



# THE PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN RESPONDING TO HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The case of Lebanon  
Lessons learned and recommendations

PART TWO



**OXFAM**  
Italia

# PART TWO. LESSONS LEARNED ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS IN LEBANON

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In recent years, the importance of local authorities (LAs) has been highlighted by scholars and practitioners: the change begins from the bottom and key actors of this change are active citizens and effective states that are the two sides of the same “development coin”. Being closer to citizens than other public institutions, LAs play a key role as catalysts for change. The purpose of this study is to reflect on the partnership with LAs for responding to emergencies and linking relief and rehabilitation to development activities. In particular, this paper critically assesses the experience of Oxfam Italia (OIT) of working in partnership with local authorities for responding to Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. This case-study analysis is based on desk-based review and interviews with key informants in Italy and Lebanon.

Generally speaking, thanks to its history and expertise, OIT is implementing humanitarian programs in Lebanon through the perspective of “localising” the response: the territory (as geographical area and public and private ac-

tors that inhabit and contribute to the social change of the context) is the “instrument” for and the “objective” of humanitarian interventions. Hence, OIT is implementing humanitarian programs establishing a territorial approach to humanitarian assistance.

The paper is structured as follows. The first section, with a critical review of five major development programmes implemented by OIT, presents the OIT approach: strengthening bottom-up poverty reduction processes and the improvement of local service delivery, providing LAs and civil society with technical assistance for supporting local development and social cohesion. The second section critically discusses the OIT humanitarian assistance in Lebanon carried out with the active involvement of LAs, highlighting that working in partnership with LAs enhances the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian assistance, despite some constraints to cope with. Finally, some recommendations to enhance the OIT approach have been pointed out.



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# INTRODUCTION TO LEBANESE CONTEXT AND SYRIAN CRISIS: FACTS AND FIGURES<sup>1</sup>

01



Since its beginning in 2011, the Syrian armed conflict has caused 6,5 million of Internally displaced persons (IDPs)<sup>2</sup> and over 2,6 million people had fled Syria<sup>3</sup>. The accelerating speed and intensity with which the crisis spread out throughout 2013, and the prospect of the refugee population in the region exceeding four million by the end of 2014, confirm this crisis to be the largest, most complex and most profound for several decades<sup>4</sup>.

Lebanon has received over one third of the refugees from Syria but, compared with other host countries, this constitutes a much higher proportion in relation to the domestic population (1 out of 4). By the end of 2014, the Syrian refugee population could reach 1.5 million.

With the escalation of the Syrian conflict, spillovers onto Lebanon have rapidly moved beyond the humanitarian to the economic and social spheres where large, negative, and growing impacts are occurring. According to the World Bank, the conflict may (1) cut real GDP growth by 2.9 percentage points each year, entailing large losses in terms of wages, profits, taxes, or private consumption and investment; (2) push approximately 170,000 Lebanese into poverty (above the 1 million currently living below the poverty line) and double the unemployment rate to above 20 percent, affecting mostly unskilled youth; and (3) depress government revenue collection by USD 1.5 billion while simultaneously increasing government expenditure by USD 1.1 billion due to the surge in demand for public services, bringing the total fiscal impact to USD 2.6

billion<sup>5</sup>. Across all key public services, the surge in demand is currently being partly met through a decline in both the access to and the quality of public service delivery<sup>6</sup>.

| ESTIMATED AFFECTED POPULATION              |           |
|--|-----------|
| Syrian refugees                            | 1,019,522 |
| Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS)      | 52,997    |
| Lebanese returnees from Syria (registered) | 17,510    |
| Estimated host communities affected        | 1,500,000 |

**Table 1: Estimated affected population in Lebanon, 15 April 2014. Source: OCHA<sup>7</sup>**

The Government has resisted construction of refugee camps, allowing the refugees to settle freely (in over 1,500 localities), although the majority is concentrated in the northern half of the country. As a result, the self-settled refugees depend heavily on support from local communities and aid agencies. There is evidence of substantially rising tension between local host population and the refugees, with labour market competition being a source of significant concern. Spending on education and health has increased significantly while the quality of public services has reportedly deteriorated, especially for vulnerable Lebanese citizens. Competition in the informal job market has driven wages down, while prices for basic necessities, such as fuel or rental accommodation, have increased. Whilst refugees are dispersed throughout the country, the majority (86%) are living in communities where most of the vulnerable Lebanese (66%) also reside<sup>8</sup>.



Due to the characteristics of Syrian refugee crisis and the response of the Government of Lebanon, local authorities (LAs) carry the burden of facing the crisis. For instance, according to the World Bank, a visible decline in the level and quality of solid waste management and municipal services has resulted from the sudden and sharp increase in demand and utilization by Syrian refugees<sup>9</sup>. Solid waste generation has doubled in several areas, thus contributing to ground water contamination, pollution of water resources and spread of water-borne disease<sup>10</sup>.

The international community is getting aware

### *Increased tension between host communities and refugees*

about the necessity to address the needs not only of Syrian refugees, but also of vulnerable Lebanese. In this sense, the key role of Lebanese local authorities is clearly stated in the *Roadmap of Priority Interventions for Stabilization from the Syrian Conflict*, developed by the Government of Lebanon<sup>11</sup> and in the UNHCR *Regional Response Plan* for 2014<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, international donors are shifting their priorities from first emergency response activities (for example, distribution of food and non-food items) to reactivation of local economy and improvement of service delivery (for example, cash for work activities).



1. This section is an overview on Lebanese context in the light of Syrian refugee crisis. It's not intended to be exhaustive, but only to highlight some key elements that will be crucial for the development of this study. For a wider description of current Lebanese context, consult for example TANA COPENHAGEN ApS, *The Syrian displacement crisis and a Regional Development and Protection Programme: Mapping and meta-analysis of existing studies of costs, impacts and protection*, 2014; MERCY CORPS, *Policy Brief. Engaging Municipalities in the response to the Syria Refugee Crisis in Lebanon*, 2014; MERCY CORPS, *Things fall apart: political, economic and social instability in Lebanon*, 2013; WORLD BANK, *Lebanon: Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict*, 2013; UNHCR, *2014 Syria Regional Response Plan*.

2. OCHA, *Humanitarian Bulletin – Lebanon*, Issue 1, 1 March - 15 April 2014.

3. By end of March 2014. Source: UNHCR. On 31 of March 2014 2,578,037 people were registered as refugees.

4. TANA COPENHAGEN ApS, *The Syrian displacement crisis and a Regional Development and Protection Programme: Mapping and meta-analysis of existing studies of costs, impacts and protection*, 2014.

5. WORLD BANK, *Lebanon: Social and Economic Impact of the Syrian Conflict*, 2013.

6. *Ibidem*.

7. OCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic - Humanitarian Dashboard*, 26 May 2014.

8. UNHCR, *2014 Syria Regional Response Plan*.

9. WORLD BANK, *op.cit.* note 5, p. 4.

10. *Ibidem*.

11. The *Roadmap* establishes a preliminary set of prioritized immediate- short- to medium-term recommendations focused on alleviating the impact of Syrian crisis on Lebanese host communities. Among immediate recommendations (Track One Interventions) there are the strengthening of capacities of local authorities in the areas of local governance, coordination and conflict prevention and the increase of funding for additional municipal services (water, electricity and waste management) and programs to help reduce communal tensions and enhance social cohesion.

12. "The current plan emphasizes the need to sustain significant support for public institutions and host communities to guarantee that Syrians and PRS will continue to be able to enter Lebanon and enjoy access to basic services. Vulnerabilities are expected to increase as conditions for refugees and other affected populations, including Lebanese communities, deteriorate. While the generosity of the Lebanese population remains unabated, community coping mechanisms are fraying. Partners will make a concerted effort to mainstream support to host communities across all programmes, and through community support projects implemented in close coordination with the GoL, both at national and local levels." (p. 9).

## THE LEBANESE LOCAL AUTHORITIES<sup>1</sup>

The Syrian refugee crisis is weakening Lebanese local authorities, considering that they had already been facing huge problems due to the complex decentralization process in Lebanon and its political situation.

According to the 1977 Decree-Law, Municipal Council is elected each six years on the basis of a general and direct vote; afterwards, the Municipal Council elects a President and a Vice-President of the Municipality. Municipalities are entrusted with a broad range of tasks. The law stipulates that any work having a public character or utility within the area of the municipality falls under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Council. However, municipalities have to deal with administrative and fiscal constraints: most of the 985 municipalities, of which 70% are small (less than 4,000 registered inhabitants), do not have the capacities to provide many of the designated services they are mandated to. It has been highlighted that almost 400 municipalities do not have one single employee and another 400 have very weak municipal administration; they are subject to oversight by several authorities which have reduced their ability to respond to the needs of their constituents<sup>2</sup>. For instance, it takes three years to hire a municipal staff. At fiscal level, many Municipalities rely on the transfers

of central Government through the Independent Municipal Fund.<sup>3</sup> Yet, many Municipalities have formed municipal Unions that have become important actors in the context of decentralization.

A Union is created by a decree from the Council of Ministers, upon the suggestion or initiative of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities or upon the request of the Municipalities. Municipal Unions are headed by a President elected by the Municipal Union members (the Presidents of Municipalities forming the Union). Currently there are 48 unions, of which 36 were established in the last 10 years. These unions include a total of around 660 municipalities as members (two thirds of the total number of municipalities) and they are home to two thirds of the resident population of the country. Unions of Municipalities have several prerogatives. Based on Article 126 of 1977 Decree-Law, they are permitted to provide public projects of common interest from which all or some of the member municipalities can benefit. These projects include roads, sewerage, garbage, slaughterhouses, firefighting, organization of transportation, co-operatives and markets. Some of these unions have pooled their resources in order to fund regional development projects.

Others have become recipients for donors' money. However, the performance of many unions is hampered by several challenges like: weak administrative capabilities, inability to collect membership fees, high dependence on the Independent Municipal Fund for revenues, and overlapping competencies with municipalities resulting in conflict.<sup>4</sup> In addition,

the unions' performance is impeded by sectarian politics.<sup>5</sup> For one, the municipalities of 21 unions are non-contiguous which effectively makes developmental planning impossible. Furthermore, only 13 out of the 26 Cazas have one union and the rest have between two and seven unions.<sup>6</sup> This makes coordination on the Caza level much harder.

1. This box is based on the analysis of ATALLAH, Sami, *Decentralization in Lebanon and Establishing Regional Administrations for Integrated Development*, Featured Analysis, LCPS, 2012.

2. *Ibidem*.

3. According to Article 86 of 1977 Decree-Law, the municipal finances consist of fees collected directly by tax payers; fees collected by the State, the independent services or the public institutions on behalf of the municipalities and distributed directly to each municipality; fees collected by the State on behalf of all municipalities; financial aids and loans; revenues of municipal properties, including the total revenues of public domains related to the municipality; donations and wills. The Independent Municipal Fund (IMF) is an intergovernmental grant system. The Ministry of Finance collects eleven taxes and fees and deposits them into the IMF for distribution to municipalities. The central government distributes the funds based on a formula outlined in Decree 1917 of 1979. Once the expenditures for salaries, wages, compensation as well as supplies, public works, and services for staff are deducted, the remaining amount is distributed to Municipalities and Municipal Unions.

4. ATALLAH, *op.cit.*, note 1.

5. For example, in Jezzine Region there are two Unions of Municipalities, divided by religion: one is formed by Christian Municipalities and one by Shia Municipalities.

6. Lebanon is administratively divided into eight governorates (muhafazah). Each governorate is divided into districts (Caza or Kaza). Lebanon has 26 Caza. The administrative center of each Caza is often located in the largest city in the district.



