we'am

Community Perceptions Report
01 December 2023 – 29 February 2024

we'am
Working for Engagement, Acceptance and Mediation

Disclaimer

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1. Executive Summary

The perceptions collected during this quarter reflect the nationwide sense of insecurity and instability. Safety concerns coupled with economic challenges are paramount as individuals express feelings of vulnerability in their communities, attributed to the absence of gun control, the escalation of violence and robberies, food insecurities, and low incomes. Moreover, the widening scope of the Israeli war on Lebanon, with Israel targeting regions deep within Lebanese territories, has further exacerbated feelings of anxiety. The Community Perceptions Tracker (CPT) revealed that Gender Based Violence (GBV) poses a significant threat to individual safety, particularly affecting women, and girls. An additional contributor to safety apprehensions is the rising number of school dropouts, primarily attributed to economic hardships that hinder parents from enrolling their children in schools. Consequently, youngsters are left unsupervised on the streets, where they tend to adopt delinquent behaviors, posing an additional strain on communal security. Overall, people echoed a growing need for reforms by the government and changes to improve the political, economic, and social situations.

The Israeli- war on Lebanon has impacted individuals' livelihood in Southern Lebanon. This is due to severe lack of accessibility to and increased prices of goods and services, and substantial destruction of essential infrastructure.

Community-led Recommendations

To Local Authorities:

- Enhance communication and engagement with residents by establishing effective communication channels through regular town hall meetings, and the creation of an advisory board representative of the community. This will facilitate the sharing of information, safety concerns, and security measures.

Although the GoL serves as the primary duty-bearer to respond to local and national challenges, the prevailing circumstances in the country preclude the consortium from proposing community recommendations to the GoL at this time. These quarterly briefs will be coupled with other project outputs to develop more concrete recommendations at the policy-level to the GoL.

To EU and other programs:

- Prioritize funding for awareness programs on drug abuse for youngsters and parents and provide rehabilitation programs.

- Invest in education programs to give underprivileged children the chance to enroll in schools.

- Provide resources for crime prevention education and intervention programs, in collaboration with local authorities and CSOs, aimed at addressing underlying socio-economic factors contributing to criminal behavior.

- Fund activities that contribute to the reduction of stress and anxiety, as this can enhance mental well-being and reduce intrafamilial tensions.

- Prioritize funding for awareness-raising on the dangers of irregular migration especially by sea.

- Support youth-led initiatives and programs that promote social cohesion, human rights, intercultural dialogue, and positive behavioral change.

- Invest in training programs and awareness initiatives on the right of People with Disabilities and ensure their representation in activities and decision-making processes.

2. **Background**

Project

ALEF – act for human rights is implementing the WE'AM project (Working for Engagement, Acceptance and Mediation), funded by the EU and led by OXFAM, and which aim is to contribute to a people-centered recovery of Lebanon, in line with 3RF[1] and particularly its Pillar 3[2] that supports a socially cohesive environment. Considering the multi-layered crisis[3] and societal divisions in the country, the project aims at focusing on three key dimensions: drivers of tensions at the community level; conflict prevention processes and awareness raising; mainstreaming of community level social cohesion into programming, with particular focus on the EU. The project multi-stakeholder participatory approach helps build consensus among civil society, community groups, religious leaders, political, media, and private sector actors, and donor community and the wider audience, and produces recommendations to mainstream social cohesion into EU community-based development programs.

As part of the project, the Working Group for People Affected by the Syrian Crisis (WG PASC), a network of 32 local CSOs facilitated by ALEF,[4] has been collecting timely community perceptions on social tensions, and on the reform processes Lebanon is expected to undertake to address the crisis, using Oxfam's Community Perception Tracker (CPT) approach to capture, analyze, and understand the perceptions of communities in the 6 areas prioritized by the consortium (Beirut, Tripoli, Akkar, Baalbek, Saida and Barja). PASC's usage of the CPT has focused on monitoring social tensions and sentiments of people around the reform processes and its application,

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1 The Lebanon Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) is part of the response to the August 4 Beirut Blast. It is a people-centered recovery and reconstruction framework that aims to achieve three central goals in response to the Beirut explosion. The first aim is to have a people-centered recovery that returns sustainable livelihood to the affected population and improve social justice; the second aim is the reconstruction of assets, services and infrastructure; and the third aim is reform to support reconstruction and contribute to the restoration of people's trust in governmental institutions.

2 Pillar three is the reconstruction framework which aims to implement reform processes to support reconstruction and help restore people's trust in governmental institutions by improving governance.

3 Since 2019, Lebanon has been facing a complex crisis marked by economic collapse, financial sector instability, political gridlock, social unrest, spillover of regional tensions, and humanitarian challenges.

