

Land management in time of crisis

Enhancing Land Management, Land Development and Construction

Tenure security for Syrian refugees of Lebanon: The Occupancy Free Of-Charge programme in the Bar Elias locality

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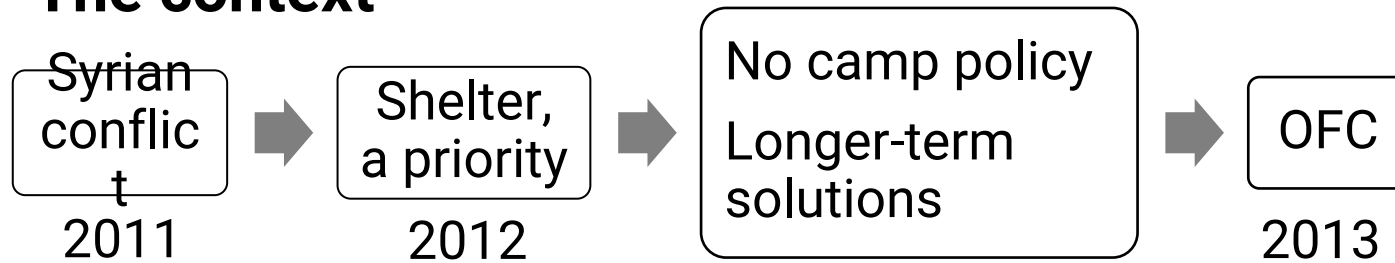
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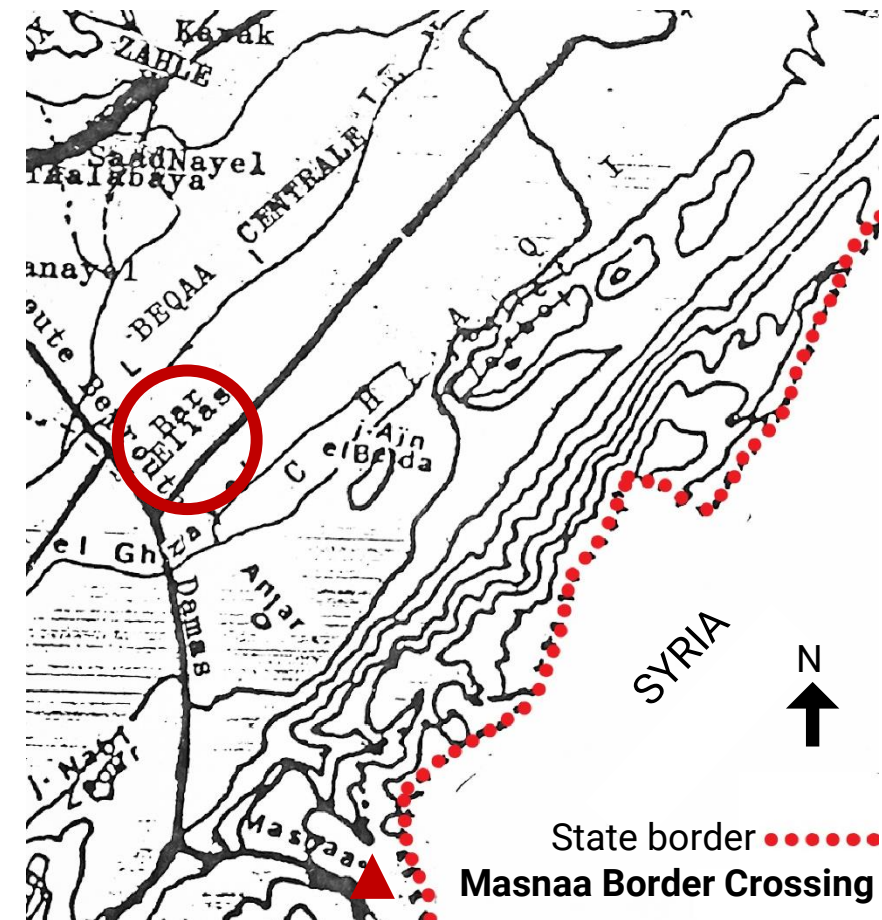
The Occupancy Free Of-Charge (OFC) shelter programme

The context



The study

- Focuses on tenure security for refugees in Bar Elias,
- Examines the design-implementation-evaluation of the OFC,
- Highlights the elements that helped increase the refugees' tenure security,
- Draws upon the challenges and lessons learned.



