



Assessing the reduction of water provision in ITSs and its association with the livelihood status of Syrian refugees in the Bekaa

Research Brief
September 2018

In May 2018, World Vision Lebanon conducted a research to identify the implications of reduction of water provision due to reduced funding in the WASH sector on the livelihood of Syrian refugees residing in Informal Tented Settlements (ITSs) in the Bekaa Valley.

About World Vision in Lebanon

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization working to create lasting change in the lives of children, families and communities living in poverty. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

World Vision was found in 1954 and has been active in Lebanon since 1975. World Vision promotes the well being of Lebanon's children and their communities through emergency relief, community development and advocacy.

World Vision is committed to supporting vulnerable Lebanese as well as refugees in Lebanon. We implement programs in the sectors of Child Protection, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Basic Assistance and Livelihood, and Early Childhood Care and Development.

Recommendations

Despite political, economic, and social factors that hinder many Syrian refugees and host Lebanese from living a dignified life, access to water is a basic need and it is vital for Syrian refugees living in informal tented settlements to access the minimum standards of water provision. World Vision calls on the Lebanese government, donor community, and humanitarian agencies to work on the following:

- ◆ Maintain funding to the water sector guaranteeing that the level of water service provision does not fall short of the minimum requirement (35L/capita/day) especially in the most vulnerable informal settlements with no access to alternative water sources;
- ◆ Facilitate and fund the implementation of the proposed cost-efficient and sustainable solutions in line with the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan benefiting both Informal tented settlements and Lebanese host communities;
- ◆ Increased funding for stabilization and infrastructure programs to address the current shortage of water provision to Lebanese communities and when water needs for Lebanese communities are met and where surplus can be achieved, connect ITSs to the water network in alignment with the LCRP;
- ◆ Continuous coordination, monitoring of situation of ITS and evidence sharing between Wash sector working group members and other sector working groups namely health, child protection and basic assistance to prevent negative coping mechanisms as a result of any adjustment in the current service provision.

Introduction

World Vision in Lebanon (WVL) is one of the main actors responding to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees in the Bekaa valley in Lebanon. Informal tented settlements (ITSs) are rarely connected to existing public water and sanitation networks and have limited access to other water sources. As a result, basic WASH needs for ITS residents are only met through WASH assistance provided by different humanitarian organizations. Through its partnership with UNICEF, WVL provided a total of 300 ITSs and 35,000 Syrian refugee individuals with water provision through water trucking, quality monitoring, supply and rehabilitation of water tanks, wastewater management through site sludge removal and other innovative solutions, construction and rehabilitation of latrines, and provision of hygiene promotion sessions.

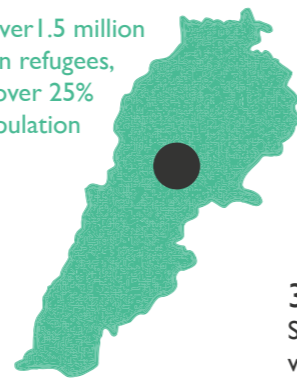
Following the shortage in funding, a decision was made to start providing less water to Syrian refugees residing in ITSs. Previously, and according to sector standards, Syrians refugees were supplied with an average of 35 l/cap/d. However, this amount decreased gradually since January 2018, and reached approximately half as of March 2018. This study addressed the problem of providing less water trucking to Syrian refugees following the funding cuts in the first half of 2018 in the WASH sector and its association on their livelihood status in terms of employment, expenditures and coping strategies. Three hundred sixty four Syrian refugees' households benefitting from WASH programming implemented by WVL and funded by UNICEF were surveyed during the month of May 2018.

Methodology


This research is a cross-sectional study among a representative sample of 364 Syrian refugees' households from different ITSs in Central and West Bekaa where WVL is currently implementing WASH programming funded by UNICEF. A multi Multi-stage probability sampling was adopted to identify the sample from a total of 5,769 households, taking into account 95% Confidence Level and 5% Margin of Error.

The study was conducted during the month of May which is characterized by a warmer weather and increase work opportunities in the agricultural sector which Syrian refugees generally work in.

Lebanon is hosting over 1.5 million vulnerable Syrian refugees, representing over 25% of the population



Bekaa region is considered amongst the poorest and most under-served in Lebanon, hosting 36% of the country's Syrian refugee population

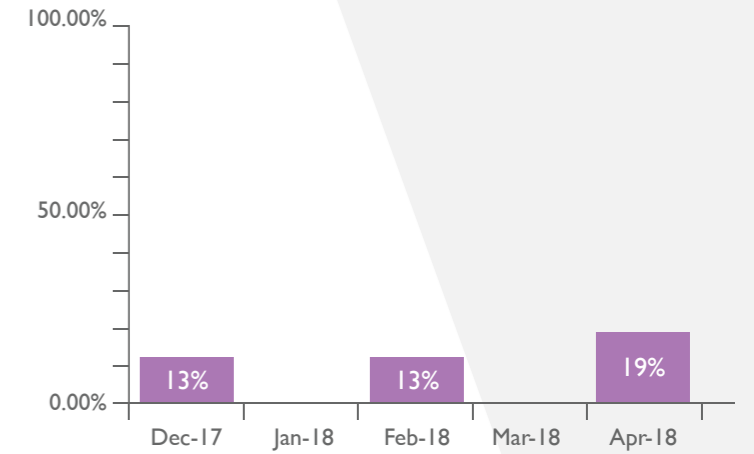
35,000  Syrian refugee individuals were supported throughout the duration of WVL's WASH program

Research Findings

1. Association of reduction of water provision with the employment status of household members and with child labor

A significant increase ($p < 0.0001$) of 59.6% was observed in the percentage of household working adults during the period where they have been exposed to water reduction. The average working days per month for an adult significantly increased too by 4 days ($p < 0.0001$) for the same period.

Child labor



In April 2018, 19% of the households had their children aged 5 to 17 years old engaging in economic activities outside the household.

2. Association of reduction of water provision with household expenditures

From December 2017 to April 2018, 38.6% of the surveyed households indicated that they would prioritize spending on water. The monthly average amount spent on water increased by 8,000 L.L for each household equivalent of paying for one additional water truck transportation per month. At the other side, fuel, household assets and clothing related expenditures were deprioritized by Syrian refugees. The monthly amount allocated to health expenditures for infectious diseases such as medical services and medications decreased significantly by approximately one third following the water reduction.

3. Livelihood coping strategies

The reduction in water provision will only increase the debt status of Syrian refugees. Moreover, it will increase the recourse to income-generating strategies that pose protection-related and health-related threats among Syrian refugees like child labor and accepting high-risk jobs leading to disabilities. Accepting low-paid jobs will have a negative impact on the labor market of the Lebanese host community by increasing competition for jobs. Illegal work such as sex work, drug dealing, robbery, burglary, etc. are more likely to increase with the economic burden of water reduction as reported by surveyed beneficiaries. This situation will lead to deteriorating relations with the Lebanese host community especially in areas with the highest concentration of refugees such as in Bekaa.