4 The Working Group for Persons Affected by the Syrian Crisis in Lebanon (WG PASC) is a voluntary, inter-organizational, non-binding and informal network. The Working Group is open to all local CSOs working with persons affected by the Syrian crisis. It works to enhance the capacity and space for CSOs in Lebanon to influence their government and international actors to adopt policies that more effectively meet the needs of vulnerable refugees and host communities and implement them effectively.

through the network's regular day-to-day engagement and programming. This has been allowing for the tracking of the perceptions of not only crisis-affected communities, but also local service providers, local authorities, wider civil society and UN agencies' staff, and other community groups, on an ongoing basis.

To further understand drivers and triggers of social tensions at the national level and the impact of the reform process and its connection to social cohesion, ALEF has been analyzing on quarterly basis the qualitative data collected by PASC using the CPT against incidents, news reports, and other secondary sources to produce quarterly perception reports around social tensions and the reform process. ALEF has been conducting monthly meetings with PASC members using the CPT, in order to discuss any observations, recurrent trends, and potential improvements to the process. Additionally, the findings and recommendations of this report have been validated with PASC and project partners, in order to ensure that the findings are in accordance with observations from the field.

This community perceptions report is the second of the series and covers the period between 01 December 2023 and 29 February 2024.

Community Perception Tracker (CPT)

The CPT utilizes a mobile tool to gather community perceptions during crises, aiding organizations in understanding the beliefs and perceptions of affected communities. Its goal is to give crisis-affected communities the opportunity to shape programs and policies that could potentially impact their lives and contribute to bottom-up change.

Context

The period spanning December 2023 through February 2024 witnessed a widening of the scope and intensity of the attacks with targets 75km from the Southern borders. This is underscored by decades of occupation, impunity, and disregard to international law. The current escalation is further impacting community livelihood in the south, triggering tension among Lebanese segments, and destabilizing the political situation. The below is an account of key events:

During this reporting period, a member of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) was killed by Israeli Forces shelling, and others were injured.[5] More prominently, however, an Israeli airstrike killing a Hamas official, Saleh al Arouri, in the Beirut Southern Suburb, al Dahiyeh **caused alert among authorities in Lebanon; this was the first assassination outside the Palestinian territories and was near Beirut, the capital.** Al Arouri served as the deputy chief of Hamas political bureau and the founder of Hamas military wing, the Qassam Brigades.[6] The airstrike was aimed on a gathering involving Hamas officials and members of the Lebanese Sunni Islamist Jamaa Islamiya

5 Al Jazeera (2023, 5 December). Lebanon army says one soldier killed in Israeli shelling on border post. Retrieved from: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/5/lebanese-army-says-one-soldier-killed-in-israeli-shelling-near-border#:~:text=The%20Lebanese%20Armed%20Forces%20have,engaged%20in%20conflict%20with%20Israel

6 Al Jazeera (2024, January 3). Who was Saleh al-Arouri, the Hamas leader killed in Beirut? Retrieved from: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/3/who-was-saleh-al-arouri-the-hamas-leader-killed-in-beirut

faction, resulting in four Palestinian and three Lebanese casualties.[7]. Although Israel did not take full responsibility for the drone strike in al Dahiyeh, it stated that the attack is strictly on Hamas, and not on the Lebanese state.[8] These events prompted the caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati to file the third complaint to the UN for Israel's actions, urging Israelis to abide by the UNSC 1701 Resolution and ceasefire.[9]

The Intensification of Israeli attacks targeting **civilians and civilian infrastructure has increased throughout the month of January, contributing to not only increasing fear within local communities but deepened polarization between proponents and opponents of the war.** Indeed, Israeli airstrikes continue to injure and kill[10],[11] civilians and cause extensive damage to nearby residential areas.[12] In fact, between December and February, the number of civilians killed since October 8th had doubled, from 24 to a total of 42 civilian deaths. Al Taybeh High School was also destroyed using phosphorus gas.[13] **Children in shelters in South Lebanon are also reported to have exhibited increased anxiety, heightened fear, and sleeping disorders.**[14] On February 18th, an Israeli strike deepened its targets and hit Ghazieh, an area in Saida, 50km away from the southern border, resulting in 14 people injured and spread an intensified anxiety among the Lebanese due to the possibility of further escalation.[15] Furthermore, on February 26th, Israel attacked areas close to Baalbek, situated 75 kilometers from the borders[16] resulting in the death of two Hezbollah members and injuring 3 others.[17] As such, the expansion of Israeli operations of areas deep within Lebanon, the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and fear of a nation-wide war outbreak **is fostering the polarization and divisions within the Lebanese community.** One segment of the community, although in support of the Palestinian cause, condemns Hezbollah's involvement in the war on Gaza, viewing it as dragging Lebanon into a situation it is ill-equipped to manage. Conversely, the other segment perceives Hezbollah's resistance and actions crucial for the Palestinian cause, and war on Gaza. Hence, the discourse of

