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MEDITERRANEAN CITY-TO-CITY MIGRATION

# CITY MIGRATION PROFILE

## BEIRUT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This document is a synthesis of the Municipality of Beirut Migration Profile and Priority Paper drafted in the framework of the Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Project (MC2CM). The project aims at contributing to improved migration governance at city level in a network of cities in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean region. More information is available at [www.icmpd.org/MC2CM](http://www.icmpd.org/MC2CM).

### GENERAL OVERVIEW (2015)

<b>Political and administrative context</b>	Municipal Beirut has a clear demarcation as a city with a dual status of a governorate and a municipality. It has a surface area of 19.6 km <sup>2</sup> and a population of some 400 000. The built environment is estimated to occupy around 66% of its total area. Greater Beirut is an ambiguous term encompassing Beirut and its surrounding suburbs. Its borders are not clearly defined and stretch from the Damour River to the South of the airport, Nahr al-Kalb River to the North, the hilly areas of Mount Lebanon to the East, and the Mediterranean to the West for an estimated surface area of 67 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population</b>	403 337 (Municipal Beirut, 2012) 2 226 000 (Greater Beirut, 2012)
<b>Share in national urban population</b>	7.7% (Municipal Beirut) 42.3% (Greater Beirut)
<b>Number of refugees in the city (Greater Beirut)</b>	270 608 registered Syrian refugees (2017) 28 449 registered Palestinian refugees in 3 UNRWA camps (2014)
<b>Share of refugees in the city (Greater Beirut)</b>	13.4%
<b>Share of foreign born in national population</b>	34.2% (including refugees)

### MIGRATION PATTERNS

Since the second half of the 19th century most of Lebanon's economic and cultural activities have taken place in Beirut. The city currently boasts the country's main port, its only international airport, houses the government offices, and is the main cultural and educational centre. Beirut has therefore attracted various waves of newcomers, such as rural migrants, elites and low-skilled refugees from peripheral areas of Lebanon, Armenian and Christian refugees from Ottoman Turkey and other areas, Arab refugees and migrant workers from neighbouring countries, South East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Often settling at the periphery of the city, these migrants have contributed to redefine the contours of the city. Following the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), which forced entire populations to flee the city or settle at its borders, reconstruction projects reaffirmed the physical expansion of the city.

### MIGRANT POPULATION

There are about 300 000 refugees settled in Greater Beirut, but estimates suggest a share of refugees in the city of up to 20%. More than half of refugees (58%) are from Syria, around 41% are Palestinian and 1.4% Palestinians from Syria. Most Palestinians (74%) are settled outside the official camps of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the Near East in low-income neighbourhoods along with Lebanese as well as Syrians and other migrant workers. Out of the 200 000 migrant workers in Lebanon, more than 70 000 are Ethiopians, followed by about 50 000 Bangladeshis and 25 000 Filipinos, most of them being female domestic workers.

### LOCAL MIGRATION POLICY

Due to a plethora of pressing needs and limited resources of municipalities, migration has not been, until recently, at the top of the local authorities' agenda. It is only with in the wake of the Syrian refugee influx that local authorities have stepped up their role. Their intervention was particularly crucial in the early years of the crisis

(2012 – 2015) when there was a gap left by the lack of a clear policy or intervention strategy for this humanitarian crisis. Besides, due to Lebanon's 'non-camp' policy, refugees have been scattered across the country leaving municipalities to provide for these populations with limited financial and human resources.

There is no explicit migration policy in Lebanon, apart from the 1962 law regarding the entry, stay and exit of foreigners which regulates movement, stay and employment of non-Lebanese in the country. Decisions are made through ad hoc rules and regulations.

Employment of non-Lebanese either follows the labour law, bilateral agreements with countries of origin or the consent of a sponsor (or *kafala*). Access to labour courts of migrant workers, who fall under the *kafala* system, is often obstructed by employers. There are reports from the NGOs Kafa and Anti-Slavery International that some of these migrant workers are at times subjected to violence and exploitation. Formally, a domestic worker has to be sponsored to enter Lebanon on a 3-month work visa, paid and arranged by either an individual employer/sponsor (*kafil*), or an agency. However, most of foreign labourers operate in the informal sector.

