



2019

VULNERABILITY, DEBT AND WELLBEING AMONGST SYRIAN REFUGEES WHO HAVE HAD THEIR HOMES DISMANTLED



IMPACT OF HOME DISMANTLEMENT ON ARSAL REFUGEE POPULATION

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فخيم

العالمي



“

I have learned and dismantled all the words in order to draw from them a single word:

Home.”

- Mahmoud Darwish

SOCIAL PROMOTION FOUNDATION (FPS) STUDY

The Social Promotion Foundation works to eradicate poverty and to promote sustainable human, social and economic development, in accordance with the dignity of the person, and respectful of the identity of the people and social groups.

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INDEX

06	1. Presentation
07	2. List of acronyms and abbreviations
08	3. Executive summary
09	.....	4. Context
09	.....	4.1. Aarsal information
10	.....	4.2. Specific vulnerabilities
11	.....	5. Investigation goal and objectives
11	.....	5.1. Overall objectives
11	.....	5.2. Specific objectives
12	.....	6. Methodology
14	.....	7. Key findings and analysis
14	.....	7.1. Refugee population's profile and conditions in Aarsal
19	.....	7.2. Experience of the Syrian refugees during the Dismantlement of their homes
23	.....	7.3. Analysis of Acquired Debts
30	.....	7.4. Description of needs and stressors due to dismantling
33	.....	7.5. Wellbeing situation in relation to the loss of housing
36	.....	7.6. Identification of social problems associated with dismantling
41	.....	7.7. Basic Assistance Needs
45	.....	7.8. Identified Coping Mechanisms
46	.....	8. Limitations
47	.....	9. Conclusions
49	.....	10. Recommendations
53	.....	11. References

FIGURE INDEX

TITLE	PAGE
Figure 1: Respondents Gender	14
Figure 2: Household gender-based decision making	14
Figure 3: Marital status	15
Figure 4: Comparative Women/girls and men/boys currently living in the structure with Women/girls and men/boys who were living in the demolished/destroyed structure	15
Figure 5: Percentage of type of PwD	16
Figure 6: Occupation	16
Figure 7: Male respondents' occupation	17
Figure 8: Female respondents' occupation	17
Figure 9: Percentage of highest level of education attained	18
Figure 10: Percentage of supportive persons for HH to carry out the self-demolition	19
Figure 11: Events during the most recent incidents	20
Figure 12: Percentage of households receiving humanitarian aid for the reconstruction	20
Figure 13: Percentage of sources of receiving humanitarian aid during reconstruction	22
Figure 14: Percentage of debt amounts prior to demolition	23
Figure 15: Percentage of money borrowed to cover the expenses of dismantlement	24
Figure 16: Percentage of debt before and after the dismantlement	24
Figure 17: Percentage of sources to borrow money related to the dismantlement	25
Figure 18: Percentage of borrowed money returned related to the reconstruction	26
Figure 19: Percentage over how to save/do in order to cover the debt/additional expenses	27
Figure 20: Percentage of coping mechanisms implemented in other to cover the debt/additional expenses of their Household	28
Figure 21: Percentage of basic needs not meet	30
Figure 22: Classification of how help is provided to cover needs	31
Figure 23: Percentage of children at household level going to school on 19-20	32
Figure 24: Percentage of problems experience over the last two weeks by Syrian refugees in Aarsal affected by the dismantling	33
Figure 25: Percentage of new or increasing problems after the dismantlement at household level.	34
Figure 26: Percentage of new or increasing problems after the dismantlement at household level experience by children	34
Figure 27: Percentage of the experiences that the household members went through during the dismantlement	36
Figure 28: Percentage of the experiences that the household members went through after the dismantlement	37
Figure 29: Percentage of the experiences that Syrian refugees went through at community level after the dismantlement	38
Figure 30: Percentage of the experiences that Syrian refugees went through at social level after the dismantlement	38
Figure 31: Relationship between Lebanese and Syrians in Aarsal, compared with five months ago before the first demolition	39
Figure 32: Percentage of rate the safety of the area at day time and night time	39
Figure 33: Percentage of agreement on "People around your community are willing to help their neighbors"	40
Figure 34: Percentage of agreement on "People in your community can be trusted"	40
Figure 35: Percentage of other needs	42
Figure 36: Percentage of other needs in winter	43
Figure 37: Coping mechanisms adopted at household level since the demolition	45

This study, undertaken by FPS on behalf of the Bekaa Intersector aims to further elaborate on the living conditions of the Syrian refugee population in Aarsal, Lebanon, following the dismantling of their homes. It also aims to dig deeper into the repercussions of this dismantling, in association with further problems caused by debt, stress, well-being problems, social barriers, and basic assistance and adaptation mechanisms faced by Syrian refugees in Aarsal.

Throughout the months of May - June, 2019, Syrian refugees in Aarsal were forced to dismantle homes they built, in an attempt to comply with the Government of Lebanon ruling based on the 2004 Lebanese Construction Law. This study will focus on analyzing the impact caused by the dismantling of homes (self-demolition and/or aided ones), and, at the same time, diagnose the effect this event has had on the vulnerability, level of debt, and wellbeing amongst Syrian refugees.

Due to the lack of literature related to the impact these demolitions and/or self-demolitions have had on Syrian refugees in Aarsal or their associated risk factors, FPS, with the support of Bekaa Intersector, present this document to identify the needs of those Syrian refugees who lost their homes throughout this dismantling process in compliance with the aforementioned ruling.

Results obtained from this study will be part of the strategic tool aimed at facilitating the design of the UNHCR and the Inter-Sector 2020 strategy. Those results will also serve in identifying FPS' potential future interventions in Aarsal. In summary, this study's recommendations will be translated into programmatic solutions addressing problems faced by the Syrian refugee population, from a holistic and comprehensive perspective, taking into consideration different factors such as well-being, vulnerability and debt, with an overall aim of mitigating the effect of home dismantling.