The content

- 1. Tenure security and the evolution of the programme.** Highlights the upgrades that allowed the OFC to secure tenure for the Syrian households.
- 2. Outcomes and limits.** Highlights the outcomes and limits in preventing rent increases and evictions once the programme is over.

The methodology

Fieldwork : November 2020 - January 2021. Qualitative and quantitative tools used:

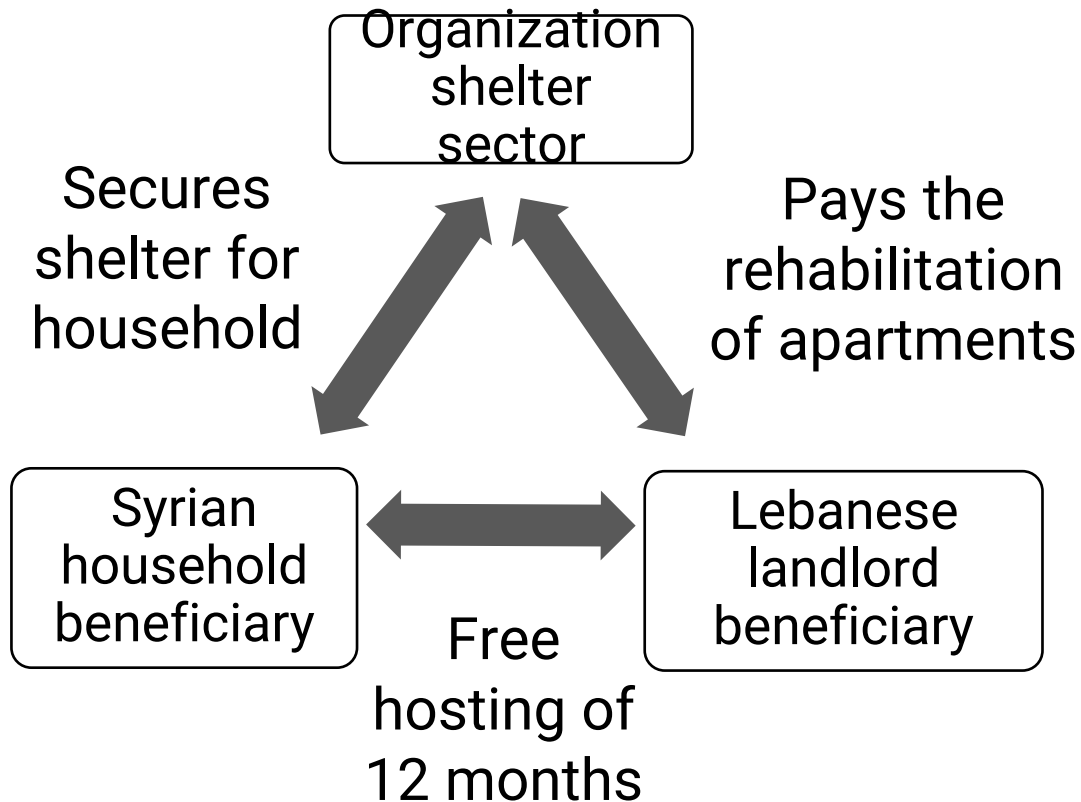
- 15 interviews with the staff of humanitarian organizations involved in the OFC,
- 9 interviews with the Ministry of Social Affairs coordinators and local authorities,
- Survey on Bar Elias OFC; questionnaires carried out with 50 Syrian beneficiaries,
- Survey conducted with 28 OFC landlords beneficiaries.

1. TENURE SECURITY AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE PROGRAMME

Bar Elias, Lebanon

A. The design

The process



B. The evolution

Syrian refugees tenure insecurity

- Social and power dynamics with landlords,
- Lack of rent regulation in private rental market,
- Rent debt linked to restrictions on livelihoods.