# OXFAM ITALIA ACTION IN LEBANON: A REVIEW OF PAST AND ON-GOING INTERVENTIONS

02

## A constant presence since 2006 through strong partnerships with local authorities and civil society.

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Generally speaking, in Lebanon Oxfam Italia (hereinafter OIT) has taken a role of catalyst of change, supporting bottom-up poverty reduction processes and the improvement of local service delivery through the empowerment of effective local authorities and the active involvement of civil society. OIT has provided and provides local authorities and civil society with technical assistance for supporting local development and social cohesion through institutional and capacity building,

valorisation of the territory aiming at job creation and small and micro enterprises development and facilitation of North-South and South-South knowledge sharing networks, activating vertical subsidiarity (from national towards local institutions) and the horizontal one (within private and public stakeholders belonging to the same territorial or thematic area). Therefore, OIT plays the role of institutional brokering and networking, stimulating the creation and the fostering of partnerships



and collaborations among Lebanese and international actors from Italian and European territory through the channel of decentralized cooperation. In this perspective, it is interesting to note that OIT worked with the Regional Authority of Tuscany in its process of creation of a Coordination Platform for projects imple-

mented by Tuscan actors in Lebanon in order to favour synergies among relevant stakeholders according to a common approach and thus make their action more effective and efficient.

Main partners/allies of OIT in Lebanon are summarized in the following table.<sup>1</sup>

| LOCAL AUTHORITIES  |  | LOCAL NGOs   | OTHER ACTORS  |
|--|--|--|---|
| DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS   | HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS  |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Municipality of Aytaroun</i></li> <li>• Union of Municipalities of Zgharta</li> <li>• Union of Municipalities of Jezzine</li> <li>• Union of Municipalities of Tyre</li> <li>• Beirut Southern Suburbs Municipalities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Municipality of Aytaroun</i></li> <li>• Union of Municipalities of Zgharta</li> <li>• Municipality of Bcharre</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Association for Forest Development and Conservation (AFDC)</li> <li>• Children of al Jaleel Center (CJC)</li> <li>• Naa'ba</li> <li>• Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ministry of Agriculture</i></li> <li>• <i>Syndicate of Beekeepers of the South</i></li> </ul> |

Table 1: OIT partners/allies in Lebanon

It is interesting to note that, apart from Beirut Southern Suburbs Municipalities, most OIT partners are medium/small Municipalities and

institutions located in rural areas in the North and South of the country.

1. Partners with whom the partnership has ended are highlighted in italic.

# Local development, essential services and territorial planning as cornerstones of OIT action.

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After the conflict between Israel and Lebanon in summer 2006, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs promoted a program through which OIT started to work on the Lebanese territory with post emergency interventions aiming to the restoring social and economic conditions of the country.

Thanks to its past experiences and its expertise in decentralized cooperation, OIT has focused to work in Lebanon primarily in three main areas of need:

- **Economic justice.** OIT has implemented projects (especially in Bint Jbeil Caza, Saida and Tripoli areas) aimed to develop the local agricultural production and the economic empowerment of rural communities. OIT offered support to small farmers, including women, by promoting the marketing of their products on local markets and providing support to the production, conservation and packing phases. Moreover, OIT has worked for supporting young people in job seeking, training local farmers (especially cow farmers and beekeepers) on organic agriculture and dairy farming, improving the managing capacities of breeders and rehabilitating the
- managing service of solid urban waste and of compost production. Oxfam Italia also contributed to the foundation of the local NGO Slow Food Beirut. The Regional Authority of Tuscany, the Ross emergency program (phase I and II), the Province of Florence, UNDP ART Gold Lebanon and the Province of Bolzano were partners and provided funding for those interventions.
- **Access to essential services.** Together with UNDP Art Gold program, the Local Health Service (ASL8) of Arezzo and funds from the Regional Authority of Tuscany, OIT intervention aimed to train Lebanese doctors in the Beirut Southern Suburbs Municipalities for the creation of primary health care centres of first aid treatment. In Lebanon 90% of sanitary services are private and just 40% of the population could afford medical insurance. This causes great difficulties for most of the people to access medical assistance. OIT also worked together with Children of al Jaleel Center, through funds of the Italian Cooperation (Palestinian Refugees Emergency program) and Tuscan local authorities, inside the Palestinian camp of Wavel near Baalbek. The main aim of the project was to support



formal and informal education and promoting cultural and recreational activities in order to limit the drop-out phenomena and favour the creation of a better environment for the growth of Palestinian youth and children.

- **Promotion of good governance practices and support to decentralization process.**

Thanks to the Tuscan decentralized cooperation system, OIT began to work in Lebanon supporting the decentralization process and the exchange of good practices on local development. OIT implemented projects to promote the cooperation among local institutions especially on the issue of city planning and valorisation of the local heritage. Moreover, at the end of 2011 started the three-year project

“Territorial networking for capacity building and local development: a cross border experience linking Lebanon, Jordan, France, Italy” (T-NET), funded by ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme. T-NET project aims at creating a cross border network among existing territorial networks of municipalities in Lebanon and Jordan already cooperating with European local authorities (Tuscany Region and the Province PACA) in view of promoting socio-economic local development in the Mediterranean Basin. Lebanese partners of this project are the Union of Municipalities of Zgharta, the Union of Municipalities of Jezzine, the Union of Municipalities of Tyre, Beirut Southern Suburbs Municipalities through UNDP Art Gold Programme.

## Facing Syrian refugee crisis. OIT humanitarian action in Lebanon.

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While continuing working in the area mentioned above, after the outbreak of the Syrian crisis OIT, together with its partners, started to see what could be done to alleviate the impact of this new emergency. The first intervention strategy was defined on the basis of an assessment conducted by OIT staff in August-September 2012, with the addition of information about Syrian refugees' situation and needs provided by local actors already partners of OIT (mainly Children of al-Jaleel Center and the Union of Municipalities of Zgharta). Hence, OIT decided to firstly implement its humanitarian action according to the needs of the areas where

a partnership with local actors (civil society or local authorities) already existed<sup>1</sup>. For example, Children of al-Jaleel Center (CJC), the OIT partner in Wavel Camp, reported that a huge number of Palestinian Syrian refugees were arriving from Syria to the Camp, due to its location near the borders with Syria, and they needed help. Hence, the first winterization programme of OIT took place in Wavel Camp in January 2013. From the initial stage, OIT interventions have consistently developed regarding the geographical scope and sectors in an effort to contribute answering to immediate and critical needs of a growing number of refugees.



OIT sectors of humanitarian intervention and related activities are summarized in the following table.

| SECTOR                        | ACTIVITIES  | LOCATION  | LOCAL PARTNERS   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--|
| EMERGENCY<br>FOOD<br>SECURITY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food voucher distribution</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zgharta Caza</li> <li>Municipality of Bcharre</li> <li>Wavel Camp and gatherings - Baalbeck</li> <li>South gatherings - Saida</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Union of Municipalities of Zgharta</li> <li>Municipality of Bcharre</li> <li>CJC</li> <li>Naa'ba</li> </ul> |
| NON-FOOD<br>ITEMS (NFIS)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cash for rent</li> <li>Voucher distribution for basic items (winterization kits, clothes vouchers)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zgharta Caza</li> <li>Municipality of Bcharre</li> <li>Wavel Camp and gatherings - Baalbeck</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Union of Municipalities of Zgharta</li> <li>Municipality of Bcharre</li> <li>CJC</li> </ul>                 |
| WASH                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rehabilitation and/or installation of emergency latrines, water tanks and pipelines</li> <li>Hygiene promotion (distribution of dignity kits, woman hygiene kit, baby kits)</li> <li>Improvement of solid waste management</li> <li>Awareness campaigns for safe access to quality services (especially for women and girls)</li> <li>Capacity building for LAs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zgharta Caza</li> <li>Wavel Camp and gatherings - Baalbeck</li> <li>South gatherings - Saida</li> <li>West Beqaa</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Union of Municipalities of Zgharta</li> <li>CJC</li> <li>Naa'ba</li> <li>AFDC</li> </ul>                    |
| EDUCATION                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization of remedial classes for Syrian children and young</li> <li>Organization of recreational activities and summer camps for children</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zgharta Caza</li> <li>Wavel Camp and gatherings - Baalbeck</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Union of Municipalities of Zgharta</li> <li>CJC</li> </ul>  |
| PROTECTION                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of information points on registration, medical assistance, education, legal advice</li> <li>Establishment of protection committees for meaningful participation of refugees in managing collective settlements</li> <li>Community mobilization</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zgharta Caza</li> <li>Municipality of Bcharre</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Union of Municipalities of Zgharta</li> <li>Municipality of Bcharre</li> </ul>                              |
| CASH<br>FOR WORK              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rehabilitation of public utility service</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zgharta Caza</li> <li>Municipality of Bcharre</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Union of Municipalities of Zgharta</li> <li>Municipality of Bcharre</li> </ul>                              |

Table 2: Sectors of humanitarian intervention

From the table above, it is easy to note that OIT works with Lebanese LAs in all sectors of intervention. Total budget for emergency activities has increased from 20.000 USD at the beginning of 2013 to 2.700.00 USD until December 2014. OIT works with a wide range of donors, such as Region of Tuscany, Bolzano Autonomous Province (Italy), Italian Cooperation, Waldensian Church Foundation. Moreover, working with other Oxfam affiliates that have joined their efforts for responding to the Syrian crisis, in Syria

**74.675**  
*individuals*  
*reached*

and in the neighbouring countries, additional funds were mobilised from Irish Aid, Australian Aid, EU ECHO, Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development – DFATD and from appeals launched by Oxfam Confederation affiliates in several countries included Italy).

In the following figures funds raised by Oxfam Italia are presented per main category where it results how most funds come from non-Italian donors.

Figure 1: Sources of OIT funds (%)

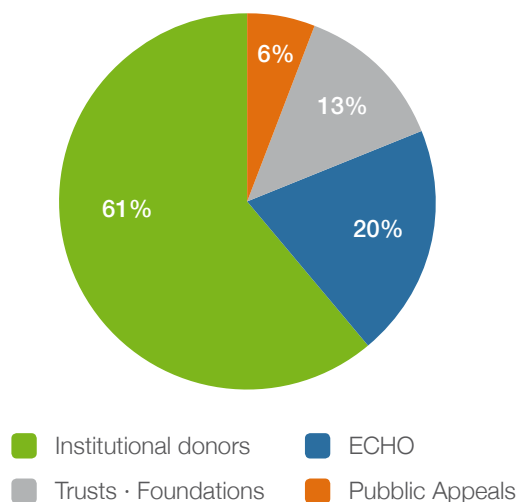
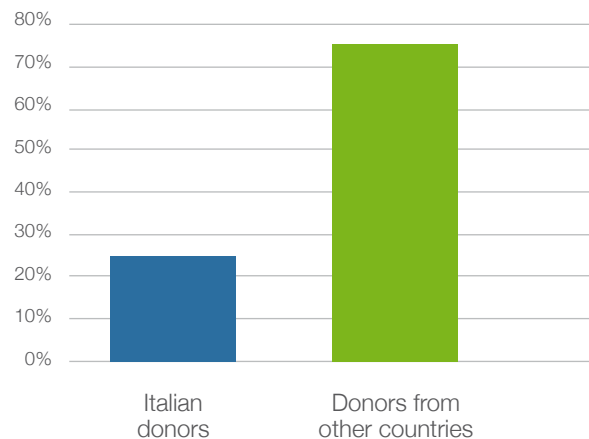