- FGD:** Focus group discussion
- FPS:** Social Promotion Foundation
- HH:** Household
- IASC:** Inter-Agency Standing Committee
- ICRC:** International Committee of the Red Cross
- IMC:** International Medical Corps
- INGO:** International Non-governmental organization
- ITS:** Informal Tented Settlements
- LAF:** Lebanese Armed Forces
- LCRP:** Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
- LRC:** Lebanese Red Cross
- MdM-F:** Médecins du Monde France
- MSF :** Médecins Sans Frontières
- MH:** Mental Health
- MHPSS:** Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
- NGO:** Non-governmental organization
- OCHA:** United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- PwD:** Person with disability
- PWSN:** Person with special needs
- SGBV:** Sexual Gender-based Violence
- SoPs:** Standard Operating Procedure
- UNHCR:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- UNICEF:** United Nations Children’s Fund
- VASyR:** Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees
- WFP:** United Nations World Food Programme

This study was commissioned by the UNHCR and produced by the Social Promotion Foundation (FPS) in cooperation with and from the point of view of the civil society actors present at the Bekaa Intersector and/or present in Aarsal and with the Syrian refugees in Aarsal affected by home dismantling.

Developing the paper was identified as a priority in light of the widespread need for understanding the impact of home dismantling among the refugee population, especially on the following areas: vulnerability, debt and wellbeing. To this end, the paper intends to provide a clear picture of the impact of home dismantling and context-specific, experience-based, practically and doable recommendations for those who are responsible for designing and implementing humanitarian interventions in Aarsal. It can also provide donors guidance regarding the considerations and elements that should be included in programs in Aarsal and other areas in Lebanon affected by home dismantling.

For the purpose of this study, mixed method approach was adopted. For quantitative data, 379 Syrian refugee households were surveyed during the month of November 2019 and asked to report on longitudinal data from 2018 till the first half of 2019. The survey included sections on social demographics, occupation, refugee occupation and employment status and disability, dismantlement, debt, coping strategies, wellbeing and vulnerability. For qualitative data, three focus group discussions (FGDs) with twenty-seven refugees and four key informant semi-structured interviews (SSIs) have been conducted with relevant field experts from protection, child protection, mental health, and other sectors.

Findings have shown that Syrian refugee population in Aarsal is facing difficult situation due to the dismantling of their houses. In general terms, they couldn't repay their debts. This debt caused additional problems in saving money on food, school, health, etc. The accumulation of debt generated family problems, increase family tensions, and have forced families to adopt negative coping mechanisms. There was a need to cover education, debt coverage, fuel and/or firewood, mats and clothing basic needs. The study also showed that the refugees' well-being was affected by the dismantling process and its consequences. Children experienced enuresis, aggressiveness towards others, hyperactivity, and other feelings. There were no safe spaces for children to play, which in turn led to children fights. Study showed a high percentage of the affected population with physical and intellectual specific needs. The interviews reflected contributed evidence of unreported situations of gender violence and sexual violence.

Some household members reported an increase in inappropriate behavior within families following dismantling, such as insults, bad language, breaking objects, etc. Despite the fact that most of the survey and FGD participants responded that there have not been any bad behaviors, however, in the interviews with professionals, it was referred on numerous occasions on the increase in violent and aggressive behaviors, especially towards women and girls.

Based on the findings, FPS recommends to seek alternative solutions to support refugees' main priorities, basic needs and debt by proposing innovative and sustainable ways to facilitate debt coverage. FPS also proposes different health and psychosocial well-being interventions to help suffered Syrian refugees with a more secure, dignified life. FPS recommends designing specific programs for children and youth as they are identified as a vulnerable group. Moreover, at the advocacy level, FPS recommends promotion of awareness and/or protection actions against gender-based violence. Moreover, FPS seeks the continuous coordination and monitoring between livelihoods sector working groups and other protection and basic assistance working groups to mitigate negative coping mechanisms as a result.

Almost nine years into the Syrian crisis, Lebanon remains host to the largest concentration of refugees per capita, with a Syrian refugee population ranked as the fourth largest refugee population in the world.

The Government of Lebanon estimates that the country hosts 1.5 million Syrian refugees who have escaped from their country's conflict since 2011 (UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, 2018).

The increased population comes with a major load on what seems to be known as fundamental services, thus limiting both host and refugee communities to benefit from the latter. Study shows that 92.5% of the Bekaa residents agree that the presence of so many refugees in Lebanon today is placing many constraints on Lebanon's resources as a whole (Bekaa Governorate, 2019).

In 2018, funding requirements for adequate support to Syrian refugees in Lebanon was estimated at \$ 2,291 billion. As of September 2018, those needs were only one third funded. Despite all improvements made in terms of economic vulnerability, over half of Syrian refugee households had amounts below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket of \$ 2.90 per person, per day, unable to meet survival needs of food, health and shelter, and 69% of households remained below the poverty line (UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, 2018, p. 13).

4.1. ARSAL INFORMATION

Arsal is a Lebanese town with 35,000 Lebanese residents and hosting more than 37,000 refugees (UNHCR, 2018-2019). Syrian refugees in Arsal face extremely harsh conditions mostly in the crowded tented settlements they live in, in addition to the current situation that is getting harder by the day due to recent changes, such as evictions and the latest decision of Lebanon's Higher Defense Council, released mid-April 2019, related to the demolition of solid structures built inside the Informal Tented Settlements (ITS).

Such decision, indicated that all structures built by Syrian refugees using materials other than timber and plastic sheeting in informal camps must be dismantled.

According to Save the Children, most of these structures are partially or fully made out of concrete, and very few refugees in Arsal had the equipment or the means to dismantle such types of structures.

As a result of the above and starting July 2019, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and LAF Intelligence began implementing the decision to demolish all semi-permanent structures within ITS.

All Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for dismantlement were prepared at Inter-agency level and the different types of structures were classified as follows:

Type 1: partially built structures (can relatively easily be dismantled by refugees themselves).

Type 2: fully built structures with zinc roofing (needs skilled labour to dismantle, takes about a week).

Type 3: fully built structures with cast (needs a bulldozer, it is more expansive and require a day or two of labour, however will be completely destroyed (National Protection Working Group, Minutes of meeting and Report., 2019).

Fifteen weeks into the implementation of the demolition process, hundreds of families responded to the given notice period from authorities by finalizing the process themselves. Some others paid daily workers, members of the refugee community, to comply with the given deadline. Few were those who were unable to respond to the demolition decision, either due to the fact that they were residing in structures of type 3 (difficult to demolish themselves), or because they were threatened by their landlords of being evicted within a short period of time, or because they refused to move forth with the demolition without prior shelter assistance (International Rescue Committee, August, 2019).

The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) patrols to the refugees' sites affected by the demolition decision decreased during the third week of August as 520 out of 531 solid structures affected by the demolition decision had been demolished by the refugees themselves in the monitored sites and just 11 out of 531 solid structures affected had been forcibly demolished by the LAF (International Rescue Committee, 2019).

