specific, infrastructure rehabilitation, hygiene promotion and facilitation of access to latrines could effectively address many of the entrenched health and hygiene issues that refugees in informal settlements deal with. Unfortunately, measures of this kind may be limited by the land rights of the settlement tenants which are precarious, ill-defined and often arbitrarily violated, thus requiring mobile or temporary solutions. Further research is required to ensure any such interventions are carefully tailored to the specific context of informal settlements

Furthermore, given that such a large proportion of settlement households appear to be food insecure across the region, food assistance targeting may need to be revised in order to address the entrenched access problems that settlement residents face. Although coping mechanisms such as inter-household borrowing practices appear to attenuate this insecurity, such strategies are by no means a sustainable way of curtailing food insecurity on a mass scale. Equally, whilst the quantity of food provided is important, any new common response should also integrate dietary diversity in order to address pervasive micronutrient deficiencies to which vulnerable groups – such as children and pregnant and lactating women – are more susceptible.

With field presence and active involvement in sector and multi-sector assessments and information management in the KRI, Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, REACH is undertaking regional analysis on sectors and themes using data collected with various partners. The aim is to provide aid actors engaged in the response to the crisis in Syria and neighbouring countries with a regional overview and thus contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of the crisis. Where possible, REACH integrates indicators from the Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP) and the Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP), adding need, vulnerability and outcome indicators to go beyond measurement of outputs to assess the effect of the humanitarian response on Syrian households.

REACH is also currently engaged in data collection on host populations, to shed light on the impact felt by neighbouring countries hosting the world's largest refugee population. This regional informal settlement report has focused on analysis of primary data, complemented by secondary data where available, to assess comparable indicators and identify information gaps that remain. A second thematic report using the same methodology is being prepared concomitantly, exploring food security amongst Syrian households at home and in neighbouring country. A third regional report, outlining multi-sector analysis of REACH primary data is also being developed, to provide a regional overview across sectors, of the challenges faced by Syrians.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> See REACH (forthcoming) Syrians in Jordan, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and within Syria: Regional Multi-Sector Analysis of Primary Data and REACH (forthcoming) Food security among Syrian households at home and in neighbouring countries: Regional Thematic Report