Figure 2: Donors per location (%)



Beneficiaries of OIT humanitarian action are Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees from Syria and the host communities. A total amount of 14.935 household (74.675 individuals) have

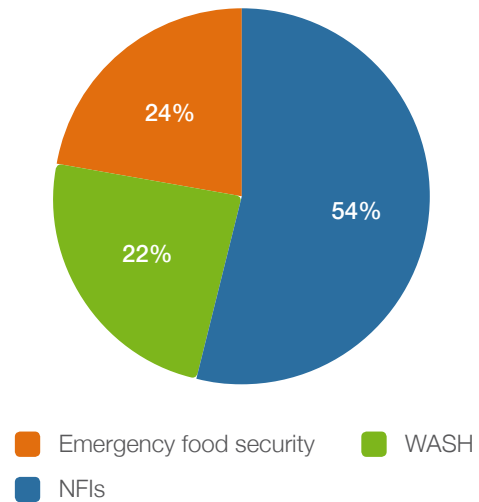
been reached (42% women and girls). The number of beneficiaries reached according to the sector of intervention and type of beneficiaries is shown in the following figures<sup>2</sup>.

| BENEFICIARIES REACHED                 |           |             |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----|
|                                       | Household | Individuals |     |
| Sirian refugees                       | 7.465     | 37.325      | 50% |
| Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) | 6.430     | 32.150      | 43% |
| Host communities                      | 1.040     | 5.200       | 7%  |
| TOT                                   | 14.935    | 74.675      |     |

Table 3: Number of beneficiaries reached per type

It is important to note that all the beneficiaries are entitled to protection activities. Beneficiaries of WASH, food security and NFIs activities in Zgharta and Baalbeck are also beneficiaries of educational ones. 54% of beneficiaries have been reached through the

Figure 3: Number of beneficiaries reached per sector



humanitarian projects implemented with the Union of Municipalities in Zgharta and the Municipality of Bcharre.

In Zgharta and Bcharre, most beneficiaries have been reached in NFI sector; protection activities are cross-cutting in all the projects.

Figure 4: Beneficiaries reached per area of intervention (%)

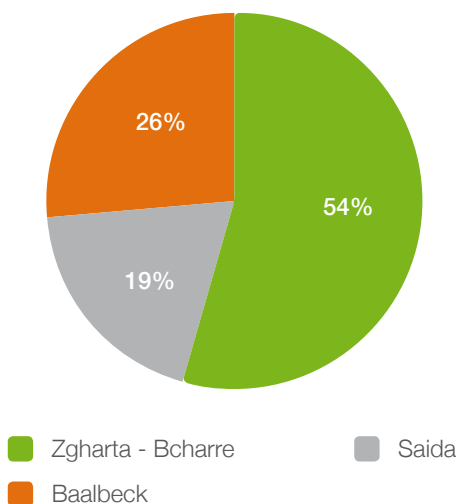
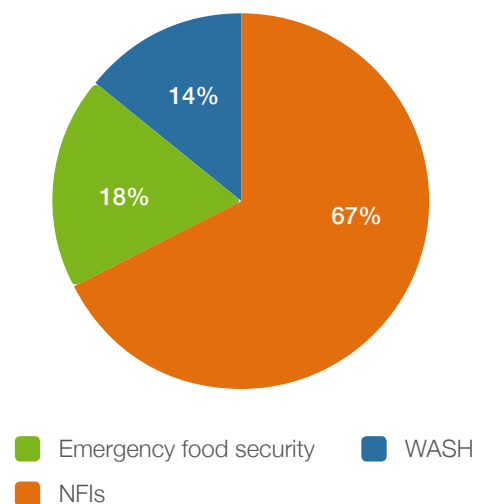


Figure 5: Beneficiaries reached in Zgharta and Bcharre per sector (%)



1. Also, in April 2013 a team composed by OIT, Oxfam Netherlands and Oxfam GB carried out a Real Time Evaluation to assess the Oxfam response to the Syrian crisis in Lebanon. That document was useful to improve Oxfam action in some key elements

2. Last update: 31st of March 2014. Cash for Work activities have not started yet. The number of household has been multiplied by 5 (average number of individuals forming a refugee family).



REFLECTING ON WORKING  
WITH LAS IN LEBANON  
WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

03



Since the beginning of this study, to understand better the key elements of OIT partnership with LAs, a reflection exercise, involving relevant stakeholders in Lebanon and Italy, has been structured on the basis of the following key topics:

1. When, how and why the partnership began;
2. The context where the partnership has been and continues to be developed;
3. How the partnership has been structured at operational level;
4. The need and importance of working with local authorities in humanitarian programs.

During the interviews with relevant stakeholders (representatives of Lebanese local authorities, OIT staff, other Lebanese actors)<sup>1</sup>, many perspectives and points of view came out. Next paragraphs will offer a synthesis of

that evidence from the field in order to highlight lessons learned for adjusting or rethinking critical factors and replicating and enhancing success elements.

It is important to remark that OIT is implementing humanitarian interventions with two local authorities in Lebanon, the Union of Municipalities of Zgharta and the Municipality of Bcharre. Instead, it is implementing development projects with two more local authorities, the Union of Municipalities of Jezzine and the Union of Municipalities of Tyre. With the aim to have a deeper overview on the reality of Lebanese local authorities and the challenges and added value in working with them, the author has decided to interview all the local authorities that are working in partnership with OIT and not only the ones regarding humanitarian interventions<sup>2</sup>.

1. See the Methodology of this study.

2. One of the Unions partners of OIT in development projects has affirmed that they are not interested in working in emergency action, but only for the achievement of Union strategic goals; the other one is already working with other international NGOs and has declared to be interested in working with OIT on Syrian refugee crisis in the future.

# The beginning and the development of the partnership between OIT and local authorities.

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## **In most cases, the partnership existed before Syrian refugee crisis**

In most cases (three out of four), the partnership of OIT with Lebanese local authorities (LAs) has started before the outbreak of Syrian refugee crisis in 2012. The existing partnerships in development projects with the 3 Federations of Municipalities of Jezzine, Tyre and Zgharta started thanks to contacts shared by other NGOs or Institutions – such as CGLU-BTVL<sup>1</sup> – or to personal knowledge of members of the local authority during international meetings.

Taking into account its presence in the country, OIT decided to firstly implement its humanitarian action according to the needs of the territory where a partnership with local actors already existed. In this sense, OIT developed its first partnership with Lebanese LAs for facing Syrian crisis with a LA it was already working with: the Union of Municipalities of Zgharta. In mid-2013, the partnership shifted from development issues only to a joint crisis response for two main reasons: on one hand, the Union of Municipalities of Zgharta was making efforts to cope with the huge influx of refugees from Syria in its territory (the Union had opened a Registration Office for Syrian refugees and it was distributing alone

food items for new comers). On the other hand, OIT decided to design and implement humanitarian projects in close partnership with the LA in order to provide Syrian refugees with humanitarian assistance in a more efficient and effective way and, at the same time, to enhance the capacities of the Union to cope with disasters. Later on, OIT has extended its assistance to other areas involving other local authorities, such as the Municipality of Bcharre<sup>2</sup>.

## **Summing up efforts and professionalism are main catalysts for the development of the partnership**

In Lebanon there is a widespread interest in creating and enhancing partnerships between LAs and international NGOs in humanitarian and development projects. In fact, due to recurrent crisis and thanks to strong international networks developed since 1994 through Euro-Mediterranean partnerships and other programmes, the Lebanese LAs have experience in working with international community<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, in Lebanon there is favourable environment for the beginning and development of partnerships between LAs and international NGOs. LAs have a clear idea about the reasons to strengthen such partnerships in development and humanitarian programs:



1. The support an international NGO as Oxfam could provide at financial and technical level; moreover, the Lebanese political instability has determined the need for more technical and financial support from outside, i.e. from the international community;

*"It's important to sum up national and international efforts to tackle the problem of Syrian refugee"*

Representatives of a LA

2. The recognized professionalism and impartiality of the organization.

*"The same Syrian refugees ask for OIT."*

*"Thanks to OIT, we have stability in our area"*

*"For us, it's important to work with professional and experienced international NGOs, just even to discuss with them different subjects, to exchange opinions. This process can generate many outcomes."*

Representatives of LAs

1. The CGLU - *Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis* (that works for the social and economic development of local authorities) through its Lebanese office (BTVL) put in contact the Federation of Municipalities of Zgharta with the Region of Tuscany.

2. The partnership with Municipality of Bcharre has started at the end of 2013. With the aim to identify another area of intervention, OIT asked its partners to suggest a zone with a relevant influx of Syrian refugees in need. The Union of Municipalities of Zgharta suggested the Municipality of Bcharre and OIT staff conducted a need assessment in Bcharre area, thus deciding to implement refugees' assistance projects in that new location in partnership with the Municipality.

3. All the LAs interviewed currently work with international organizations (UNDP, UNHCR), international NGOs (Save the Children, Red Cross, World Vision, NRC), Governmental Agencies for Development (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) and European local authorities (for example, Union of Municipalities of Jezzine has been developing an important partnership with PACA Region – France for four years). Moreover, all the local authorities interviewed have already worked and are working with civil society organizations.

## Some contextual elements to take into account.

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A deep knowledge of the context of intervention is crucial not only in development projects, but also in humanitarian assistance, mainly in socially, politically and economically complex environments as Lebanon is.

The urgency of humanitarian assistance maybe could not be a sufficient “excuse” to not take into account the characteristics of the country, especially if we want to build up resilience to the crisis. During the researches for this study, relevant stakeholders have given a complex picture of the political, social and economic context where the partnership of OIT with local authorities has been developed. The following elements give a picture of Lebanese reality to take into account for the sound implementation of humanitarian and development projects in the country.

### **An ongoing decentralization, but LAs have insufficient resources**

Firstly, if we want to work with Lebanese LAs, we should take into account that the decentralization process in the country is still ongoing. As outlined in the Box 1, Lebanese Municipalities and Unions of Municipalities have a broad range of tasks for the management and development of the territory. However, two main critical aspects affect Lebanese LAs: the lack of financial

resources because of the deficiency of or delays in financial transfers from Central Government and the lack of skilled personnel. Lebanese LAs cannot easily hire technical personnel, so the staff is mainly elected and subject to spoil system and turnover. These critical points affect the efficiency and effectiveness of LAs not only in times of crisis, but also in the day-by-day work.

Moreover, in some cases, competencies are not clearly divided between local authorities and Central Government. This “confusion” generates unintended inefficiencies.

Inefficiencies in the functioning of Lebanese LAs – especially the Unions - are also due to sectarian politics (the party who leads the Union is different from the majority parties in the Municipalities forming the Union; there are political clashes among different groups in the same party, etc.).

### **Two levels of territorial government: Unions of Municipalities or Municipalities. Which is the best to work with?**

A second element to be considered is the Lebanese territorial organization. The 1977 Decree-Law does not exactly define a strong separation of competencies between Municipalities and Unions of Municipalities. Generally speaking, the main role of a Union is to support Mu-

*A complex context  
at political, social  
and economic level*



municipalities and provide them with a common strategy<sup>1</sup>. Hence, the function of a Union is to enhance a strategic work aimed at developing the region<sup>2</sup>. For example, the Union of Municipalities of Jezzine has designed a Strategic Plan (a “roadmap”) for the Union structured on seventy small projects aimed at the development of the territory in the sectors of health, education, environment, tourism, infrastructure, social development, urban planning and industry. In the words of a representative of a Union of Municipalities, “it was difficult to convince the Majors that the role of a Union is not only of getting funds. It’s more on common interests of all of us for the well-being of the region.”