The refugees perceived that they had no other choice but to comply with the demolition notice should they want to avoid fines, arrests, forced demolitions and deportation to Syria. Hence, the majority of the refugee population affected by the dismantling was forced to move in with relatives or neighbors temporarily. The Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) had also relocated some families to a previously identified contingency site and made available buses and food in case of need.

All refugees reported concerns of surviving the harsh weather conditions in winter thus becoming homeless as their tents are easily damaged because of the wind, heavy rains and snow; they also reported their unwillingness to relocate, neither within Arsal, nor outside the Bekaa Valley, and prefer to stay in their ITS and the structures they lived in for years. They went on to say that the demolition decision (amongst others) was issued to pressure them to return to Syria (International Rescue Committee, 2019).

Based on the aforementioned, and in order to meet the most urgent needs, several organizations such as the UNHCR, International Medical Corps (IMC), MEDAIR, the United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Médecins du Monde France (MdM-F), Amel Association, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and Salama, among others, have combined their efforts not only to identify the main gaps but also to bridge them by means of providing comprehensive primary health care, wellbeing services, gender-based violence prevention and response programming for persons of concern throughout the country.

4.2. SPECIFIC VULNERABILITIES

According to the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, 2017), 76% of refugees from Syria residing in Lebanon live in poverty, driving an increase in negative coping mechanisms such as mounting debt, child labor and early marriage. The protracted displacement and the increasing vulnerabilities related to the above mentioned living conditions in crowded settlements, further exacerbate the risk of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) incidences (UNHCR, 2018).

The ABAAD's report *Shifting Sands* (El-Masri, 2013) set out that most women were witnessing increasing domestic violence as most of the refugee men were not being able to fulfill their traditional "masculine" roles as protectors and heads of their families, which frequently resulted in threatening behavior towards their families, wives and children. Child mothers, early married girls, unaccompanied girls and adolescents, women and girls with disabilities and single heads of households were most at risk. Since 2014, in almost nine out of ten reported cases, survivors have been women and girls, and one in four reported cases of SGBV involved children.

The problem that remains mostly reported and that intimidates Syrian refugees the most is intolerance and xenophobia, that arise from the Lebanese community. All group participants of the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) 2019 Arsal Report stated that they were victims of some form of intolerance from the Lebanese host community. Participants revealed that some host community members have scorned, insulted, beaten and threatened the refugees. According to the majority of the participants, some Lebanese from the host community look at Syrians as "inferior" and do not respect their rights. Alarming, there was a general discourse that Lebanese men see Syrian women as vulnerable and an easy target for marriage or sexual harassment with only minimal consequences should they get caught performing any sort of violence against Syrian women (VASyR 2019 Arsal Results, 2019).

Notwithstanding the fact that women are the most unprotected, men also face high levels of physical, structural and emotional violence inflicted upon them by the Lebanese communities and the failing legal and protection mechanisms in Lebanon (UNHCR, 2018).

In terms of legal requirements, legal documentation, legal residency and birth registration continues to be a challenge for most Syrian refugees. Overall, 73% of interviewed refugees aged 15 and older reported not having legal residency, similar to 2017. While the share of households where all members reporting legal residency was stable (18%), the share of households in which no member had legal residency grew by six percentage points, to 61% (UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, 2018).

Refugee children continue to be the most affected as they are constantly afraid and worried. As their parents are very busy fixing their homes, refugee children are receiving limited attention and therefore they have become aggressive and nervous. Parents are facing challenges in controlling their children's behavior and exercising positive parental authority. Some children can still be seen playing around the rubble while others (as young as eight) are seen helping their parents in cleaning around the tent. Consequently, some developed skin allergies due to nearby rubble where others developed asthma conditions. Children with disabilities are in continuous need of specialized services, particularly speech therapy, diapers for some, and ongoing monitoring. All sites may need improvement to ensure children can move freely (UNHCR, 2019).

Finally, acquisition of additional debt came as a result of the demolition decision, a major concern that was raised by the refugees who feared that this would be an additional burden on their basic living requirements and challenging family budgeting plan, especially with the winter season around the corner (International Rescue Committee, 2019, p. 1).

Nowadays, there is only a 14.9% of families with no debt as against a 27.6% with a \$ 200 debt, 37.6% with a \$ 201 to \$ 600 debt and a 19,9% with more than \$ 600 debt (VASyR 2019 Arsal Results, 2019).

A sense of dependency could cause further issues. Due to the fact that the host community can only protect the refugees to a certain extent when it is necessary. While it may initially appear to be harsh it is key to introduce strategies which teach Syrian refugees to be self-sufficient. Hence, self-help coping strategies seem to be a necessity no matter how restrictive, aversive or hazardous they may turn out to be (UNHCR, 2018).

5. INVESTIGATION GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

5.1. OVERALL OBJECTIVES

- To facilitate the design of immediate and short-term operational and protection responses in Arsal that take into account the humanitarian consequences of dismantlement as well as the upcoming winter.
- To allow longer term operational and protection planning (i.e. 2020 planning, as well as Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, LCRP) to take into account the longer-term consequences of dismantlement, including on patterns of vulnerability.
- To provide evidence for further advocacy towards local and national authorities as well as donors and the international community.

5.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Describe the situation faced by Syrian refugee families in relation to dismantling, debt for reconstruction and how it affects people.
- Analyze the impact and consequences of demolitions on people's well-being, health, food, access to basic services, and the differentiated impact on women and children.
- Identify vulnerability factors and protection factors, in relation to social problems/tensions, basic assistance and coping mechanisms.

The methodological design used for the scope of the research objective began with the need of gathering as much information as possible, in order to diagnose the consequences of dismantling households in relation with three main factors: vulnerability as a consequence of home dismantlement; debt as a consequence of home dismantlement and wellbeing.

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to analyze factors of different nature. The quantitative methodology has allowed the research team to collect quantifiable objective data, with a descriptive nature of analysis variables. The qualitative methodology was applied to check the perception and opinion of the reality of the Syrian refugees, as seen by them, but also through local and international organizations staff working in the area.

The methodology has been designed according to the evaluation of three main areas of analysis, which contain the research variables:

1. Social and demographic, related with education, occupation, refugee status and disability
2. Dismantlement, according to the shelter order incidents (demolition, self-demolition, raids...)
3. Debt, depending on whether they have it or not, by-effects, health consequences, impact on children and women; and reconstruction
4. Wellbeing, in terms of according to basic needs
5. Vulnerability, referring to social problems/tension, basic assistance and coping mechanisms
6. Additional information, to complement the information gather in the areas mentioned above

The population targeted for this research resides in Aarsal and its immediate surroundings.

