

# Swiss Cooperation in Lebanon

## Protection and Migration Domain



Outreach session from NRC's Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) programme on civil documentation, legal residency, and housing, land and property (HLP) rights. © 2018 Joshua Berson

### Background

In the framework of the Cooperation Program for the Middle East 2019-2022, the Embassy of Switzerland, through the different actors of the Federal Administration (Whole of Government Approach – WoGA), namely the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Human Security Division (HSD) and the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), is leading the response related to protection and migration with key partners such as the UN, international and local NGOs as well as governmental agencies. By harnessing specific fields of expertise, the Swiss WoGA-actors contribute to a more sustainable and comprehensive response.

Switzerland's objective within the Protection and Migration Domain is to support conflict-affected and the vulnerable persons to live in safety and dignity and enjoy their fundamental rights in line with relevant international bodies of Law. Through promoting policies and legal frameworks that improve protection and migration governance and through providing equitable access to specialized services, Switzerland will contribute to the realization of durable solutions for IDPs and refugees who are at risk of protracted displacement. It also contributes to the strengthening of national and regional migration governance capacities, thus improving the protection and migration environment for all vulnerable persons (see table 1).

### Definitions

Protection is defined according to the inter-agency standing committee (IASC) in 1999 as "all activities aimed at ob-

taining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law" (i.e. human rights law international humanitarian law, refugee law).

Working towards durable solutions means diminishing gradually the needs and vulnerabilities of displacement affected communities, while strengthening their capacities, skills, and increasing their resilience, so that displaced persons can increasingly enjoy their human rights without discrimination based on their displacement. Underpinned by the principles of voluntariness, safety, dignity and non-discrimination, the IASC framework identifies three options to achieve this goal: return to place of origin or habitual residence (voluntary return), local integration and resettlement to third country.

### Protection Concerns

#### Syrian Refugees

- Around 1.2 Mio Syrian refugees in Lebanon are facing a shrinking protection space. 69% of them are living below the poverty line.
- Syrian refugees are resorting to negative coping mechanisms, ranging from withdrawing children from school, cutting on essential household expenditures, child labour and early marriage to entering into exploitative work relationships.

#### Palestine Refugees

- Palestine refugees from Lebanon and since 1948 are facing socioeconomic limitations and legal barriers to the full enjoyment of human rights with 65% liv-

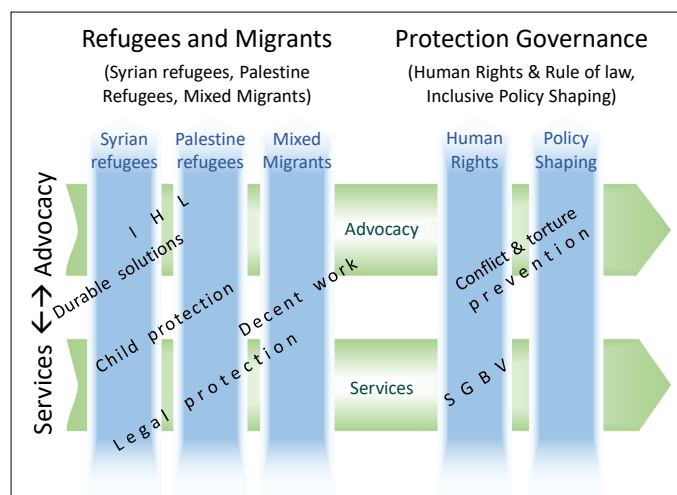


Table 1: Protection and Migration domain with thematic foci

ing below the poverty line. With 90% amongst the Palestine refugees from Syria, the destitution is even higher, due to their consecutive displacement.

- Almost half of the 174'000 Palestine refugees from Lebanon are living in one of the 12 official refugee camps, where living conditions are dire and basic service delivery is assumed by UNRWA. The circumstances are similar in the Gatherings, which grew around the camps and are often neglected by the municipalities.

## Migrants

- Labor migrants and migrant domestic workers in Lebanon suffer from a rudimentary legal framework, which does not in all cases guarantee the protection of basic human rights, as legal stay is tied to an individual employer who has considerable responsibility and power vis-à-vis the workers.
- Violations of migrants' rights related to decent working conditions, access to justice, provision of social security and freedom of movement are widespread.

## Rule of Law and Human Rights

- Rule of law remains weak. Legal and judiciary systems do not provide protection to citizens whose access to justice is limited.
- The security sector lacks external oversight over recently created mechanisms on human rights and anti-torture.

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## Swiss Response

### Objectives

The Swiss response aims at increasing the protection space and improving living conditions of vulnerable communities in Lebanon; as well as at promoting the adherence to human rights including refugee rights and rule of law standards in Lebanon.

### Approach

The approach is twofold and includes the provision of protection services (incl. basic services, legal counseling, psycho-social support, etc.) and capacity building to local actors (incl. government entities) and deployment of experts; as well as advocacy and policy shaping through knowledge production and fostering dialogue.

### Examples

Switzerland achieved the following impact through the im-

plementation of its Cooperation Program (examples):

- As a result of a combined holistic approach targeting **Syrian refugees** through direct services, advocacy efforts, and capacity building, some of the main barriers preventing refugees from acquiring a residence permit or from registering births have been alleviated. Child friendly learning environments and enhanced access to education was achieved through the rehabilitation of schools and education based cash-approach, targeting out of school children and their families. Key actors in this interventions has been UNHCR, UNICEF, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Legal Agenda, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), and the Embassy of Switzerland in a self-implemented project.
- By supporting an intensive training program for the General Security on border management, key concepts on **mixed migration** movements including human rights, gender, and migration will be incorporated in standard operating procedures of the General Security, contributing to mainstreaming a rights-based approach in the border management. Decent work and the protection of labor rights for vulnerable groups including refugees, migrant workers and Lebanese is being tackled through monitoring, service provision, advocacy and the creation of a network of civil society organizations to leverage their collective knowledge and efforts. Key partners in this intervention has been General Security, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and Oxfam.
- The government of Lebanon had the ability to prepare for its first submission of the Convention against Torture (CAT) report through several closed trainings to its official delegation to Geneva. The latter presented the report and are now in the process of implementing the first set of recommendations. The establishing of the National **Human Rights** Institute (NHRI) as well as the assigning of its members has already been accomplished by the government. Key partners in this intervention have been Restart and various entities from the government including the security sector.

### Further information

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