Tenure security components (based on one organization's work)

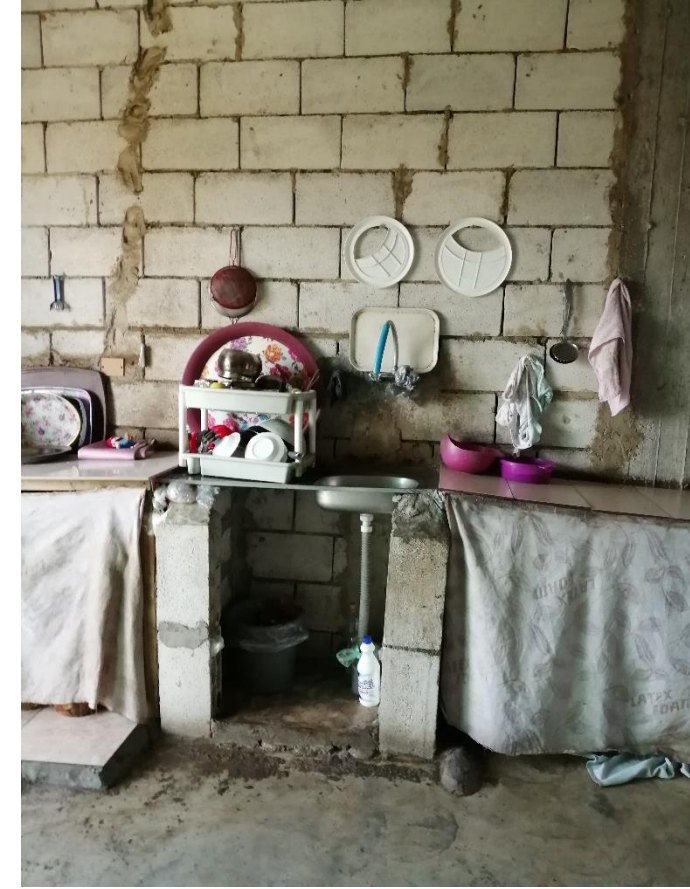
- A tripartite signed agreement,
- Shelter/legal teams collaboration: creation of a Taskforce for the monitoring of HLP disputes,
- Specialized dispute resolution team to resolve tenure disputes rising under OFC or not.

2. THE OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAMME/1

Bar Elias, Lebanon

Figure 1. Buildings and units after OFC rehabilitation

Source: Photos by author, 25 and 26 November 2020.



Bar Elias, Lebanon

i. Improving living conditions and securing one-year rent-free housing

- The majority **were satisfied** with the rehabilitation works (35 participants).
- Beneficiaries benefited from an average free-hosting period of **10 months and 18 days**.

ii. Securing tenure for Syrian refugees during the OFC programme

- During OFC period, **issues of security of tenure improved**.
- Eviction rates during OFC ranged between **2 and 5 per cent**.

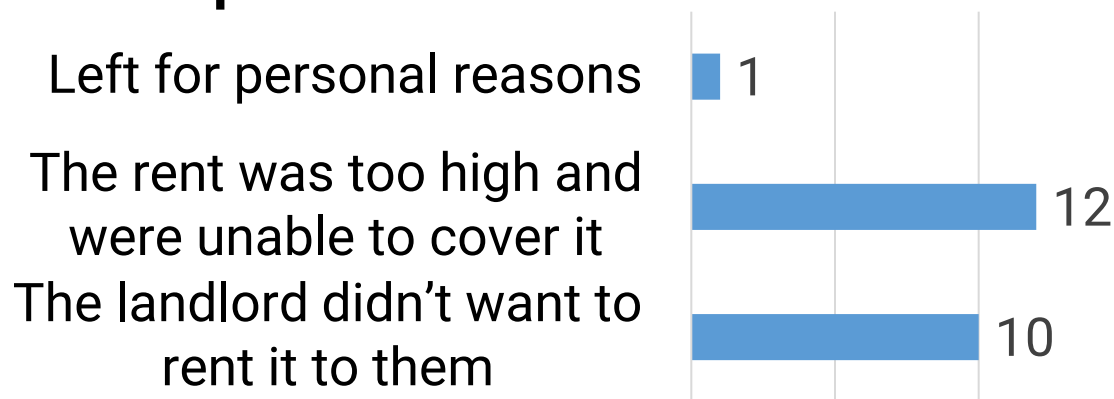
iii. Increasing the supply of affordable housing and boosting the economy

- The majority of the rehabilitated **units are being rented**.
- OFC **supported the local economy**. Landlords would hire local labour, buy the material from the town.

“Secure enough” tenure: key issues of the programme

Evictions through rent increases

Figure 2. **Beneficiaries moving out once OFC expired**



Once the OFC is over, the household's tenure security rights depended on the goodwill of the landlord.