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7 Reuters (2024, January 3). Israeli drone kills deputy Hamas chief in Beirut. Retrieved from: https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/explosion-southern-beirut-suburb-dahiyeh-two-security-sources-2024-01-02/

8 Reuters (2024, January 3). Israeli drone kills deputy Hamas chief in Beirut. Retrieved from: https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/explosion-southern-beirut-suburb-dahiyeh-two-security-sources-2024-01-02/

9 L'Orient Today (2024, January 10). Lebanon Files third UN complaint against Israel since the start of the conflict. Retrieved from: https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1363821/lebanon-files-third-un-complaint-against-israel-since-start-of-the-conflict.html

10 Relief Web (2024, January 15). Lebanon: Flash Update #9 - Escalation of hostilities in south Lebanon. Retrieved from: https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-flash-update-9-escalation-hostilities-south-lebanon-11-january-2024

11 Naharnet (2023, 11 December). Israeli Strike kills Lebanese local official. Retrieved from: https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/302043-israeli-strike-kills-lebanese-local-official

12 OCHA (2024, January 3). Lebanon: Flash Update #8 - Escalation of hostilities in south Lebanon, 3 January 2024. Retrieved from: https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/lebanon/lebanon-flash-update-8-escalation-hostilities-south-lebanon-3-january-2024

13 CLDH (2024, January 28). HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN A WEEK. Retrieved from: https://drive.google.com/file/d/18UK2NZDFz-JNGdKYr0Xr_ARhsgqJXEpx/view

14 OCHA (2023, 9 December). Lebanon: Flash Update #4 – Escalation of hostilities in South Lebanon. Retrieved from: https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/lebanon/lebanon-flash-update-4-escalation-hostilities-south-lebanon-9-december-2023

15 L'Orient Today (2024, February 21). Ghazieh strikes: Not indicative of all-out war in Lebanon, but sent a clear message. Retrieved from: https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1368927/ghazieh-strikes-not-indicative-of-all-out-war-in-lebanon-but-send-a-clear-message.html

16 AP News (2024, February 26). Israel's air force strikes deep inside Lebanon, killing 2 people, after Hezbollah downs a drone. Retrieved from: https://apnews.com/article/israel-lebanon-hezbollah-airstrikes-balbek-drone-ed15c8275fa47e6214784f5ed99649f8

17 The National News (2024, February 26). Israeli strikes hit Lebanon's Baalbek for first time since start of Gaza war. Retrieved from: https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/2024/02/26/israeli-jets-strike-lebanons-baalbek-for-the-first-time-since-gaza-war-began/

"Our Lebanon and Their Lebanon," has reemerged.[18] The ongoing presidential vacancy is fueling anti-Hezbollah opposition faction to pursue presidential election to safeguard the nation from a widespread war.[19] Meanwhile, the uncertainty of municipal elections is also increasing communal tension amid the potential escalation of the conflict.[20]

The southern region holds significant prominence in the cultivation of various commodities, including olives, tobacco, wheat, bananas, milk which collectively contribute to a total export value of 94 million dollars annually.[21] **This figure is expected to witness a decline consequent to the devastation of agricultural land in Southern Lebanon and the deployment of white phosphorus gas.** The prices of all necessary goods and services are increasing exacerbating further economic hardships of citizens, especially in rural areas such as the Southern villages affected by the clashes. These record-high prices impose an additional strain on individuals and households, particularly in terms of transportation, electricity costs, and basic needs such as food. Moreover, the Israeli targeting of agricultural areas in the South impacts livestock, crops, poultry, and aquaculture. Consequently, by the end of December, approximately 200,000 birds, 700 heads of livestock, 250 beehives, and 60 greenhouses were reportedly destroyed.[22] Lebanon, is presently grappling with challenges within this sector, exacerbating concerns regarding food insecurity. **Attacks on agricultural sites not only jeopardize livelihoods and food security but also exert adverse effects on local climate and biodiversity.** In fact, the Agricultural Union of the South contends that the agricultural sector is marginalized and threatened, evident in the extremely low government allocated budget in January 2024. The Central Beqaa Valley, where agricultural production is centered, is known for the cultivation of grapevine, vegetables, potatoes, and tobacco.[23] This area contributes greatly to basic food necessities in the country and is being highly impacted by the Israeli attacks in the Beqaa, near Baalbek, which is increasing the risk of food insecurity, and agricultural disruption in the country.