For the quantitative methodology, a questionnaire was drafted and shared with a total number of 379 persons (the original target was 374). This data was calculated on the basis of an estimated number of 5,000 affected households (CI = 95%). Questionnaire participants were randomly selected from lists of families whose homes have been dismantled (lists provided by UNHCR). The aforementioned questionnaire consists of 102 close-ended questions and one open-ended question.

The selection criteria for the survey sample were:

- Respondent is above 18 years old
- 50% men and 50% women
- Respondent's house was demolished/self-demolished
- No two respondents belong to the same HH family
- Their selection is based on a proportional distribution of 50% between men and women

For the **qualitative methodology**, two actions have been developed:

- Three focus group discussion (FGD) with 27 refugees (13 women and 14 men): (1) an FGD with female Syrian refugees (including female PwSN) affected by the dismantling order during the month of August, (2) with male Syrian refugees (including male PwSN) affected by the dismantling order during the month of August and (3) a mix group of Syrian refugees (women and men, including PwSN) affected by the dismantling order during the month of August (at least half of the participants).

The selection criteria for the FGD were:

- Respondent is above 18 years old
- Respondent's house was demolished/self-demolished
- No two respondents belong to the same HH family
- Their selection is based on a proportional distribution of 50% between men and women

- Four key informant semi-structured interviews have been conducted with relevant field experts from protection, child protection, mental health, and other sectors:
 - Organization 1
 - Organization 2
 - Organization 3

7.1. REFUGEE POPULATION S PROFILE AND CONDITIONS IN ARSAL

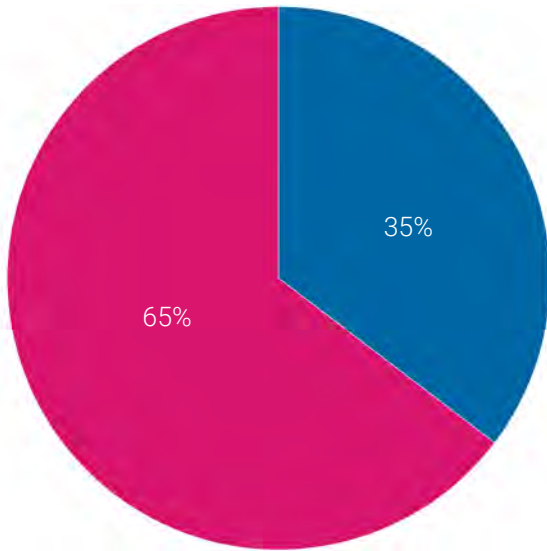


Figure 1: Respondent Gender

98% of respondents were mainly refugees registered with UNHCR, while 2% of the participants in the survey indicated that they aren't registered at the UNHCR, and 68% are heads of households. As the figure 1 show, 65% of respondents were women (between 18 and 75 years old with an average age of 39.5) as opposed to 35% who were men (between 20 and 74 years old with an average age of 40); bearing in mind that decision-making (Figure 2) belongs to the male in such a community (as per 67% (n=259) of the respondents).

■ Woman ■ Man

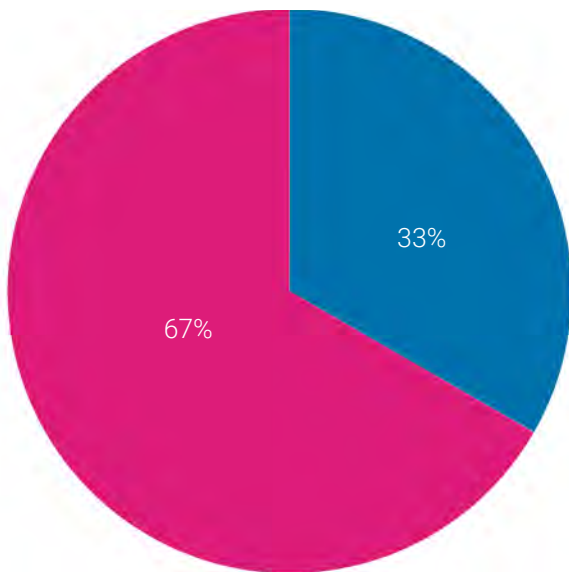
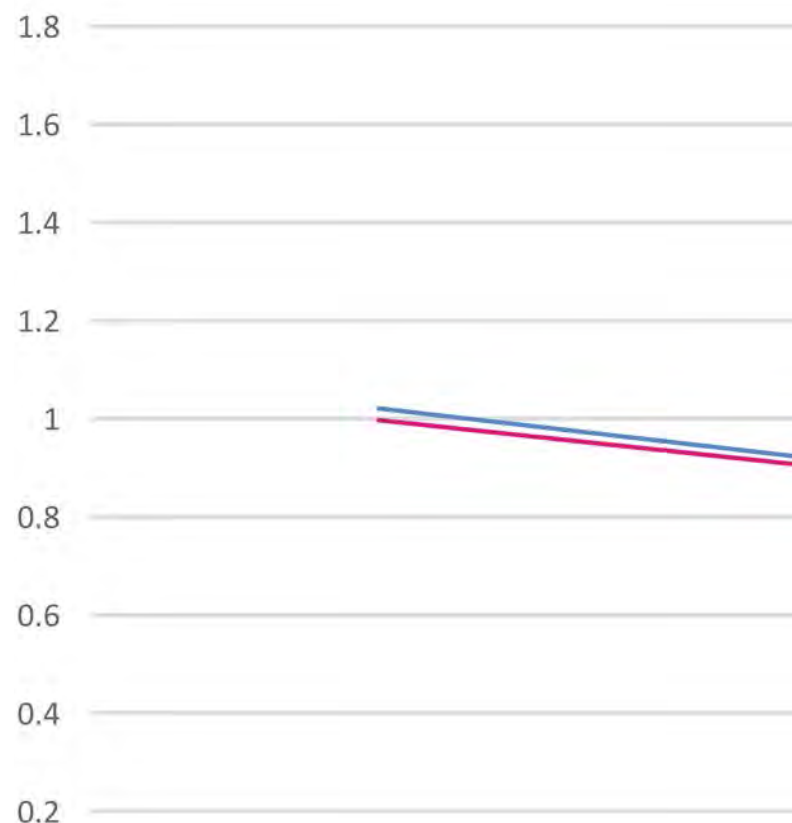