Therefore, a question is if it is more effective and efficient working with a Union of Munic-

ipalities or directly with the Municipalities in emergency context could arise. Actually, the choice to implement a project with a Municipality or a Union depends on the specific context of the area of intervention and the type of activities to be implemented. In some situations, it could be more efficient and effective working directly with a Municipality, because it is more structured. Moreover, a Municipality could represent better the needs of its territory: sometimes, the President of the Union is the Major of the biggest city of the area and only this city benefits of the work of the Union. In other cases, a Union has a more widespread presence on the territory and it could play a strategic role for the development of the region than a single Municipality.

## The difficult coexistence of host communities with refugees

It is well known that Lebanese LAs are on the frontline of the response to Syrian refugee crisis. Relevant stakeholders agree that the Government of Lebanon (GoL) has not a strategy or drivers of action to cope with the crisis<sup>3</sup>, so LAs have started coping with the huge influx of refugees before receiving any hints by the GoL<sup>4</sup>.

Municipalities and their citizens have shown great generosity to Syrian refugees, receiving them in their territory and allowing them to “use” public services of the area. All the local authorities interviewed have affirmed that they have no problems with Syrian people because they are used to receive Syrians as seasonal workers in agriculture. Moreover, Lebanese people can understand the suffering of Syrian refugees, because Lebanese people have experienced conflicts and the need to go outside their country to save their lives<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, due to the huge influx of Syrian refugees, it should come as no surprise that municipalities are struggling to cope with the socio-economic pressures, namely related to services provision due to the rapid population increase in their areas of jurisdiction. Main problems are related to solid waste management, water and sanitation, health, education, social issues, especially related to the “fight” for unskilled jobs<sup>6</sup>. Problems can arise also when the political and religious orientation of Syrian refugees is different from the host community majority one.

It is easy to understand that LAs stress the

importance to ensure the security of Lebanese communities and therefore the “obligation” to “put an eye” on Syrian refugees because of the challenges this influx imposes on the territory.

*“People in the south of Lebanon have experienced war too, so they know what being a refugee can mean. Lebanese people understand the suffering of Syrian refugees, we feel compassion. Notwithstanding, we have to put some conditions to them, we have to put an eye on them”*

Representatives of LAs

Moreover, all LAs interviewed have opened a registration office for Syrian refugees in order to collect data about where Syrian refugees come from, if they are legal or illegal, where they have decided to stay, in other words, to keep the control over their area of jurisdiction.

*“We don’t know how many they are and where they stay. We need to control our territory”*

Representatives of LAs

Some of them are trying to organize daily life of Syrian refugees, creating specific areas for the disposal of solid waste or meeting points where Syrian refugees can wait to be hired for a casual job<sup>7</sup>.

## *The “duality” of Lebanese point of view on Syrian refugees*

Understanding and taking into account this “duality” of the Lebanese point of view on refugees (empathy vs. social, economic and personal security) is crucial for an international NGO that wants to properly address the Syrian crisis. The provision of aid only to Syrian refugees could be a crucial obstacle in the partnership with



LAs: generally speaking, international NGOs have to provide aid not only to Syrian refugees, but also – and mainly – to Lebanese community, helping the LAs to tackle relevant problems of the territory.

*“NGOs should take into account needs of the Municipalities, not only go to the Syrians”.*

*“During a voucher distribution for Syrian refugees, an old Lebanese Christian woman came and showed me her crucifix necklace. She told me: Look at this and remember we exist we are poor too”.*

Representatives of LAs

It is easy to speculate that with a weak central leadership by the GoL, the humanitarian assistance could suffer of lack of coordination and that technical and financial resources could be addressed not where they are mostly needed. The subsequent consideration is that international NGOs such as OIT should reinforce their advocacy action with the international community of donors in order to rethink aid channels to better include LAs in humanitarian programs and empower them according to the needs of vulnerable refugee and Lebanese population.

1.As outlined by representatives of LAs. The Union of Tyre is formed by 62 Municipalities, the ones of Jezzine and Zgharta by 27 Municipalities.

2. Statement of representative of a LA.

3. A representative of a LA has suggested to build refugee camps in Syria to solve the problem of influx of refugees in Lebanon.

4. In the words of the representatives of LAs, “we are doing more than the GoL”.

5. The “empathy” with Syrian refugees have been outlined by all the local authorities interviewed.

6. These problems have been outlined by all the local authorities interviewed.

# Methodology of work with LAs in Lebanon.

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Some elements characterize the partnership of OIT with LAs at operational level:

## **Involvement of LAs in design of the proposal.**

First of all, all the LAs have been actively involved in the design of the proposals by OIT staff.

## **Signing of Memorandums of Understanding.**

For each project implemented, all the partners have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with OIT (or with the Region of Tuscany, which is the program lead in the case of T-NET project), which contains articles on the objectives of the project, roles and responsibilities of each part, implementation of activities, financial management of the project with the scheduling of planned disbursements and reporting tasks. Moreover, the MoU states the respect the Oxfam Code of Conduct.

## **Two-pronged management structure: political endorsement and operational implementation by a technical staff.**

The President of the Union or the Major of the Municipality represents the political level of management structure and he/she is responsible for the approval and endorsement of the project. The technical team is responsible for the technical and administrative management of the project as well as for the monitoring and evaluation activities. In Zgharta, for example, the President of the Union has appointed his Exec-

utive Secretary as technical referent for the implementation of humanitarian projects in the area. Afterwards, the technical referent has selected volunteers from each Municipality forming the Union of Municipalities of Zgharta for assessment activities. The political level does not receive any salary; instead, technical staff is paid through project funds that the LA receives from OIT and autonomously manages. The same operational structure has been adopted in Bcharre.

## **Initial training for the staff of LA involved in humanitarian projects:**

in the start-up phase of humanitarian projects in Zgharta area, some specific trainings for the technical staff of the Union have been organized on humanitarian issues, such as child protection, filling of baseline surveys and questionnaires, management of cash transfer and voucher distribution activities. Also, specific trainings on strategic planning have been organized in the last weeks. Capacity building activities are intended not only to fill knowledge gaps for the sound implementation of humanitarian interventions, but also to create skills to be used in local development activities.

## **Involvement and responsibilities in implementing the projects.**

In humanitarian projects the staff of the LAs (Union of Municipalities of

Zgharta and Municipality of Bcharre) manages the mapping of the area of intervention for the identification and selection of beneficiaries. In Zgharta, the staff, composed by selected volunteers, collects information about Syrian refugees: where they come from, where they live, how many they are, what are their needs, etc. Afterwards, the team draws up the beneficiaries' database, later on cross-checked with UNHCR beneficiaries' lists by OIT staff to avoid overlaps. In case of cash transfer projects (Zgharta and Bcharre), the staff of the LA involved in the project helps OIT staff organize and supervise the distribution of vouchers for food and non-food items to Syrian refugees. In case of WASH activities (Zgharta), the LA has put at disposal of the project its technical personnel (an engineer). Finally, the LAs provide logistic support for the implementation of project activities (facilities and equipment).

**Active involvement in monitoring and reporting activities.** Staff of LAs involved is also actively involved in follow-up and monitoring activities, such as the Post Distribution Monitoring process implemented by Oxfam Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Team in the country.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the staff of the LA has to submit a financial and narrative report on a monthly basis and a final narrative and financial report at the end of project activities<sup>2</sup>.

### Constant coordination between OIT and LAs.

Coordination between OIT staff and Lebanon

and local authorities is made by e-mail, phone and field visits by OIT staff.

Considering the elements listed above, the active involvement of LAs at political and technical level in each implementation phase of humanitarian projects is a success factor of the partnership. Not only the political endorsement of the projects is up to them, but also the proper organization and supervision of all the activities. Thus, LAs' level of ownership of and commitment on the projects is high. Moreover, the quality of the intervention increases thanks to a deeper knowledge of the context. This is an innovative aspect that differentiates the OIT approach from other international NGOs that usually implement humanitarian projects directly or through local NGOs. Another success element are the trainings organized for the staff of LAs: this activity ensures not only a more effective and efficient implementation of project activities, but also the creation of new skills in the LAs useful to cope with other crisis that can occur in the future. Thanks to humanitarian programs implemented with OIT, 5 social workers, 1 WASH expert, 1 logistician, 10 hygiene promoters and 16 volunteers have been involved and trained in Zgharta and Bcharre.

Another element to reflect on is that the constant presence of OIT staff in the field has facilitated and fostered the active involvement of local authorities and ensured the supervision over project activities.

*"OIT is here in the field, with us."*

Representatives of LAs

1. As affirmed by OGB Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Officer in Lebanon.

2. The financial reports are accompanied by the copies of the invoices and any other proof of payments: all expenses must be justified through proofs of payment by the presentation of documents to OIT. The monthly narrative reports describes the results obtained, in reference to the indicators defined in the project, the activities implemented, the problems encountered, etc.

# The need and importance of working with local authorities in humanitarian programs.

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Why an international NGO should implement humanitarian programs in partnership with a LA instead of working directly on the field or through a local NGO? The choice of working in emergency with LAs may generate a key dilemma: how to conciliate the need to rapidly save human lives in emergency situations with the choice of what is the most effective partnership to be put in place<sup>1</sup>. It is easy to note that sometimes, humanitarian response directly performed by an international NGO or in partnership with local NGOs can be more rapid and effective. Notwithstanding, any humanitarian strategy – especially in the Lebanese context, where there are no refugee camps – has to deal with LAs, at least for the formal endorsement of the action. Why? Because international humanitarian actors may endanger the legitimacy of local authorities, bypassing or substituting for them<sup>2</sup>.

*OIT can help us to be more professional. It can improve capacities of local authorities, not substitute for them"*

Representatives of LAs

International humanitarian actors need to work with LAs because the State has the institutional responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emer-

gencies occurring on its territory<sup>3</sup>. The Oxfam Humanitarian Strategy explicitly states that “the most effective and sustainable way to increase the speed and scale of humanitarian response is to build domestic response capacity of (...) state bodies”<sup>4</sup>; to achieve this change, it is important to carefully assess and take into account State capacity and willingness to cope with emergencies in order to better understand the action Oxfam Affiliates can carry out with national and sub-national public bodies in the country. In case of willing but unable State, Oxfam Affiliates can implement programmes of capacity building, be operational where there is insufficient local capacity and advocate for international support, as Oxfam Italia has been doing in Lebanon since 2012<sup>5</sup>.

Reflecting on Lebanese experience, working in partnership with LAs enhances the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian response thanks to:

- A deeper knowledge of the territory and needs of local communities. Local authorities represent the community, its needs and its potentialities. This aspect is crucial for designing and implementing interventions with high ownership, relevance and impact.



- The creation of capacities for strengthening the resilience of the community. Capacity building for local authority personnel in the context of Syrian refugee crisis represents the first step of the creation of skills for coping with all kind of disasters in the future and fostering the resilience of the community. Moreover, working with local authorities has improved their knowledge about humanitarian strategies and actors<sup>6</sup>.
- A strong linkage between relief and development. Working in partnership with LAs and citizenship means to enhance the local governance of a territory in order to generate social change. Thus, this territory and its community are involved in a bottom-up poverty reduction process that, apart from

the first emergency response, can successfully trigger sustainable development solutions through the improvement of the quality of essential basic services and resilience building strategies.