On another front, a renewed discourse advocating the return of Syrian refugees to Syria has emerged and has contributed to societal tensions. In fact, the non-governmental organization (NGO) World House of Lebanon, in conjunction with several official institutions, initiated the "UNDO the Damage" campaign at the beginning of 2024 employing billboards disseminated nationwide and an advertisement broadcast on MTV Lebanon (a national station associated with right-wing political parties). This campaign calls to 'rectify the damages' stemming from the presence of Syrian refugees.[24] It's broadcasting on MTV channel, and on the roads is heightening

18 MTV Lebanon (2024, February). Retrieved from "Sar el Waet".

19 L'Orient Today (2024, February 20). The opposition's latest attempt to break presidential deadlock. Retrieved from: https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1368775/the-oppositions-latest-attempt-to-break-presidential-deadlock.html

20 L'Orient Today (2024, February 19). Mawlawi warns of delay to municipal elections amid conflict. Retrieved from: https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1368693/mawlawi-warns-of-delay-to-municipal-elections-amid-conflict.html

21 The Policy Initiative (2024, February 12). Economic Impact of the War in Lebanon: Real and potential losses. Retrieved from: https://www.thepolicyinitiative.org/article/details/352/economic-impact-of-the-war-in-lebanon-real-and-potential-losses

22 OCHA (2023, 21 December). Lebanon Flash Update #6 – Escalation of hostilities in south Lebanon. Retrieved from: https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/lebanon/lebanon-flash-update-6-escalation-hostilities-south-lebanon-21-december-2023#:~:text=As%20of%2019%20December%2C%2072%2C437,killed%20and%20492%20people%20wounded

23 Lebanon's Second National Communication Ministry of Environment/UNDP (2011). Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation. Retrieved from https://climatechange.moe.gov.lb/viewfile.aspx?id=33#:~:text=The%20central%20Bekaa%20valley%20where,and%20grains%20are%20mainly%20cultivated.&text=The%20mountainous%20region%2C%20which%20is,orchards%20and%20vegetables%20are%20grown.

24 L'Orient Today (2024, March 18). Controversial new campaign calls to 'undo the damage' of Syrians in Lebanon. Retrieved from: https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1369676/controversial-new-campaign-calls-to-undo-the-damage-of-syrians-in-lebanon.html

people's apprehensions towards Syrian refugees, especially amidst the deteriorating financial stability. The controversial campaign falls short of providing factual information and has used misleading footage to fuel tensions and call for deportations[25].

25 L'Orient Today (2024, March 18). Controversial new campaign calls to "undo the damage" of Syrians in Lebanon. Retrieved from: https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1369676/controversial-new-campaign-calls-to-undo-the-damage-of-syrians-in-lebanon.html

3. Detailed Data
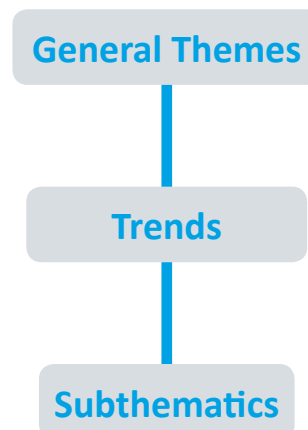
Sources of Perceptions

The CPT covers six key regions in Lebanon – Tripoli, Akkar, Beirut, South, Mount Lebanon, and Baalbek-El Hermel – each of which has specific areas of focus. In Tripoli, the project's attention centers on Baddawi, Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh, and El Mina. Akkar's focus includes Fneidek, Tekrit, Mashta Hassan/Mashta Hammoud. The project's focus in Beirut lies in Ain el Remmeneh/Chiyah, and Hay el Gharbeh/Ghbeiry. Saida is the central focus in the South, Barja in Mount Lebanon, and Baalbek City and Deir El Ahmar in Baalbek-el Hermel.
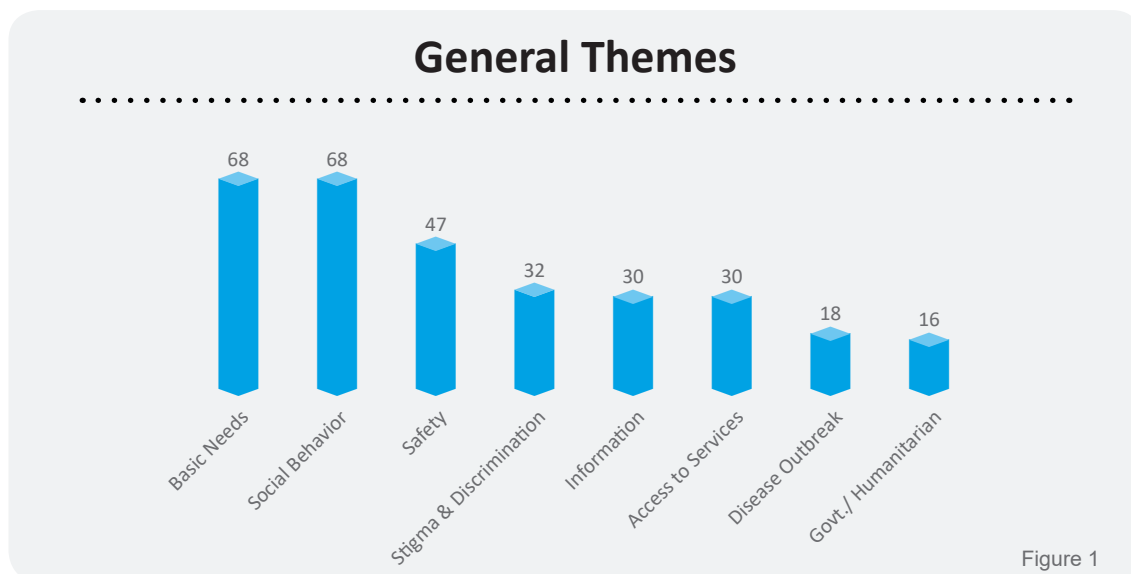
In the fourth quarter of the project, spanning December 2023 through February 2024, a cumulative total of 233 perceptions were collected. The primary sources of information that influenced or shaped the perceptions collected were word of mouth, based on what the community around is saying, (135), and personal feelings, based on one's own beliefs (85).