Refugees face specific regulations. Lebanon is not party to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees and the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the UNHCR in 2003 only grants limited guarantees to refugees. Palestinians have been treated as foreigners since their arrival in Lebanon as of 1948 and face numerous restrictions regarding employment and private property. Without access to public services, health and compulsory education are provided by UNRWA. The exclusion of Palestinian refugees from the public and economic spheres intends to safeguard their right of return, while securing employment for Lebanese nationals.

Prior to the crisis, Syrians made up most of Lebanon's foreign workforce and enjoyed greater cross-border movement. Policies and regulations have however changed in the wake of the Syrian refugee influx. Due to security concerns Syrian refugees have recently been subjected to restrictions on their movement (entry, curfews), and, in response to economic concerns related to unemployment among Lebanese citizens,

their access to work has been restricted to three sectors, namely: construction, agriculture and domestic labour. In practice, however, only a small percentage of Syrians in Lebanon apply for work permit, and most of them work informally.

In the framework of the MC2CM project, 3 priorities have been pre-identified together with the Municipality of Beirut:

1. **The creation of a Migration Observatory for Beirut, supporting capacity-building in the field of data collection and analysis**
2. **A Community Guidance and Assistant Unit, serving as a platform for migrants, refugees and host communities**
3. **Building social cohesion at neighbourhood level to ease tensions between communities**

## **MAINSTREAMING MIGRATION**

The municipality of Beirut promotes itself as a 'culturally diverse' city. Despite this vision, the city does not yet have a clear strategy on how to address the subject of migration in its various and multifaceted dimensions. On the other hand, urban services provided by the municipality and its subcontracted providers are universal and made available to all and do not discriminate against any population based on their nationality. Yet, access to basic rights for migrants in Beirut can be a challenge given the complexity of legal regimes in the country.

Migration governance stakeholders at local level		
Local level	Local officials ( <i>Mukhtars</i> )	Elected officials, they are local state administrators and document birth, marriage, death registration at the local level
Beirut Municipal Council	Elected municipal council	Council of 24 elected for 6 years operating in different fields and representing the different city districts and religious sects. City councilors can set up committees working on specific issues. Due to the institutional blockade, municipal councils are the only directly elected institutions in 7 years and benefit from a reinforced legitimacy. Despite its financial and administrative autonomy, municipal governance and capabilities remain weak
	Beirut Mayor	Elected head of the Council, the Mayor has mainly a representative role
Beirut Governorate	Governor ( <i>Muhafez</i> )	Elected state-officials, the governor chairs the executive power at the local level
	Social stability units	The local security and disaster risk management units support the governors' office in the field of social stability and cohesion
Gouvernement central	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities	Supports and oversees local authorities such as governorates, municipalities and unions of municipalities
	General Directorate of General Security	Issues visas and residency permits to foreigners
	Ministry of Social Affairs	Co-leads the Lebanon Crisis Response Strategy (LCRS) together with international relief organisations. Several other ministries are involved in inter-sector working groups with the LCRP
	State Ministry for Refugee Affairs	Created in 2016, it oversees aid and assistance to Syrian refugees in the country

Civil Society Organisations active in the areas of migration and integration in the city	
Amel Association	Promotes the socio-economic and civic rights of the unprivileged in Lebanon
Basmeh and Zeitooneh	Serves Syrian refugees and host communities in Shatila Camp and other parts of Beirut/Lebanon
Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre	Provides services and protection to migrants in Beirut and elsewhere in the country
Centre for Refugee Rights Aidoun	Advocates and campaigns for Palestinian refugees' right of return
Domestic Workers Union	Advocates for domestic migrant workers' rights
Dream of a Refugee Association	Supports Shatila camp's youth with training and psycho-social support
Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum	Independent body of 42 international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) supporting vulnerable communities throughout Lebanon
KAFA Violence & Exploitation	Seeks to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, exploitation and trafficking in women and female domestic workers
Nadja Now International	Provides support to Syrian communities in Beirut and the Bekaa Valley
Sonbola Group for Education and Development	Delivers educational programmes addressing Syrian refugee children and youth needs in Beirut

## INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

### Coordination and cooperation at city level and with regional and national levels

Since the end of the Civil War and the Taef Agreement (1989), Lebanon has entered a phase of accelerated administrative decentralisation, in order to grant localities greater autonomy, foster local development and enhance citizen participation. However, financial and functional limitations, as well as political and sectarian fragmentation, have hindered reform implementation.