*“Working with local authorities in emergency helps us to create a bridge between relief and development”*

Riccardo Sansone, OIT Humanitarian Aid Coordinator

*“Working with local authorities in emergency context is an investment”*

Francesca Pini, OIT Syrian Crisis Response Desk

- The successful implementation of local-level concrete activities in emergency response can be an “instrument” of influence and lob-

bying for change in local regulations and can trigger changes in national policies on disaster preparedness and management.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out some constraints in the partnership with LAs. First of all, working with LAs in humanitarian programs means that we have to deal with an intrinsic element of public bodies, such as the institutional instability and turnover. Changes of political and technical referents of the projects and sectarian politics can hinder the development of the partnership, due to a different vision of the newly elected, the unwillingness to work with international NGOs, other political interests or, also, religious issues, especially in a socially and politically complex context such as Lebanon<sup>7</sup>. Generally speaking, the adverse effects of political and institutional instability and spoil system are some of the main critical factors in working with local authorities, both in development and humanitarian projects (see Part One of this study).

Secondly, working with LAs in humanitarian programs is a demanding process. The staff of LAs involved in the project has to be selected and trained and sometimes it is difficult to find personnel with the proper skills and sensitivity to deal with the complex situation of an humanitarian crisis. Moreover, an international NGO has to be aware that working with a LA is different from working with a local NGO: LAs have different procedures and unavoidable bureaucratic

hindrances that could delay the implementation of activities. It is important to be conscious and respect the “bureaucratic” nature of the LAs and therefore take into account the possibility to

have delays in the implementation of the project. This element should be taken into account in the planning stage of the intervention. Also, the project manager should be able to deal with this aspect, avoiding putting too much pressure on the staff of

LAs for the implementation of activities.

Thirdly, in the design of humanitarian programs, we have to consider that the LA is a public body in charge of the local governance of the territory. Thus, its institutional and political mission is to manage and develop its territory according to the needs of its community. Working with a LA only on humanitarian activities without considering development issues means to distort its nature<sup>8</sup>. In the project implementation, this aspect becomes clear when we see that the commitment of the LAs in humanitarian programs varies depending on the activities to be realized, with a subsequent risk of decrease in the quality of intervention. It is easy to understand that voucher distribution or other cash transfer activities are not considered “interesting”, whilst improving services (waste management/water network) are considered more appealing as they have a positive impact on the entire community. This element is especially true in the Lebanese context, where LAs are responding to a crisis that only indirectly affects their population: LAs

*Working with LAs  
in humanitarian  
programs  
is a demanding  
process*

are implementing humanitarian activities that don't generate any advantage for their citizens. In this sense, it is extremely important to make clear to the LAs involved that the emergency response is only a phase of the wider objective of territorial development, which the partnership with OIT aims to pursue<sup>9</sup>. The establishment of Framework Agreements between OIT and LAs encompassing overarching development objectives and expected results of the partnership could be useful to enhance the participation and commitment of LAs for the sound implementation of humanitarian activities<sup>10</sup>.

Finally, another challenge is posed by the strategies of international donors. It is well known that in the aftermath of a disaster, the international community concentrates its technical and

financial commitment on the stricken area. Huge amounts of emergency funds arrive and many international NGOs start working in the country. Sometimes local partners "get carried away" by drivers of action established by donors, in spite of local development needs<sup>11</sup>. But later on, when the acute phase of the crisis has finished, the attention of international donors shifts to other crisis. This aspect makes difficult to establish longer-term recovery and development strategies with local partners, especially with LAs<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, if a country is affected by recurrent or slow-onset crisis, in the outbreak of the crisis, donors' funding "attention" shifts again to humanitarian programs, even if development programs are on-going. This dynamics of the international aid could cause frustration in local partners<sup>13</sup>.

1. As highlighted by Roberto Barbieri, Director-General of OIT.

2. As stated by Francesca Pini, OIT Syrian Crisis Response Desk.

3. This principle is clearly stated in international law and uttered in many UN General Assembly Resolutions such as General Assembly Resolution 46/182 "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations".

4. OXFAM INTERNATIONAL, *Humanitarian Programme Strategy*, 2012, p.18.

5. For more information on how to match international response to national state capacity, see *Oxfam International, Operating Model - Humanitarian Programme Strategy*, 2012, p.16.

6. As outlined by Zanobi Tosi.

7. For example, a trained member of the staff of a LA involved in humanitarian projects with OIT was fired because of political tensions inside the LA.

8. As outlined by Umiliana Grifoni, OIT Middle East and Maghreb Regional Manager.

9. "We need to define together an overarching goal for the partnership that goes beyond the emergency", Zanobi Tosi, OIT Project Manager.

10. No Framework Agreements have been signed yet between OIT and the LAs partners.

11. As stated by Laura Bassetti, OIT Lebanon Desk.

12. It has been reported that after first emergency programmes in the aftermath of Israeli war in 2006, many international NGOs left the country. The lack of continuity of international community created a sense of disbelief in Lebanese local authorities. Moreover, Representatives of Italian Cooperation have affirmed that Lebanese local authorities had started strategic planning processes after the end of emergency caused by the Israeli war in 2006 thanks to a new attention of international donors on development issues, but with the Syrian crisis, attention of donors has shifted again to humanitarian intervention.

13. For example, in Lebanon, LAs are afraid that international NGOs could make promises they can't fulfill in the end, as happened in 2006.

# Lessons learned on OIT experience in Lebanon.

In light of the considerations we have done on the key dimensions of the partnership between OIT and LAs in Lebanon, we can outline some

lessons learned in a SWOT matrix, intended as a starting point for thinking on the future drivers of action of OIT in Lebanon and other contexts.

| STRENGTHS   | WEAKNESSES   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OIT ability and expertise in working with LAs</li> <li>• Recognized professionalism and impartiality of OIT</li> <li>• Previous knowledge of the country</li> <li>• Active involvement of local authorities in design and implementation of humanitarian projects</li> <li>• An efficient two-pronged management structure</li> <li>• Constant presence of OIT personnel in the field</li> <li>• Initial training for local authority team as a tool for long-lasting capacity building</li> <li>• Increase in the funding opportunities for LAs, channelled through OIT</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framework agreements on the objectives and a longer-term vision of the partnership have not been signed</li> <li>• Delays in project activities due to bureaucratic hindrances</li> <li>• Some activities are not “appealing” for LAs (i.e. cash transfer) and their commitment decreases</li> <li>• Institutional instability and turnover</li> </ul>          |
| OPPORTUNITIES   | THREATS  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OIT is reputed as a professional and impartial organization</li> <li>• OIT has an important long standing experience in working with LAs and skilled headquarters and field personnel able to work with LAs</li> <li>• International donors are requiring more and more the involvement of Lebanese LAs in humanitarian programs and a new commitment towards vulnerable Lebanese community</li> <li>• Working with Municipalities and/or Unions of Municipalities enhances the possibility to strengthen quality essential services delivery</li> <li>• Strengthening the capacity building component of projects can enhance the ability of LAs to cope with disasters, hence improving the resilience of the community and the development of the territory</li> <li>• Working with LAs in emergency context can strengthen the linkage of relief to development according to the needs and priorities of the territory</li> <li>• Working with LAs fosters the legitimacy of LAs in emergency context</li> <li>• Working with Lebanese LAs can reactivate and enlarge the networking and partnerships with Italian LAs for territorial development</li> <li>• LAs can mobilise and involve civil society organizations in emergency response and preparedness</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working only with Syrian refugees as beneficiaries and only on humanitarian issues could hinder the partnership with local authorities</li> <li>• Working with LAs requires a strong commitment of the NGO in a medium-long term development perspective that could be hindered by the dwindling or the shifting to other areas of funding resources</li> </ul> |

Table 4: Lessons learned in a SWOT matrix

## How the involvement of LAs in emergency projects should evolve

The Syrian crisis poses big challenges. On one side, Lebanese communities and local authorities have to bear the heavy burden of an enormous influx of people in need, struggling with the willingness to support them and the awareness that Syrian refugees are an additional social, economic and environmental burden for them. On the other side, the international humanitarian community is facing again, in another emergency context, the challenge to enhance the relevance and the appropriateness of the humanitarian response by addressing persistent shortcomings of humanitarian aid such as weak understanding of local contexts, inflexibility of the response, lasting gap between relief and development.

It seems clear that a crucial future driver of action for the partnership between OIT and Lebanese LAs is to jointly work towards processes based on the needs and priorities of the territory: territorial planning, disaster preparedness and improved capacity to face emergency events.

Future sectors of intervention can be<sup>1</sup>:

- Improvement of essential services delivery (water, solid waste management);
- Cash for work (for example, maintenance of public buildings, forest clean-up, afforestation and restoration of sewage); the importance to create new jobs both for Syrian refugees and Lebanese people is evident;
- Livelihood restoration (agriculture, local mar-

kets, processing, rural small and micro enterprises' empowerment);

- Conflict mitigation through an active dialogue between Syrian refugees and host communities and between local authorities and civil society, especially women and youth;
- Disaster risk management and preparedness (early warning systems, contingency plans, vulnerability maps, training and awareness campaigns, etc.).

An element of the future OIT strategy in Lebanon is about how to strengthen its role of institutional brokering and networking with international territorial stakeholders – especially Italian LAs. In the first emergency response phase, Italian stake-

holders OIT has been working with for years (Tuscan local authorities, research centers and Universities, local firms)<sup>2</sup> have not been involved, except for the Regional Authority of Tuscany in its role of donor. In other words, OIT has not activated “territorial” resources and skills for the implementation of its projects,

mainly due to the urgency of humanitarian action. Instead, territorial stakeholders can play a crucial role not only in local economic and social development processes, but also in disaster preparedness and recovery: thanks to the channel of decentralized cooperation, territorial stakeholders can help Lebanese local authorities improve their capacity to cope with natural or man-made disasters, sharing their expertise in preparedness and recovery. For example, the

*OIT should  
strengthen its role  
of institutional  
brokering with  
international  
territorial  
stakeholders*



establishment and/or improvement of civil protection systems could be an interesting sector of activity, especially at the Union level<sup>3</sup>.

*In October 2013 the Government of Lebanon has adopted a National Response Framework for Disaster.*

Through a renewed institutional brokering and networking action of OIT, it could be created a “framework partnership” among Region of

Tuscany, Tuscan Civil Protection, local authorities, private sector and civil society aiming to activate each “territorial” expertise in case of disasters affecting South countries<sup>4</sup>. In other words, an innovative “decentralized humanitarian aid” could be implemented thanks to the successful experience of Tuscan territory in decentralized cooperation and also in humanitarian interventions, as proved in the response after 2006 conflict<sup>5</sup>.

1. As jointly outlined by representatives of LAs and OIT staff.

2. See Part One.

3. As outlined by Zanobi Tosi.

4. As explained by Roberto Barbieri.

5. The author thanks Zanobi Tosi for the definition of “decentralized humanitarian aid”.



A TERRITORIAL APPROACH  
IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE:  
REPLICABILITY AND FURTHER  
AREAS OF WORK

04



Thanks to its history and expertise, OIT is implementing humanitarian programs in Lebanon through the perspective of “localising” the response: the territory is the “instrument” for and the “objective” of humanitarian interventions. In fact, in Lebanon, on the basis of territorial characteristics and needs and thanks to an existing partnership, OIT and LAs have undertaken a dynamic bottom-up and long-term process aiming at fostering the quality of citizens’ and refugees’ life and wellbeing and increasing the resilience of the most vulnerable, both Lebanese and Syrian (territory as an “objective”). In other words, we could say that the territory and its local authorities are like a “champions” that can facilitate the response to humanitarian crisis. This process has been developing through the guidance of LAs, with the financial and technical support of OIT and the mobilisation of additional private and community capacities and resources (territory as an “instrument” of development).