Figure 2: Household gender-based decision making

■ Decisions are taken jointly by man and woman
 ■ Man



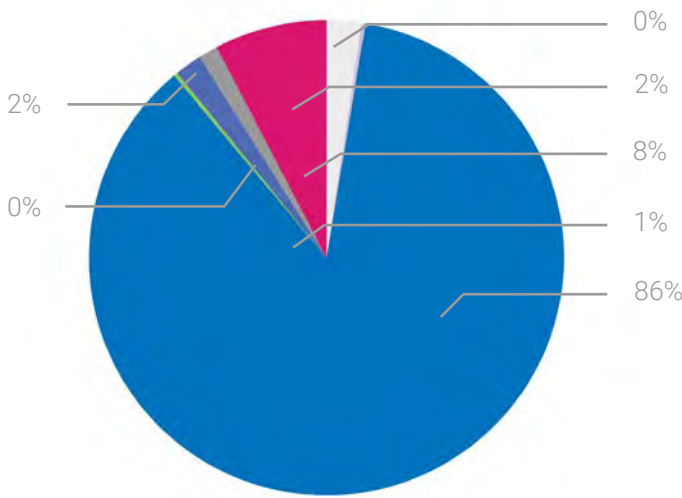


Figure 3: Marital Status

86% of respondents are married (Figure 3), followed by 8% who are widowers, living in families mainly composed (Figure 4) of a woman, a man and an average of 1.6 girls and 1.6 boys – with some families of six children (boys and/or girls). 12% of the respondent’s families (46 of 379) have between one and five members with disabilities (Figure 5), mainly men 67%, in 39% (n= 18) of cases they are the head of HH (Figure 6) and have an average of 29 years of age. 38 % of disability cases suffer from physical impairment (Figure 7). All of them have lived in demolished or destroyed homes.

- Married ■ Widowed ■ Divorced/Separated ■ Single
- Partner Missing ■ Partner Left ■ Engaged ■ Refused to answer

Following figure number 4, the average number of women living in the structure at the time of the survey is 1, men: 1, girls: 1.3 and boys: 1.6. It hardly varies when asked about the average number of people living before the demolition (women: 1, men: 3, girls: 1.3, boys: 1.6).

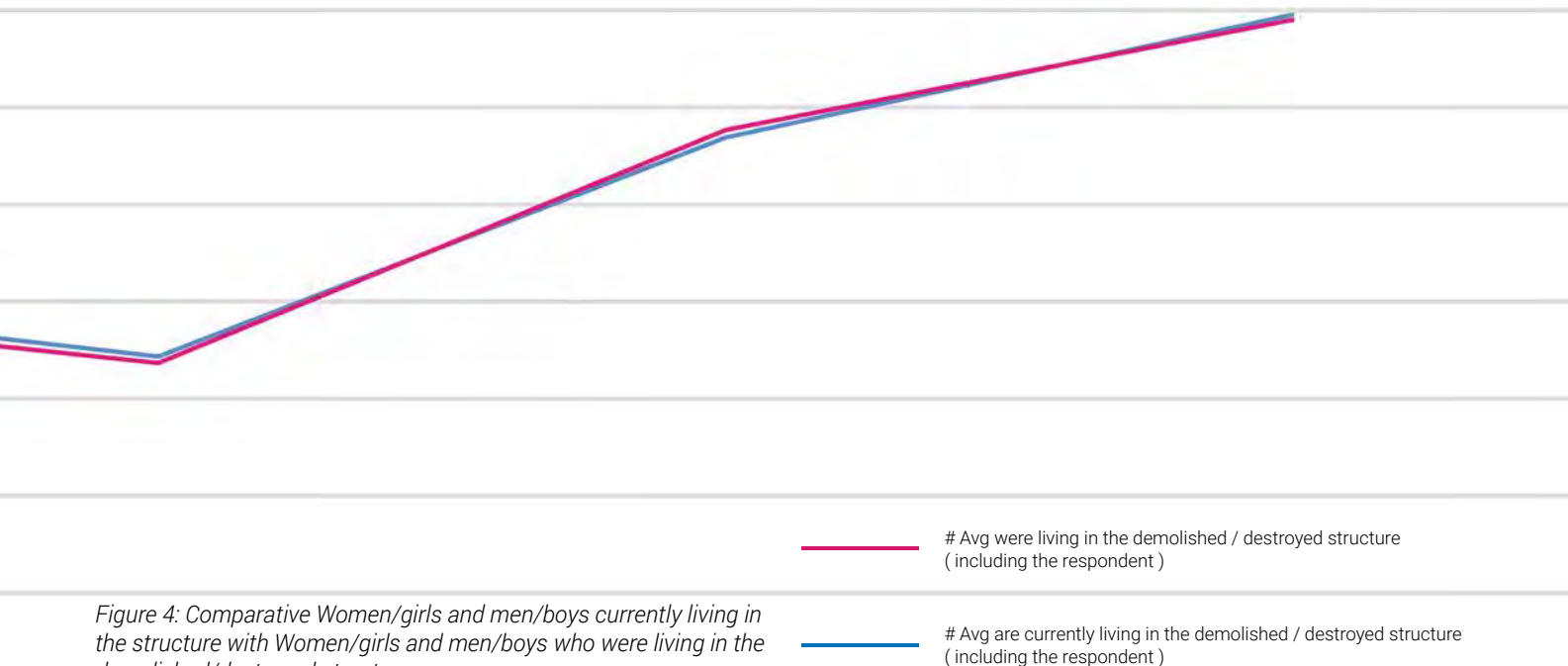
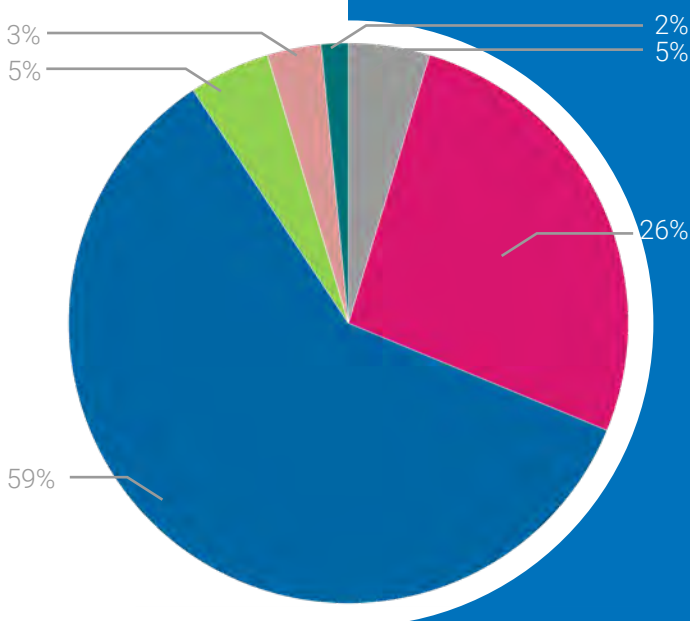