Beirut is a product of this limited decentralisation policy and enjoys a dual status of a municipality and a governorate. Governorates are the expression of the country's political deconcentration, while the local mukhtars enforce administrative decentralisation. Municipalities are the only autonomous elected body, thus benefiting from unique legitimacy as the first directly-elected bodies for the past seven years.

The government-appointed governor of Beirut has a range of executive powers and directly reports to the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, contrary to the rest of Lebanon where Mayors are chief executives. Since the Mayor of Beirut, and the other members of the Municipal Council, have limited decision-making power, they have to submit their recommendations for budgeting to the Governor for approval with final endorsement of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities.

Due to Lebanon's 'non-camp' policy, Syria refugees and asylum seekers are scattered across the country, in urban and rural areas, and fall under the municipalities' and local mukhtars' mandates. This has caused an unprecedented pressure on local service provision which has exceeded local authorities' experience and capabilities.

In 2012, the government drafted an emergency response plan but its resignation and the delay in forming a new Cabinet led to a partial implementation. In 2015, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) was jointly established by the Lebanese Government and UN agencies to coordinate international and local refugee response in Lebanon. Municipalities are indirectly involved with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, which is part of a number of sector working groups, and are directly

solicited in project implementation, together with the civil society and private sector. Beirut is one of the main targets of this plan, as it hosts large numbers of vulnerable displaced often settled in low-income suburban areas.

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Municipality of Beirut is a member of various networks and partnerships (EUROMED, Arab cities, 100 Resilient Cities). Beirut is also coupled with Saint Etienne in France under a local urban development agreement established by the French Development Agency (AFD). Since 2015, the Municipality is working in collaboration with the World Bank on disaster resilience, and aims at creating a Comprehensive Urban Resilience Masterplan for the City.

## PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

The public perception of migrants and of refugees in particular, is highly influenced by the political and security situation relayed in the media which often place the blame on refugees. These circumstances created what is referred to as a 'no-policy context' and a total absence of an official Lebanese response to the crisis. Due to their lack of legal status, Syrian refugees and asylum seekers are seen as temporary guests and are referred to as 'displaced' (*nazihin*), rather than 'refugees' (*laji'een*), a terminology that echoes Lebanon's long-lasting experience with Palestinian refugees.

A study conducted in the summer of 2016 by USJ showed that an overwhelming majority (80%) of surveyed Lebanese sees their relationship with Syrians as normal, good or very good, while around 20% perceive theirs as bad or non-existent. When asked about whether they would accept Syrians living in their neighbourhood, 55% answered positively, a percentage that dropped to 46% in Beirut particularly. Similarly 59% of Lebanese interviewed showed acceptance of working with Syrians, raising to more than 70% in Beirut.

## MIGRANTS' ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

	Education and vocational training	Employment and entrepreneurship	Social affairs	Protection against discrimination	Housing	Political participation and inclusion in local decision - making processes
Competence	Partly	No	Partly	No	Partly	No
Implementation instrument						
Policies and projects relevant to migrants' integration	The Municipality can establish and indirectly manage: kindergartens, public schools and vocational training centres upon request of the Ministry of Education. It also manages libraries and museums, cultural and artistic institutions	Service providers contracted by the Municipality for public works can hire migrants	The Municipality contributes to the expenditure of dispensaries and public hospitals.  Budget allocated to social affairs only concerns Lebanese nationals registered in Beirut		The Municipality contributes to the public housing policy, in collaboration with private providers	The Municipality is sometimes supported by civil society organisations in service provision, through more or less formal partnerships coordinated by the Municipality.  Members of civil society are sometimes part of the working committees set up by municipal councillors as advisory members with no executive power
Migrants' access	Migrants with valid residency permit can access mainstream educational public services and professional training	Migrant workers access employment through the <i>kafala</i> system of sponsorship. The sponsor arranges their arrival to Lebanon but has full authority over them  Syrian refugees have access to 3 sectors of the labour market (construction, agriculture and cleaning services) and have to apply to work permits.  Palestinians cannot access a range of professions	Migrants with valid residency permit can access mainstream health services			
Comments				Civil society organisations document incidents of discrimination and abuses of migrant workers, refugees and other migrants and provide them with legal and social support		Migrants do not have political rights