The majority of perceptions, amounting to 154, collected came from women, while 79 perceptions were collected from men. Notably, 58 participants identified facing difficulties in areas such as hearing, seeing, mobility, remembering/concentrating, communication, and self-care, while the majority reported no disabilities. Geographically, 148 perceptions were from the North, 37 from Akkar, 29 from the South, 11 from Beirut, 4 from Baalback-el Hermel, and 4 from Mount Lebanon.

Trends Identified

The perceptions collected were categorized into three different distinct tiers: the first, is broad "general themes", encompassing general ideas around which community perceptions revolved; the second, is "trends" which highlights nuanced drivers of conflict within the community and breaks down the general themes into specific issues. For instance, "fear-safety" describes the safety concerns stemming from and insecurity in the community. The third tier is a compilation of "sub-thematic" that elucidates the second tier further and deepens more analysis of the community perceptions. This division organizes perceptions and breaks down the multiple factors contributing to social instability and insecurities in communities.

General Themes

Trends

Subthematics

General Themes

Figure 1

An important observation from this quarter's findings is the substantial influence of the local context and community discourse on individuals' attitudes, views, and perceptions towards drivers of tensions. This is evident by the fact that 135 perceptions stem from word of mouth.
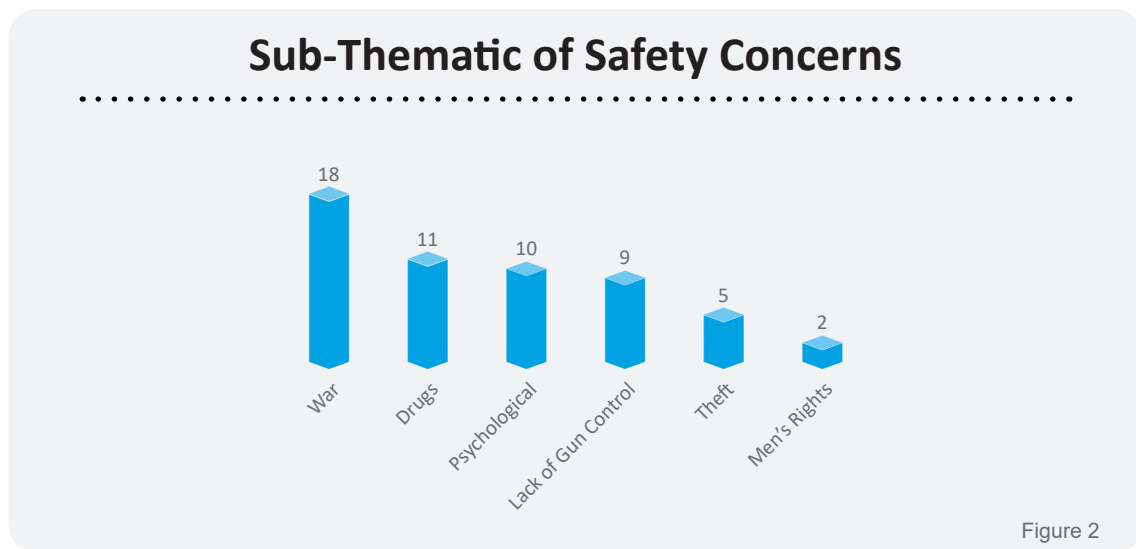
In the context of the ongoing Israeli-war on Lebanon, and the tense local situation, safety concerns emerged as the most frequently cited trend among participants expressed in 72 perceptions out of the 233, predominantly rooted in the fear of an imminent and nationwide war. Eighteen perceptions mention that the conflict and uncertainty are causing clear psychological torment for individuals, manifested in chronic anxiety and stress.

"I won't talk about the financial situation because we cannot tolerate it anymore and it's been talked about extensively. What bothers me is the war, and its impact on our mental health" (Woman, Tripoli, adult).