Hence, in order to save lives, now and in the future, OIT is implementing humanitarian programs according to its way to work in development: be in the country, have existing partnership with LAs created in years of constant exchanges, reinforce capacity building processes, play a role of institutional brokering, “bet” on the development of the territory also for coping with emergencies, thus establishing a territorial approach to humanitarian assistance.

The experience carried out by OIT of working in partnership with LAs has generated interest in humanitarian community in Lebanon. It is noteworthy that OIT approach in Lebanon is in line with priorities of international donors for the

area. Moreover, the humanitarian strategy of Oxfam Confederation stresses the importance to work more closely with national and local Governments in order to build State capacity in preparedness, response and resilience<sup>1</sup>.

### **Under what conditions the “Lebanese approach” can be replicated?**

It could be guessed if OIT way of working in Lebanon can be intended as a new approach to humanitarian assistance. Actually, its approach contains some new interesting elements that could be “tested” in contexts different from Lebanon.

Needless to say, the best way to approach a natural or man-made disaster depends on the nature and size of the crisis and on social, economic and political characteristics of the affected country.

Notwithstanding, it can be figured out what are the key elements of OIT “Lebanese experience” that should to be taken into account for the replicability of the same approach in other countries.

**a.** Decentralization. The “Lebanese” approach can be replicated in contexts where local authorities exist (even if they are not active) and can exercise their powers thanks to an ongoing or completed process of decentralization. In this sense, a deep knowledge of the context and its political, administrative, economical and social key elements of a country is crucial.

**b.** Mutual commitment towards medium-term strategies focusing on territorial development. LAs can be involved in humanitarian response if



a strong linkage with bottom-up poverty reduction strategies of territorial development is created. Moreover, capacity building must be a key component of projects implemented in order to create new long-lasting skills in the LA.

**c.** A constant presence in the field. The presence of international NGOs' professional staff on the field facilitates and fosters the active involvement of LAs and ensures the proper supervision on project activities.

**d.** An active civil society. An active and aware civil society can play a “watchdog” role, holding LAs accountable for the humanitarian action undertaken and calling them for the continuity of successful policies of territorial development.

**e.** We can discuss if the previous partnership with LAs is a necessary precondition. On one side, it is easy to understand that the establishment and growth of a successful partnership with LAs takes time. This is a typical process of development programs that have average durations of at least three years. On the other side, it could occur that the partnership begins with humanitarian programs and then becomes a longer-term partnership aiming at the development of the territory. Hence, we may argue that the “Lebanese” approach should be tested on the field under the two different scenarios in order to understand if the existence of a previous partnership with the LA is a precondition. Instead, a key precondition is the capacity of the NGO of working with LAs, thus the ability

to establish good relations with the local actor, to understand the added value of a partnership with a LA also in humanitarian programs and to deal and compromise with the problems that may occur.

### **What are the further areas of work to make the approach more relevant, effective and efficient?**

The following recommendations aim at encouraging a reflection on key drivers of future action of OIT in Lebanon and in other emergency contexts:

#### **A. PROMOTE LINKING RELIEF, REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT (LRRD) PROJECTS BASED ON A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

The basic idea of LRRD is to link short-term relief measures with longer-term development programmes in order to create synergies and provide a more sustainable response to crisis situations. The OIT “Lebanese experience” has shown that the linkage between relief, rehabilitation and development can be strengthened not only implementing interventions that combine short-term and longer-term activities, but also involving in humanitarian project design and implementation new actors, such as the LAs. This approach should be enhanced and replicated in Lebanon and in other contexts. Moreover, working in emergency with the active involvement of LAs – where the context makes possible this kind of partnership – could improve the performance of international humanitarian community: local actors will be legitimated in their action and resilience of the local community fostered<sup>2</sup>. Notwithstanding, the abovementioned “dilemma” (how to conciliate the need to rapidly save

human lives in emergency situations with the choice about what is the more effective partnership to be put in place) should be always taken into account, especially in the assessment stage of the intervention.

Another element should be considered: for the sound functioning of the partnership, OIT should be able to make clear to LAs that the emergency response is only a phase of a wider territorial development strategy. LAs cannot be involved in humanitarian projects without realizing a joint reflection on the key element for a mutual engagement in support of territorial development strategies, especially in contexts such as Lebanon, where humanitarian projects aim to fulfil needs of a population different than national citizens.

#### **B. REINFORCE OXFAM ADVOCACY ACTION TO CHANNEL INTERNATIONAL FUNDING TO LEBANESE LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS**

It is well known that Lebanese local authorities are on the frontline of the Syrian crisis. The international community is getting aware about the necessity to address the needs not only of Syrian refugees, but also of vulnerable Lebanese in their local communities. In this sense, international donors are shifting their priorities from first emergency response activities to reactivation of local economy and improvement of service delivery. Nevertheless, needs and priorities of Lebanese local authorities should be known and addressed more clearly. Oxfam Affiliates, by providing studies and evidence-based examples, should enhance their advocacy action with the international community of donors in order to rethink aid channels to better include,



and empower, LAs in longer funding cycles. An increased and targeted support to local authorities, whether financial, material or technical, is crucial for coping with the crisis and triggering territorial development processes necessary to avoid the raising of social conflicts.

#### **C. KEEP DIVERSIFYING THE FUNDING STRATEGY**

OIT has successfully diversified its funding strategy, receiving funds from governmental cooperation agencies, European Union, trusts and foundations, public appeal fundraising actions working jointly with other affiliates as “one Oxfam”. Moreover, it has received more funds from abroad than from Italian donors. This diversification has enabled OIT to sum up efforts of different donors and ensure continuity for its action in

Lebanon. Hence, OIT should keep diversifying its funding strategy and should seek for donors that could ensure longer funding cycles.

#### **D. IMPROVE THE INITIAL PHASE OF ASSESSMENT ON CAPACITIES AND WILLINGNESS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES OF WORKING IN HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS**

In order to develop a rapid and effective humanitarian action in partnership with local authorities, an improvement of initial assessment phase is recommended. This improvement should refer to the selection of local authorities to work with. The selection should be conducted on the basis of some established criteria, such as i) municipalities with a high percentage of refugee population; ii) municipalities with a high percentage of vulnerable

Lebanese; iii) willingness of local authority to work on the Syrian refugee crisis (expressed, for example, by the provision of some services or aid to Syrian refugees); iv) existing partnership with the local authority. Moreover, a decision about if it is better to work with Municipalities or Unions of Municipalities should be taken case by case. A two-fold strategy is suggested: working both with Union of Municipalities and Municipalities according to the sector of intervention and political reality of the area of intervention. Furthermore, depending on the context, OIT staff should define different criteria for the selection of LAs to work with. Assessment phase should encompass not only humanitarian issues (how many people in needs, what kind of needs, how to organize distributions, etc.), but also local socio-economic development needs of the territory within a development perspective.

#### **E. RECRUIT PERSONNEL ABLE TO DEAL WITH BOTH HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT DYNAMICS**

A key issue for the sound development of partnership with LAs in Lebanon and other emergency contexts is the ability of OIT human resources (project and programme managers) to handle the work with local authorities properly. It is easy to note that working with local authorities as active partners in the implementation of activities is something “usual” in development projects, but not in humanitarian ones. If humanitarian personnel is “not used” to work with LAs, there may be some difficulties in “accepting” how LAs implement humanitarian activities in the light of the abovementioned weaknesses.

Hence, in order to implement projects with humanitarian activities but implemented by “unusual” humanitarian partners such as LAs, it is important to select and hire personnel with a good attitude to LAs able to see the added value in working with these partners. Therefore, ideally, the “perfect” project manager for this territorial approach to humanitarian assistance should have past experiences in the humanitarian sector but also in development projects. This would allow to apply the dynamics of development partnership to an humanitarian intervention in order to find and implement concerted solutions for ensuring the effectiveness of the help provided<sup>3</sup>.

#### **F. ENHANCE MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL INSTABILITY AND ENSURE LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE TO THE PARTNERSHIP**

It is well-known that one of the most crucial critical factors in working with local authorities is the institutional instability and the negative effects of spoil system and turnover. Hence, effective mitigation strategies to cope with this aspect are required. A good knowledge of the social, political and economic context and the strong presence of OIT personnel in the field can facilitate and foster the active involvement of local authorities and ensure the supervision over project activities. Secondly, a strategic planning for the future can make clear to LAs that the partnership with OIT is not only linked to the emergency phase, but it aims to design and implement projects for the local development according to the needs of the territory. Thirdly, it is important to cre-

ate a partnership not among people (the politician in charge and the project manager of OIT) but among two or more entities (OIT and LAs) that willingly decide to work together in an institutionalized way (for example, through framework agreements encompassing the objective and expected results of the partnership). Finally, OIT should enhance civil society capacities to hold local authorities accountable for their actions and decision-making outputs. Hence, also in a humanitarian context, OIT should play its role of catalyst for change, supporting bottom-up poverty reduction policymaking process and the improvement of local service delivery through the empowerment of effective local authorities and the active involvement of civil society.

#### **G. ENHANCE CAPACITY BUILDING COMPONENT OF THE PROJECTS**

Lebanese LAs demand for capacity building. They recognize that the added value of working with OIT is its professionalism in design and implementation of projects and programmes, so they want to learn. OIT should promote capacity building of local authorities on humanitarian issues (how to organize a voucher distribution, for example) to prepare them to cope with other emergencies in the future, but also on general topics related to project management (how to do a needs assessment, how to submit a proposal to international donors, how to manage funds, etc.). In other words, OIT should strengthen local authorities' ability to identify and respond to local development needs, also in a humanitarian context.

#### **H. STRENGTHEN PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE OF COMMUNITIES THROUGH DECENTRALIZED HUMANITARIAN AID AND THE ACTIVATION OF ITALIAN STAKEHOLDERS**

Local authorities are key actors in building resilience of the communities and in disaster risk reduction<sup>4</sup>. OIT should enhance its work on these topics through a reactivation of European, Italian and Tuscan stakeholders (local authorities, civil society organizations, private sector, research centers and Universities). These actors could be involved not only in local economic and social development strategies, but also in disaster preparedness and recovery: thanks to the channel of decentralized cooperation, new stakeholders from Italy, Europe and other countries can support Lebanese local authorities improve their capacity to cope with natural or man-made disasters, sharing their expertise in preparedness and recovery. For instance, through the institutional brokering and networking action of OIT, it could be created a "framework partnership" among Region of Tuscany, Tuscan Civil Protection, local authorities, private sector and civil society aiming to activate each "territorial" expertise in case of disasters affecting South countries<sup>5</sup>. In other words, an innovative "decentralized humanitarian aid" could be implemented thanks to the successful experience of Tuscan territory in decentralized cooperation<sup>6</sup>. It is also interesting to note that OIT has the opportunity to work on disaster preparedness in Lebanon with one of the most important Lebanese NGOs working on this topic, AFDC. Maybe it could be useful to reactivate this contact and design joint projects for building the capacities of local authorities on disasters management and contingency planning<sup>7</sup>.