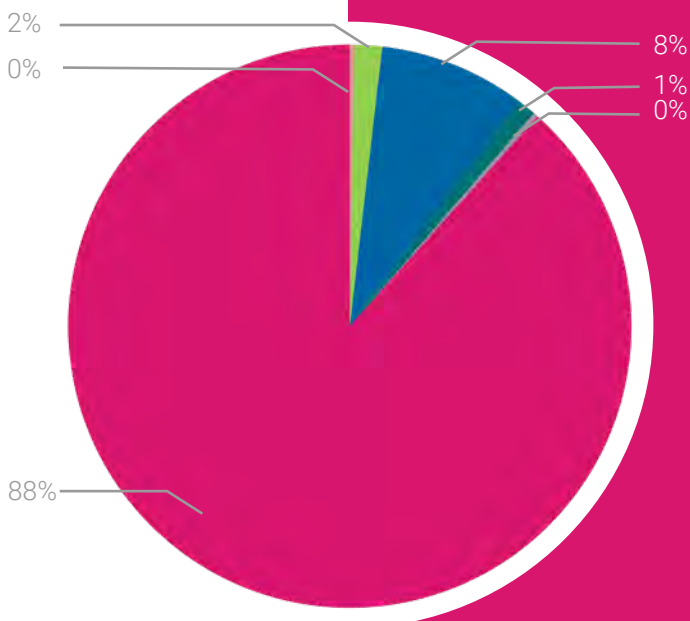
Figure 4: Comparative Women/girls and men/boys currently living in the structure with Women/girls and men/boys who were living in the demolished/destroyed structure.



Regarding the presence of PwD affected by the dismantling process, the 12% of the respondents indicated that there is in their household a person with disabilities. Of the total of households with a person with disability, in the 39% of the cases the PwD is the head of household. As shows in figure 6, 38% of the PwD in the households affected by the dismantling have a physical impairment, followed by 17% that have an intellectual disability.

Figure 5: Percentage of type of PwD

- Physical impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Mental illness
- Hearing impairment
- Speech impairment
- Visual impairment



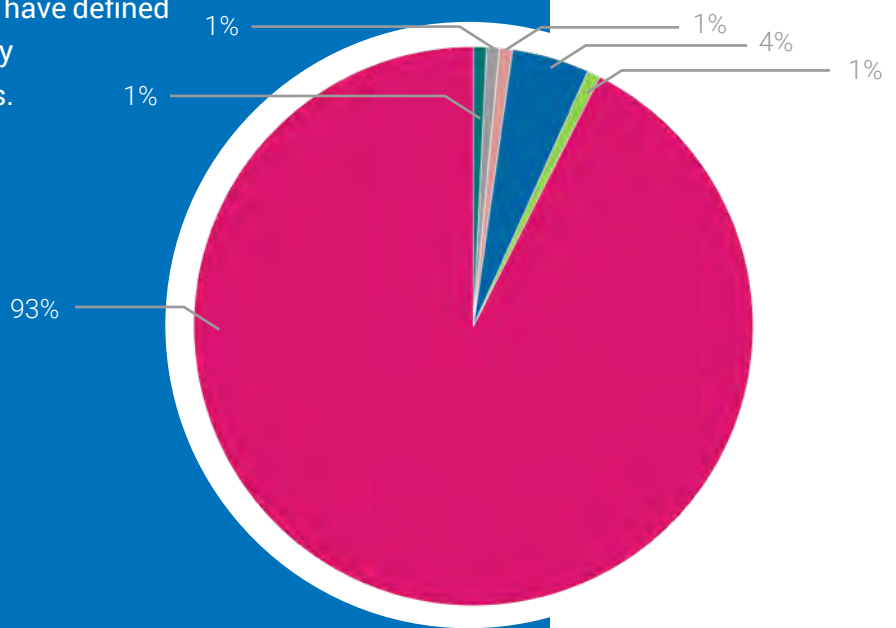
In terms of employment, the majority of the respondents, an 88%, is unemployed, and only 8% are employed as housekeepers with 2% employed as construction workers (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Occupation

- Unemployed
- Housekeeping
- Construction worker
- Others (teacher, plumber, electrician)
- Quarry worker
- Agricultural worker

88% of the male respondents (Figure 7) have defined themselves as unemployed, followed by constructed workers in 4% of the cases.

Figure 7: Male respondents' occupation

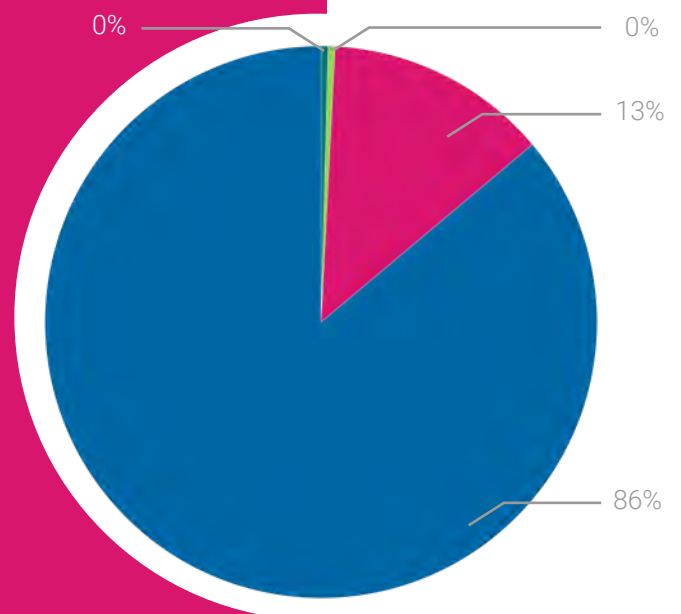


- Unemployed
- Plumber
- Quarry worker
- Construction worker
- Electrician
- Agricultural worker

86% of the female respondents (Figure 8) have defined themselves as unemployed, followed by housekeepers in 4% of the cases.