"In this life, you are living and not living at the same time. Our generation did not see anything but war and suffering" (Man, el Mina, adult).

The exacerbation of psychological distress and safety concerns trends is also attributed to a notable lack of gun control in the areas. In fact, 9 perceptions specifically highlight the concerns related to arms usage. The CPT shows that the tense and unstable situation in the country is heightening impulsive, and erratic behavior observed. Some participants have expressed that minor individual disagreements result in gunshots and escalate quickly in some areas. Compounding these issues is the prevalence of drug abuse, with 11 perceptions pointing to an open increase in drug usage on the streets, especially by young people who showcase violent, untamed, and impulsive behaviors. This trend is further aggravated by a significant rise in school dropouts – accounted for in 20 perceptions – linked to economic hardships: the phenomena of children spending more time on the streets is becoming pre-dominant exposing them to detrimental habits, reflected in 5 perceptions out of the 11 related to drug abuse. Additionally, 5 perceptions mention an increase in theft and robberies in Tripoli due to dire economic struggles. The negative perceptions around safety and security, compounded by an acute financial distress is destabilizing further an already fragile social fabric. The fragility of the social norms and values, including trust between individuals and institutions, and social cohesion, becomes evident when

people experience economic instability. Existing negative perceptions around safety and security exacerbate the eroding trust in institutions, strains community bonds, and leads to heightened tensions within society. People may also feel more vulnerable and distrustful, leading to increased anxiety and a desire for stability. This, in turn, can further strain social cohesion and impact the socio-economic well-being of citizens.

Sub-Thematic of Safety Concerns

Figure 2

The safety concerns trend extends to encompass instances of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), as articulated in 22 perceptions: risk of early marriage was mentioned in 6 perceptions, half of which attribute it to economic hardships, while the other half to cultural and societal norms.

"I got married when I was 16 years old to a man way older than me. The age gap between us was huge, and he was married to two other women as well. Despite all of this I married him because of my parents' dire financial situation. It's all because of poverty" (Woman, Saida, young).

"Back in our days, as soon as a girl turns 11-12 years old, she should be ready to get married and have children." (Woman, Tripoli, Adult).

Interestingly, a small number of perceptions emerged (2 perceptions), specifically in Tripoli – Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh area – complaining of lack of attention to challenges and abuses men face, and instances of male victimization and abuse. The framing of these perceptions has been linked by PASC WG members to a response to activities related to women empowerment and women's rights, which can be understood as a threat to the patriarchal structure of such areas. A further prevalence in such views might deteriorate trust with local CSOs by men in the area.

"I've never seen, in my whole life, an organization talking about men's rights." (Man, Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh, adult).
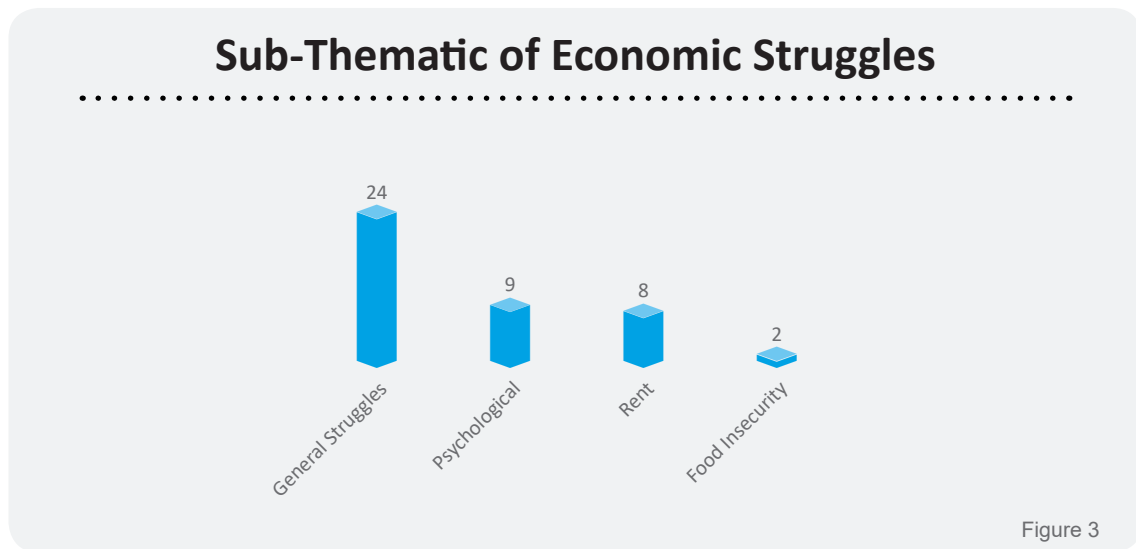
"Women have become rude and disrespectful. She collaborates with other women against her husband, and she yells at him, and she is the one controlling him, and as soon as a small and minor disagreement arises, she asks for a divorce." (Woman, Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh, adult).