## I. IMPROVE ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOLS TO STRENGTHEN OXFAM POLICIES WITH EVIDENCE FROM THE FIELD

Gathering information in humanitarian contexts always poses a big challenge in terms of availability of reliable data and logistic constraints. Notwithstanding, this exercise should be done in order to enhance the performance of Oxfam humanitarian action. This is especially true for Lebanon, where the humanitarian context is made more difficult by social, economic, political and religious issues. Hence, assessment, monitoring and evaluation tools should be enhanced through a deeper qualitative and quantitative data gathering from the field. A key issue is qualitative data gathering: interviews with

beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders should not be done only in post distribution monitoring activities to collect numbers, but also to understand the political, social and economic impact of the crisis, the perceptions of Lebanese people about the aid given, etc. Moreover, the linkage between policy design and evidence from the field through reliable quantitative data collection and qualitative analysis should be reinforced, in order to design a more effective and efficient response to Syrian refugee crisis. New evidence from the field – especially through interviews with Lebanese people - could help Oxfam design more tailored awareness campaigns aimed at reducing the mistrust of host communities for Syrian refugees.



1. OXFAM INTERNATIONAL, *Humanitarian Programme Strategy*, 2012, p.18: "The most effective and sustainable way to increase the speed and scale of humanitarian response is to build domestic response capacity of Affiliates, Partners and, where appropriate, state bodies. We will work more closely with national and local governments in countries where this is feasible, complementing the UN agencies and Red Cross National Societies on the basis of Oxfam's core competencies. Working in this way means investing in the capacity of those state bodies that are willing and able to work within international humanitarian principles and Oxfam's humanitarian framework, and Oxfam will invest its resources — whether staff time, funding, skills and experience, knowledge sharing or training — to ensure capacity building for those partners".

2. This aspect has been highlighted in Oxfam et al., *Missed Opportunities: the case for strengthening national and local partnership-based humanitarian responses*, 2013.

3. As outlined by Zanobi Tosi.

4. See, for example, DFID, *Humanitarian Emergency Response Review*, 2011; Green, Duncan, *From Poverty to Power. How active citizens and effective states can change the world*, 2012, Oxfam et al., *Missed Opportunities: the case for strengthening national and local partnership-based humanitarian responses*, 2013.

5. As explained by Roberto Barbieri.

6. The author thanks Zanobi Tosi for the definition of "decentralized humanitarian aid".

7. The Executive Director of AFDC, Ms. Sawsan Bou Fakhreddine, was a consultant of the GoL for the elaboration of the *National Response Framework for Disaster*.

## THE CIVIL PROTECTION AS AN EXAMPLE OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE: A WAY TO ENHANCE LOCAL CAPACITIES FOR RESPONDING TO NATURAL AND MAN-MADE DISASTERS?

Disaster preparedness and the installation of civil protection mechanisms have been outlined as one of the possible drivers of action of OIT in Lebanon and other emergency context. Hence, a brief overview of European and Italian Civil Protection mechanisms is useful for a reflection on the possibility to “replicate” the model (or parts of it) in other contexts.

### The Civil Protection as a part of disaster risk management

The United Nation International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) defines disaster risk management as “the systematic process of using administrative directives, organizations, and operational skills and capacities to implement strategies, policies and improved coping capacities in order to lessen the adverse impacts of hazards and the possibility of disaster”<sup>1</sup>. Thus, disaster risk management aims to avoid, lessen or transfer the adverse effects of hazards through activities and measures for prevention, mitigation and preparedness. Specifically, preparedness is defined as “the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to ef-

fectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from, the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions”<sup>2</sup>.

In view of the significant increase in the numbers and severity of natural and man-made disasters in recent years and in a situation where future disasters will be more extreme and more complex with far-reaching and longer-term consequences as a result, in particular, of climate change and the potential interaction between several natural and technological hazards, integrated disaster preparedness and management are increasingly important.

One of the most important mechanisms to cope with natural and man-made disasters is the civil protection. For civil protection we can intend a structure or any other State entity established with the aim of preventing disasters and mitigating the effects of such disasters on persons, on property and environment<sup>3</sup>.

### The European Union Civil Protection Mechanism

The importance of disaster risk management and preparedness has been recently recognized by the European Union. For instance, the Directorate-General for Humanitarian

Aid (DG-ECHO) integrated Civil Protection in 2010 for a better coordination and disaster response inside and outside Europe.

Moreover, in 2013 the Union Civil Protection Mechanism has been established. This mechanism “shall aim to strengthen the co-operation between the Union and the Member States and to facilitate coordination in the field of civil protection in order to improve the effectiveness of systems for preventing, preparing for and responding to natural and man-made disasters”<sup>4</sup>.

The main goal of the Mechanism is to facilitate co-operation in civil protection interventions in the event of major emergencies, to enhance preparedness at Member State and Union level to respond to disasters and to increase public awareness and preparedness for disasters<sup>5</sup>.

The protection to be ensured by the Union Mechanism covers primarily people, but also the environment and property, including cultural heritage, against all kinds of natural and man-made disasters, including the consequences of acts of terrorism, technological, radiological or environmental disasters, marine pollution, and acute health emergencies, occurring inside or outside the Union<sup>6</sup>. The Mechanism is activated upon the request of the affected State and only in the acute stage of the crisis (normally maximum two or three weeks). Apart from the 28 EU Member States, the former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are the participating states. The participating states pool resources (named “modules”) deployable on short notice (generally within 12 hours) in the disaster-stricken country<sup>7</sup>. The European Union also stresses the importance of the role of regional and local authorities in disaster management and the need to appropriately involve these actors in the activities carried out by European Union in accordance with Member States<sup>8</sup>.

The Decision establishes the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)<sup>9</sup> which is a coordination hub facilitating the European response during emergencies. It collects and analyses real-time information on disasters, monitors hazards, prepares plans for the deployment of experts, teams and equipment, and works with Member States to map available assets and coordinate the EU’s disaster response efforts by matching offers of assistance to the needs of the disaster-stricken country. The ERCC also supports a wide range of prevention and preparedness activities, from awareness raising to field exercises simulating emergency response<sup>10</sup>.

It is important to remark that in the European context, humanitarian aid and Civil Protection are complementary tools. The following table shows the key elements and differences between the instruments<sup>11</sup>.

|                     | HUMANITARIAN AID  | CIVIL PROTECTION   |
|---------------------|---|--|
| WHAT?               | Active donor: programming and policy development<br>Funding from EC budget = EUR 1.300 million per year | Voluntary contributions of in-kind assistance from Participating States Budget of CP Financial Instrument = EUR 370 million from 2014-2020 |
| TO WHOM?            | Implementing partners   | Government of affected country, UN and its agencies, or a relevant international organisation  |
| GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE? | Most vulnerable population(s) in third countries, mainly in developing countries                        | Inside and outside the EU  |
| TYPE OF DISASTER?   | Natural and man-made disasters (wars, conflicts, forgotten crises etc.)                                 | Natural and man-made disasters (complex emergencies exceptional)   |
| TIMESCALE?          | Immediate aftermath of crisis and beyond (presence of humanitarian needs)                               | Acute stage only (normally max. 2-3 weeks)   |

### The Italian Civil Protection model<sup>12</sup>

For the aim of this research, it is interesting to highlight some key aspects of the Italian Civil Protection model, considered as one of the most structured and well functioning in Europe.

#### The existence of a wide legal framework with enforced rules, composed by national and sub-national laws.

The National Service of Civil Protection was established with law no. 225 dated 1992, later integrated and modified by law no. 401 dated 2001 and no. 152 dated 2005. Over the years the responsibility regarding civil defence has progressively been transferred from the State to the local authorities;

the main steps of this process were legislative decree no. 112 dated 1998 and the modification of Title V of the Constitution, with which the Civil Protection became a concurrent subject of legislation, thus of regional competence.

#### The presence of a central leading body - the Civil Protection Department

The Civil Protection Department depends on the office of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers since 1982. In collaboration with regional governments and local authorities, it orients, organises and coordinates civil protection projects and activities.

It coordinates activities in response to natural disasters, catastrophes or other events -

C type events (see below). On an operational level, the Civil Protection Department:

- Issues guidelines for regions, provinces and municipalities, to prepare and implement forecasting and prevention programmes related to various risk scenarios;
- Prepares and implements emergency plans for type “C” events, in agreement with relevant regions and local organisations;
- Organizes periodical trainings with the aim to verify the effectiveness of emergency plans and test out procedures for managing disasters; also, it organizes training activities for voluntary organisations, regions, provinces, mountain communities and municipalities, as well as schools;
- Promotes information activities for national scenarios, in collaboration with other institutions and associations, as well as training and research activities regarding the forecasting and prevention of natural and man-made risks.

### **The activation of different levels of disaster governance depending on the nature of the event**

To easily detect what Civil Protection component has to act first, art. 2 of law 225 of 1992 defines three kinds of catastrophic events, depending on extension and gravity:

- A events: natural or man-made disasters a single local authority can tackle through ordinary interventions - local intervention;
- B events: natural or man-made disasters that request a coordinated intervention of more than one local authorities - provincial and regional intervention;
- C events: natural disasters, catastrophes and other events that, for their nature and extension, need to be tackled with extraordinary means and powers - National Civil Protection Department intervention. In this case, the Prime Minister declares a state of emergency with a decree and identifies, through orders, the actions to be undertaken to manage the event.

### **A structured system, based on the principle of subsidiarity, in which sectors of intervention and roles of each public or private body are well defined and interconnected**

The National Civil Protection service is organised as a complex system. Within the system, the responsibility for forecasting, prevention, relief and post-emergency activities are assigned to several bodies and operative structures. Hence, it's important to note that Italian Civil protection is not a function of only one authority; instead, it's a system of shared responsibilities composed by private and public bodies at national, regional, provincial and municipal level.

Beside public bodies, the Civil Protection System comprehends national scientific research groups (including Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia and other research institutes), national technical services, local

public utilities, voluntary organisations, the Italian Fire Brigade, the Armed Forces, the Police Forces, the National Forestry Commission, the Italian Red Cross, structures of the Italian Health Service and the National Mountain rescue and speleological corps (C.N.S.A.S.-Cai).

Over the years, many civil protection competences have been progressively shifted from the State to regional administrations and local authorities. In this sense, it's easy to note that local authorities and citizens are key actors of the model.

The system operates on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity, according to which the Municipality closest to the affected citizens – represented by its Mayor, focal point of Civil Protection System in the Municipal territory - intervenes first, providing relief to the population, coordinating local operative structures, civil protection volunteers included, while the upper administrative levels – Provincial council, Regional Council, National Government – intervene if the local authority is not able to cope with the event with its own means. The emergency actions are planned according to the principles of the “Augustus method”, a simple, streamlined and flexible instrument. In ordinary time, on the other hand, public authorities are involved at all levels in forecasting and disaster risk reduction activities. In this process, the scientific community

plays an essential role. As mentioned before, sectors of intervention of Italian Civil Protection are four:

**1) Forecasting:** activities aimed at studying and determining root causes of disaster phenomena, identifying risks and vulnerable territories. The Civil Protection Department has developed systems over the years to forecast and prevent potentially catastrophic phenomena. Thanks to collaboration with research bodies, institutes and groups, the Civil Protection Department has promoted studies and research to improve the knowledge of the territory, assess the extent of the phenomena and develop innovative strategies for damage containment.

**2) Prevention:** activities aimed to avoid or minimize damages caused by disasters to persons, on property and the environment. Prevention activities cover various areas, from the creation of monitoring systems to the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction and disaster management plans, sensitization campaigns and trainings. It's interesting to note that, according to the principle of subsidiarity, Civil Protection Department prepares disaster management plans for Type C events. The Regions provide the guidelines for preparing the provincial plans for Type B Events, and the Municipalities

prepare the plans for Type A events, according to the risk for their territory.

**3) Rescue:** interventions implemented in the immediate aftermath of a disaster and aimed to provide people affected by the event with emergency assistance.

Civil Protection System has the task of reducing the time of action between the occurrence of a calamity and the first aid to affected population.