When it comes to the educational level attained (Figure 9), 3% (n=11) have mainly completed high school and only 2% (n=6) made it to College, Pre-University and/or University.

Figure 8: Female respondents' occupation



- Housekeeping
- NGO teacher
- Unemployed
- Camp teacher

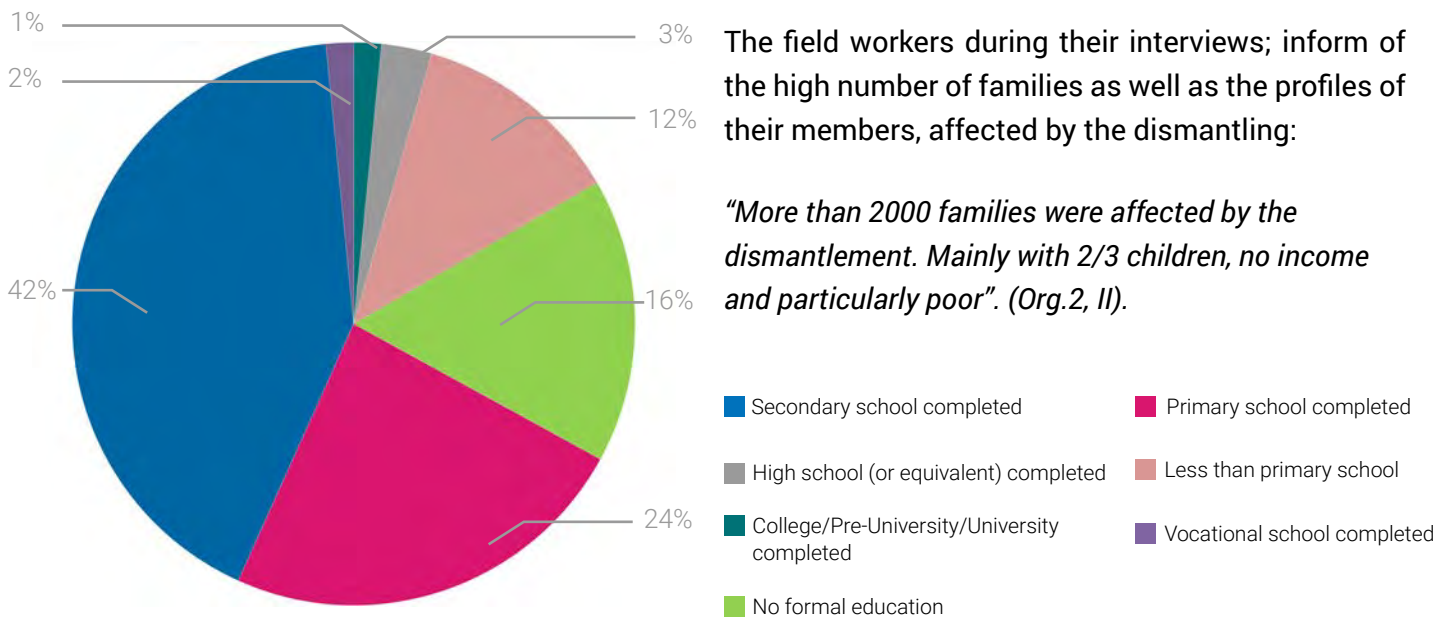


Figure 9: Percentage of highest level of education attained

The variety of profiles of refugees is important, as well as the composition of families:

“There are different profiles because they have around 199 ITS in Arsal. So, most of the refugees 20,000 approximately individuals, actually reside in informal settlements” (Org.2, I).

“You have PwD, elderly people that got their home dismantled, you also have Female Head-of-Household (FHH), but you have families with a breadwinner... So, profiles actually differ.” (Org.2, I).

In addition, these professionals also highlighted the precarious living conditions of people with disabilities, especially vulnerable and without specialized attention:

“Two of the big challenges, from my point of view, is to take care of people with special needs and initiate programs for mental health care and psycho social support”. (Org.3).

7.2. EXPERIENCE OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEES DURING THE DISMANTLEMENT OF THEIR HOMES

The recent demolition incidents took place throughout the months of May – November 2019. The most common type of demolition has been self-demolition in 97% of the cases, whereas only 3% of the structures were demolished by third actors. Only 7% of the respondents reported that their home has been fully demolished.

The families were forced to carry out the self-demolitions according to the refugees:

“The self-demolition happened also once.... While we were demolishing the walls, we used to move our stuff from one room to another..... We were too weak to refuse this decision”. (H)

Families who underwent the self-demolition process received support from relatives 54%, friends 43% and last but not least children 22% (Figure 10). In only 11% of the cases, did families revert to paid workers for support with the demolition process.