Fifty-four perceptions refer to the prevalence of economic challenges (the second prominent trend identified) causing security concerns. 8 out of the 54 perceptions indicated not being able to pay for basic services, such as rent, among others. Furthermore, 24 perceptions echoed economic struggles while surviving on low incomes amidst pronounced inflation and lack of food security. Furthermore, 4 perceptions in the CPT suggest that parents are unable to afford their children's educational expenses, including tuitions, books, and stationaries. Consequently, it has led to a rise in the number of school dropouts, reflected in 20 perceptions as previously mentioned. This, in turn, amplifies safety concerns, as children are either forced to work to assist their families, thereby violating their rights, or left unsupervised on the streets, where they may become susceptible to drug abuse, consequently exacerbating instability within the areas. The perceptions revealed that the combination of the aforementioned economic hardships often compels larger families to inhabit cramped and unhygienic houses due to constrained financial resources.

"I am a 40-year-old married man, and I have 4 daughters. We live in a very small house that is not sanitary at all. I am financially weak, and I cannot keep up with the household expenses. (Man, Fneidek, adult).

"I really do not know how we are surviving till the end of the month. Sometimes, I don't even have 100,000LBP." (Woman, Baddawi, adult).

"Rent is so high; I swear I have no idea what I am going to do." (Man, el Mina, adult).

Sub-Thematic of Economic Struggles

- General Struggles: 24
- Psychological: 9
- Rent: 8
- Food Insecurity: 2

Figure 3

The combination of economic difficulties and the looming threat of a full-scale war and instability is prompting individuals, driven by despair, to contemplate emigration to secure better living conditions abroad; shown in 8 perceptions. The inclination to travel witnessed an increase from 1 perception in December to 5 perceptions in January. This could be due to the fears stemming from the expansion in the scope of attacks and conflict, triggering anxiety around a possible full-scale war.

"The situation is so bad. I want to travel no matter what. I'd do it not only by sea but also by foot if I have to." (Man, Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh, adult).

"Currently, we are not able to make a lot of decisions because we do not know when a war will erupt. But the one decision we are sure of is emigration." (Woman, Saida, adult).

Notably, there is only 1 perception that highlights dangers of targeting agricultural lands in the South, emphasizing the undeniable negative impact the Israeli attacks will have on food security.

"We are going to witness a surge in the prices of olive oil because the agricultural lands in the south were attacked and burned. There are no more olive trees" (Man, Jabal Mohsen/ Tebbeneh, adult).

As previously mentioned, the combination of safety concerns and economic difficulties has precipitated significant psychological distress among individuals. In fact, 18 perceptions in the CPT show that this psychological strain has, in turn, exerted a notable impact on familial dynamics and relationships. Participants have reported a proliferation of familial issues and conflicts stemming from the heightened socio-economic tensions prevalent.

"Cases of divorce are increasing due to the socio-economic pressures couples are facing. They are not able to tolerate one another." (Woman, Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh, young).

Trust issues are manifested between the public and Civil Society Organizations, and between citizens and government. This is shown in a total of thirteen perceptions. The lack of trust trend, containing a total of 13 perceptions, is divided among two subthemes, the first are 9 perceptions related to the erosion of trust between the populace and Civil Society Organizations, and the second, expressed in 4 perceptions, is between the citizens and the government. Both Lebanese and Syrian individuals express sentiments of dissatisfaction, feeling that Civil Society Organizations are not providing adequate assistance to each group (highlighted in 4 perceptions). This showcases further the negative impact experienced by Syrian refugees in Lebanon due to reductions in aid and funding cuts to organizations tasked with assisting them.

"The problem is that I am Lebanese, but my husband and kids are Syrians and yet we do not get any aid from anyone. I can't even enroll my kids in school..." (Woman, Tripoli, adult).

It is important to note that, during this quarter, there was only one perception by Lebanese individuals that showcases a perceived bias in aid distribution to favor Syrians. This, as validated by members of the PASC WG, is a prevalent belief in the Lebanese society and stems from the belief that Syrian refugees are receiving assistance, while Lebanese citizens who are similarly in need are not supported.

"These organizations open between our houses and in our neighborhoods, and they only help Syrians" (Woman, Ain el Remmeneh, adult).