For this purpose, there is an operations room active at the Civil Protection Department, called Sistema (System) that works on a 24 hours-basis, and collects, verifies and diffuses information to operative structures, both at central and local level. When a disaster occurs, the System collects information on the event and evaluates whether local resources are enough to deal with it.

The emergency response is coordinated by operative centers. As established by law, each Municipality must have an operative center to be activated in case of a disaster affecting its territory and according to the nature of the event.

**4) Post-Emergency:** in coordination with national and local authorities in charge, implementation of actions aimed to re-establish normality through reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The actions vary depending on the type of event, from building houses or temporary

structures to the provision of psychological support to affected people.

### **The active involvement of civil society and voluntary associations**

Volunteers are one of the most vital components of the system: about 1 million people, distributed all over the national territory, belong to organisations that take part of Civil Protection system. Over 4,000 voluntary organisations are registered at the Civil Protection Department as accredited bodies that can intervene in the aftermath of disaster. Accredited voluntary organizations are highly trained and have a strong specialization and expertise in sectors such as health and amateur radio. During the emergency, the work of volunteers is highly coordinated at logistic and operational level. Moreover, in order to motivate volunteers, national and regional laws establish a refund system for employers whose employees participate to a civil protection intervention and for voluntary organizations that have to pay for volunteers' logistics in advance.

### **Is it possible to replicate the model in other contexts? Perceptions of relevant stakeholders**

It is evident that for the implementation of projects aiming at creating/strengthening a Civil Protection system based on the Italian model in other contexts, there

should be some preconditions in the country of intervention. Relevant stakeholders involved in OIT humanitarian and development projects have identified the following key elements:

- A comprehensive legal framework that defines roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder involved;
- A strong willingness of the central Government to create a Civil Protection system;
- A central leading body that could manage the whole process and be the referent for the sub-national levels;
- An advanced decentralization process;
- Active voluntary organizations;
- An accurate cost-benefit analysis regarding investments needed to create and maintain a Civil Protection system in relation to the potential savings in expenditures for emergency interventions;
- Dedicated financial resources to create and implement the Civil Protection system in a long-term perspective;
- A continuous interaction with scientific sector.

1. UNISDR, *Living with risk: a global review of disaster reduction initiatives. Annex I - Terminology*, 2009, p. 10.

2. UNISDR, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

3. *Framework Convention on Civil Defence Assistance*, aperta alla ratifica 22 maggio 2000 (entrata in vigore il 25 settembre 2001)

4. Decision No. 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, art. 1.

5. *Ibidem*, art.3.

6. *Ibidem*, art.2.

7. Examples of Civil Protection modules are advanced medical post with or without surgery; field hospital; medical aerial evacuation of disaster victims; water purification; emergency temporary shelter; chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear detection and sampling. Each module is self-sufficient and interoperable.

8. Decision No. 1313/2013/EU, cit. note 37, preamble, par. 7.

9. *Ibidem*, art.7.

10. From the website [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/about/ERC\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/about/ERC_en.htm)

11. From the presentation of Burghardt, Diane, *The role of EU in the response of disasters*, International Disaster Law Course, Sanremo, 1st of May 2014.

12. Source of the information of this paragraph: <http://www.protezionecivile.gov.it/jcms/en/homepage.wp>. In addition, the author thanks Mr. Filippo Franchi, Head of Civil Protection Operational Area for Arciconfraternita della Misericordia of Siena, for his kind help in understanding the functioning of the Italian Civil Protection complex system.

## GLOSSARY

**Decentralization.** It constitutes a particular aspect of public sector reform. It involves the transfer of a range of political authority and powers including revenue-raising, responsibilities in service delivery and financial, human and administrative resources from higher levels in the political system to public authorities at lower level.<sup>1</sup> Decentralization has three main dimensions: political, administrative and fiscal.

**Governance.** Governance concerns the state's ability to serve the citizens. It refers to the rules, processes, and behaviours by which interests are articulated, resources are managed, and power is exercised in society. The way public functions are carried out, public resources are managed and public regulatory powers are exercised is the major issue to be addressed in this context. (...) governance is a meaningful and practical concept relating to the very basic aspects of the functioning of any society and political and social systems. It can be described as a basic measure of stability and performance of a society. As the concepts of human rights, democratisation and democracy, the rule of law, civil society, decentralized power sharing, and sound public administration, gain importance and relevance (...), governance evolves into good governance.<sup>2</sup>

**Local Authorities.** Directly or indirectly elected public governing bodies at sub-national level possessing within a given territory, as defined by law, a degree of autonomy from the central government and a set of competences to deliver public goods and services to citizens. Local authorities encompass a large variety of public governing bodies at various levels i.e. municipalities, communities, districts, countries, provinces, regions, etc.<sup>3</sup>

**Local Development.** Actions and activities in which individuals and communities participate. It occurs in the social, political, economic and geographical areas where those individuals and communities exist.

The term 'Local Development' derives from both their physical proximity to those who participate in it and are affected by them and because those individuals and groups who participate in them are familiar and at their ease with them, have significant status in them and influence over its outcome. Their local nature is much more defined by who participates in them and on what terms as by their distance from or proximity to centres of Government.<sup>4</sup>

**Local governance.** A process of decision making (by local council and relevant stakeholder groups) on matters of local/municipal development and the implementation and management of development plans and the provision of basic services through allocation of available resources in order to achieve agreed development goals and targets. In essence, local governance is about:

- a. who is participating in decision making, how is this process organised, and to what extent are actual decisions reflecting the community's priority needs;
- b. once decisions have been made, how are they translated into action and who is involved in the implementation process;
- c. what resources (natural, human, material, financial) are available and how are they allocated to meet people's needs in terms of basic services and participatory development.<sup>5</sup>

**Territorial cooperation.** In European Union context, this term indicates the cooperation partnership two or more territories of the European Union establishes in the framework of European Cohesion policy.

**Territorial development.** Aims at improving regional and national cohesion by unlocking the specific potential of the different territories of a country, thanks to more efficient and sustainable development strategies. Territorial Development to be effective is dependant

upon a realistic level of Decentralisation, the support of Local and National Government and the ideals of Local Governance, centring upon a common spatial entity and social coherence, clearly defined outcomes to which the stakeholders have signed up and within which context there are incentives ensuring that TD is greater than the sum of its individual parts and collective benefits equal personal benefits.

There is no prescriptive all embracing concept of territorial development but a number of essential compo-

nents can be outlined. Territorial development is based on a specific geographical space which has unifying characteristic (urban, rural, natural region), often crossing administrative boundaries and ethnic homogeneity, whose citizens, in partnership with Government, identify the means to strengthen sustainable livelihoods by realising the social, economic and cultural opportunities of the territory where they reside and developing this in an environmentally sensitive manner, on the basis of peace, progress and respect for human rights.<sup>6</sup>

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## METHODOLOGY

The report methodology consisted of the three tasks:

- Review and analysis of background documents;
- Primary data collection in Lebanon and Italy;
- Data analysis and write up.

Desk work was intended to review and analyse background documents referring to Lebanese context, humanitarian action in the country, previous experiences of OIT in development projects and programmes, decentralization and decentralized cooperation issues.

The documents analysed has included:

- Oxfam Italia and Oxfam Confederation Strategic Plans;
- Oxfam Italia and Oxfam Confederation Strategic Plans on Syrian refugee crisis;
- Strategic Plans and Guidelines of main donors in Lebanon;
- Relevant documents of UNHCR and other International Agencies or NGOs on Syrian refugee crisis;
- Lebanese national law on decentralization;
- Approved project documents of Oxfam Italia development projects and humanitarian intervention in Lebanon;
- Approved project documents of other Oxfam Italia experiences regarding emergency, recovery and preparedness activities involving local authorities;
- Final or intermediate evaluations of programmes and projects involving local authorities (Seenet, NetsAfrica, MedCooperation, Desurbal, T-NET);
- EU Communications on decentralized cooperation and local authorities in development;
- Specialized literature on decentralized cooperation.

**Field mission in Lebanon and interviews.** A three-weeks field mission in Lebanon has been organized for

collecting primary data on Oxfam Italia humanitarian intervention in the country in partnership with local authorities. Data have been collected through interviews with relevant stakeholders (see table below), mainly representatives of local authorities OIT is working with and OIT personnel in Lebanon. Moreover, interviews have been undertaken in Italy too with OIT personnel involved in Syrian refugee crisis response and with OIT staff considered as a key actor to reflect on OIT history and approach.

Key stakeholders have been divided in three groups:

- a.** Oxfam Italia staff in Italy and Lebanon;
- b.** Partners in Lebanon (Union of Municipalities, Municipalities);
- c.** Partners in Lebanon (Other Oxfam Affiliates, donors, INGOs, local NGOs).

For each group a tailored semi-structured questionnaire has been administrated. Questionnaires have been organized in five key dimensions of research:

1. The beginning and the development of the partnership;
2. The context of the partnership has been and continues to be developed in;
3. Organizational aspects of the partnership;
4. Problems faced and results achieved;
5. The future of the partnership and its replicability and scaling up.

These dimensions of research have oriented both the desk and the field work.

Final task has been the report writing.

## LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

### PARTNERS IN LEBANON. LOCAL AUTHORITIES

|                                    |                  |         |
|------------------------------------|------------------|---------|
| Union of Municipalities of Tyre    | Hassan Hammoud   | 24-feb  |
| Municipality of Bcharreh           | Antoine Taouk    | 25-febr |
| Union of Municipalities of Jezzine | Khalil Harfouche | 03-mar  |
| Union of Municipalities of Zgharta | Toni Sleiman     | 07-mar  |

### PARTNERS IN LEBANON. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

|  |                             |        |
|--|-----------------------------|--------|
| AFDC. Director   | Sawsan Bou Fakhreddine      | 28-feb |
| DPNA. Director   | Fadlallah Hassouna          | 04-mar |
| UTL. Communication Officer   | Vincenzo Schiano Lomoriello | 05-mar |
| Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis (CGLU)<br>au Liban et en Jordanie. Bureau Technique<br>des Villes Libanaises (BTVL) | Houda Odeimi                | 05-mar |
| CDR. Council for Development<br>and Reconstruction   | Marie Helene Kassardjian    | 06-mar |

### OXFAM

|   |                       |        |
|---|-----------------------|--------|
| Oxfam GB. MEL Officer in Lebanon  | Maria Ghazzaoui       | 24-feb |
| Oxfam GB. Policy Officer in Lebanon   | Hasan Saifo           | 24-feb |
| Oxfam Italia. Director-General  | Roberto Barbieri      |        |
| Oxfam Italia. Director<br>of Development Cooperation<br>and Humanitarian Aid Department | Sorinel Vasile Ghetau |        |
| Oxfam Italia. Humanitarian Aid Coordinator  | Riccardo Sansone      |        |
| Oxfam Italia. Middle East and Maghreb<br>Regional Manager                               | Umiliana Grifoni      |        |
| Oxfam Italia. Mediterranean and Middle East<br>Office Humanitarian Aid Referent         | Francesca Pini        |        |
| Oxfam Italia. Mediterranean and Middle East<br>Office Development Referent              | Laura Bassetti        |        |
| Oxfam Italia. Country Representative  | Samantha Bobbo        |        |
| Oxfam Italia. Project Manager   | Zanobi Tosi           |        |

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Oxfam Italia is an association that is part of an international confederation of 17 organizations that work together in more than 90 countries in order to build a future free from injustice of poverty. We work to improve the living conditions of thousands of people, giving the power and the resources to exercise their human rights and build a better future for themselves.

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