Recommendations

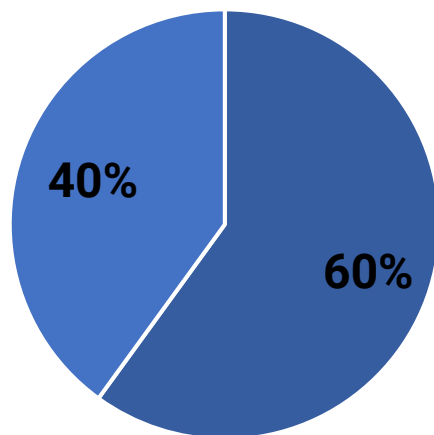
- Add a transitional phase during which rent is controlled.
- Negotiate a rent control/freeze period once the OFC is over.

This would allow to achieve some certainty around tenure for the refugees once the programme expires.

“Secure enough” tenure: limits of the programme

Evictions through rent increases

Figure 3. OFC beneficiaries of 2018 and 2019



- 30 households moved out of the apartment once the OFC programme expired

The beneficiaries can't be expected to be able to pay rent, once OFC is over, as long as there's no reliable access to livelihoods.

Recommendations

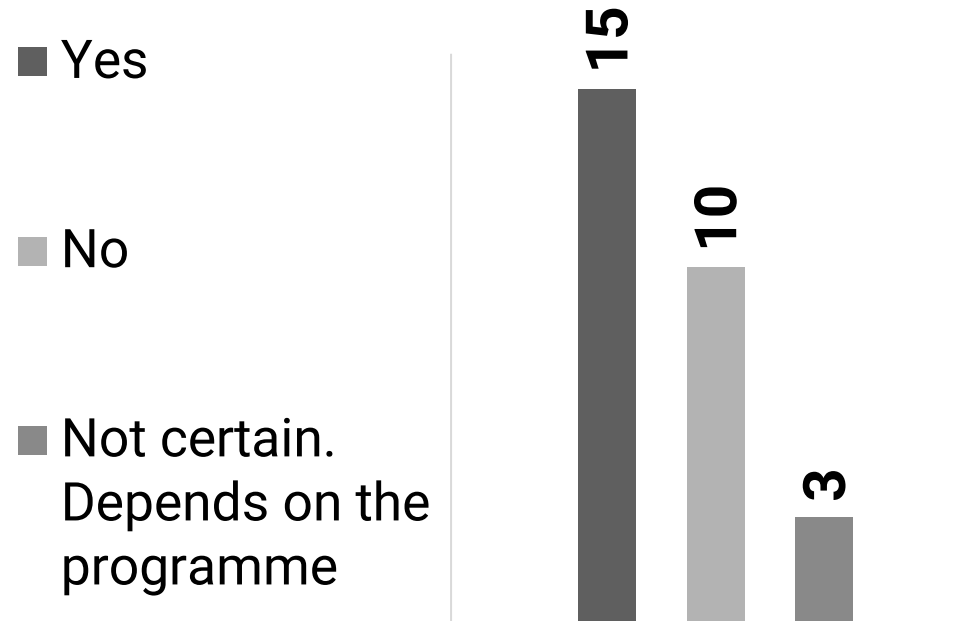
An integrated approach to the programme including:

- Shelter sector
- Legal HLP sector
- Livelihoods sector

“Secure enough” tenure: key issues of the programme

Length of the rent-free hosting period

Figure 4. Three-years OFC. Landlords’ opinions



Recommendations

A multi-annual OFC ensures more cost and time efficient results;

- the staff will secure their jobs and develop expertise over many years,
- the refugees will enjoy better tenure security, will be able to build stronger social and financial capitals,
- the landlords will be able to complete all the works.

“Secure enough” tenure: key issues of the programme

The yearly fundraising cycle of OFC

- The funding gap between the needs and the available resources,
- The humanitarian yearly fundraising cycle,
- Priority goes to the most urgent, the Informal Tented Settlements,
- Temporary shelter solutions instead of durable ones.

Recommendations

- More resources for longer-term shelter solutions
- The yearly fundraising cycle needs to adapt to the new reality of a protracted refugee Syrian crisis.
- End short-term annual fundraising paves the way for longer-term programmes;
- long-term-funding multi-annual OFC secures tenure beyond the programmes implementation period.

THANK YOU FOR THE ATTENTION!