Furthermore, 4 perceptions show that the war on Gaza has negatively affected the relationship between individuals and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The CPT shows that individuals harbor the belief that organizations advocating for human rights are not meeting their duties, lacking credibility, and hypocrites by failing to adhere to the principles they preach and protect the women and children of Gaza.
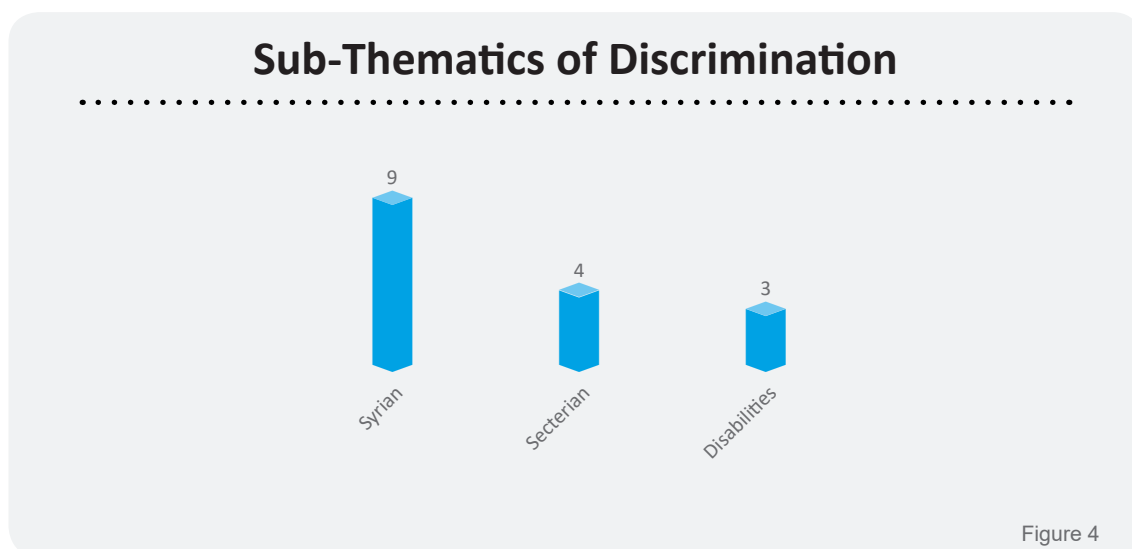
"How is it possible that these international organizations are not capable of doing anything to the children and people of Gaza?!" (Woman, Baalback, adult).

Conversely, the lack of trust in governmental institutions arises from the belief that they are incapable of providing services, enforcing the law, and ensuring security in the areas. **The absence of a strong government leaves individuals in fear and uncertainty as they grapple to attain satisfactory living conditions.** Moreover, although the lack of effective gun control measures falls under the safety concerns trend, it is also a significant contributor to trust erosion because individuals feel that their own government is unable to protect them. Alongside economic challenges and safety concerns, the government's inability to address societal needs is another contributor to the desperate urge to emigrate in pursuit of improved living standards.

"The government leaves thieves and drug abusers on the streets because they want to keep the chaos in the country. Even the prisons are still full, and most prisoners are not prosecuted yet" (Man, Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh, adult).

The discrimination against Syrians increased from 2 perceptions in December to 5 perceptions in January. Socio-economic tensions increased and manifested in severe discriminative views against Syrian Refugees. Overall, the related perceptions collected during this quarter (total of 9), reflect grievances around Syrians straining key basic services, thus diminishing availability of goods and services for Lebanese citizens; and undercutting job opportunities by accepting lower wages, and hence, causing unfair competition between Lebanese individuals and Syrian refugees. Animosity and hostile feelings are at their peak among both communities.

"I am a woman from Ain el Remmeneh, and I am forced to take my children to another city to see a dentist, because Syrians took all the appointments in the clinics." (Woman, Ain el Remmeneh/Chiyah, adult).

Sub-Thematics of Discrimination

Figure 4

The trend of discrimination, encompassing a total of 16 perceptions, also includes discrimination against disabled individuals reflected in 3 perceptions. Furthermore, certain instances of discrimination and perceptions of inequalities are sectarian related, articulated in 4 perceptions. These sub-themes highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of social tensions in the country.

"The Shiaa want to take control of the area. They outnumbered us, we are the minority now." (Woman, Ain el Remmeneh/Chiyah, adult).

"You go to Jbeil, Batroun, and Beirut and you see all the streetlamps are on. We all know why; it is because Christians are supported. Us, Muslims, no one cares about us, especially in Tripoli. They want to destroy us and ruin the city's reputation." (Woman, Jabal Mohsen/Tebbeneh, adult).

"I don't know why everyone assumes that if I am on a wheelchair, it means that I smell bad and I never shower." (Woman, Tripoli, adult).

Most notably, 2 perceptions highlighted the absence of a comprehensive government reform program to make change and enhance the country's security. Some participants talked about the lack of a reform process and the need to establish one to offer a framework that addresses systemic issues, and inefficiencies in governance and policies.

"We should work on a Lebanese government that is transparent and inclusive of all political and religious entities in the country. Only in this way will we be able to create sustainable change on the economic, political, environmental, and educational level. However, if we continue in this path we are only going to go from bad to worse" (Man, Barja, adult).

Community Perceptions Report
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