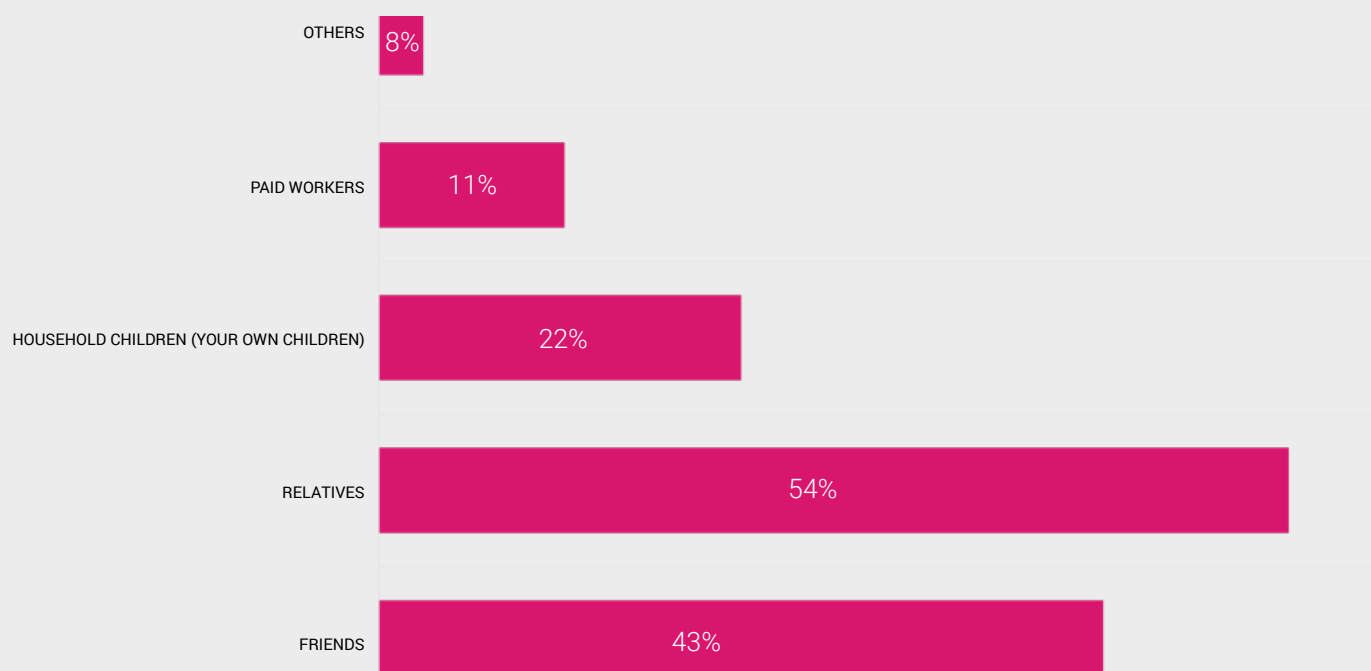


Figure 10: Percentage of supportive persons for HH to carry out the self-demolition

During the demolition process, there were no incidents in 82% (n=312) of the households; although 17% (n=66) of the respondents indicated that there were army incursions, with hardly any arrests of any family members 0% (n=1) (Figure 11).

The lack of incidents can be explained by the fact that the army was in charge of communicating the beginning of the self-demolition process, as the Syrian refugees explained:

“We received a warning from the army to leave our house and demolish it ourselves”. (B)

“We were forced to demolish our house after we received the warning from the army” (D)

Only 54% of the respondents indicated that the structures demolished were reconstructed, 41% indicated that none of their living structures were reconstructed, 3% indicated that some of them were reconstructed and a 2% indicated that only one of the structures demolished was rebuilt.

Despite of the fact that most of the homes were rebuilt where the old ones used to stand, some refugees describe that one of the main problems was finding a new place to rebuild their homes.

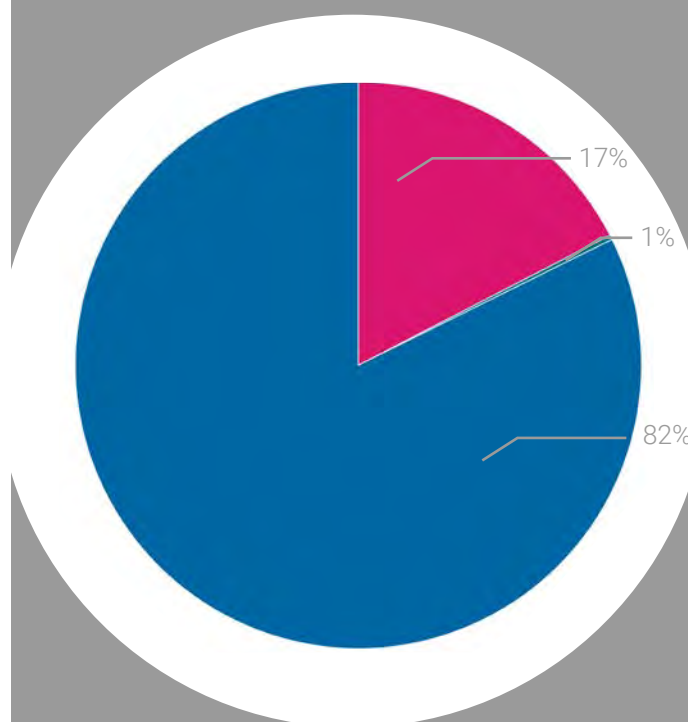


Figure 11: Events during the most recent incidents

■ None ■ Army raid
■ Detention of family members during army raids

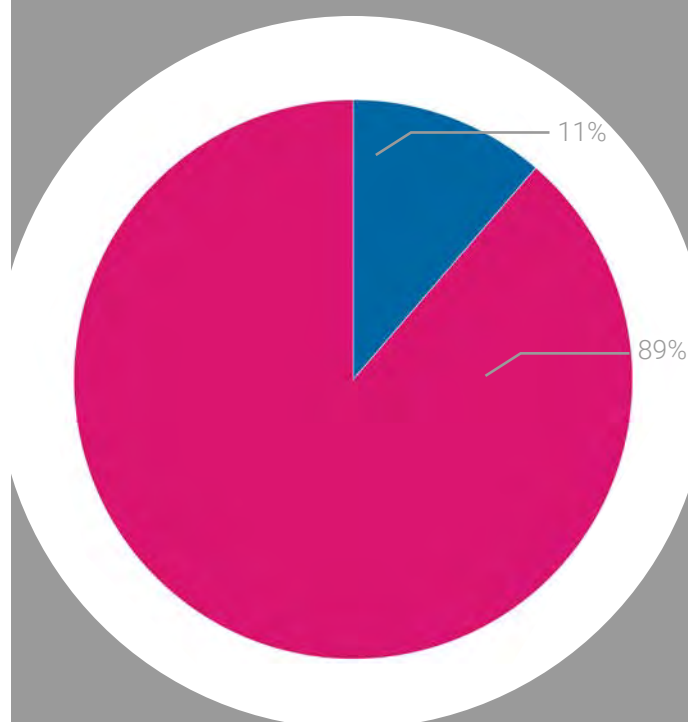


Figure 12: Percentage of households receiving humanitarian aid for the reconstruction

■ Yes ■ No

“My home was entirely dismantled, roof and walls. I rented a land and the landlord told me to build a home on the land and drafted a lease contract. The Army didn’t accept that contract”. (H2) Some refugees kept living in the house during their reconstruction

“During this time, I stayed home, I didn’t live outside”. (H2) When reconstructions occurred, 89% of the respondents received humanitarian aid for reconstruction. Out of this 89% a 100% received materials support and 0% received financial support.

However, Syrian refugees have indicated that despite the support received, it took the aid actors time to carry out the distribution.

“We waited two months to receive the wood, and when they came to distribute, they didn’t give us any!” (B2)

This support was received from NGO / INGOs in 66% of the cases followed by UN Agencies (UNHCR, WFP) in 33% of the cases.

As mentioned by the organizations interviewed, some refugees englobe all support received under the UN umbrella (Umam, which translate into English as nations). The Bekaa Intersector has confirmed that the WFP didn’t provide any mankind support except through existing agencies.



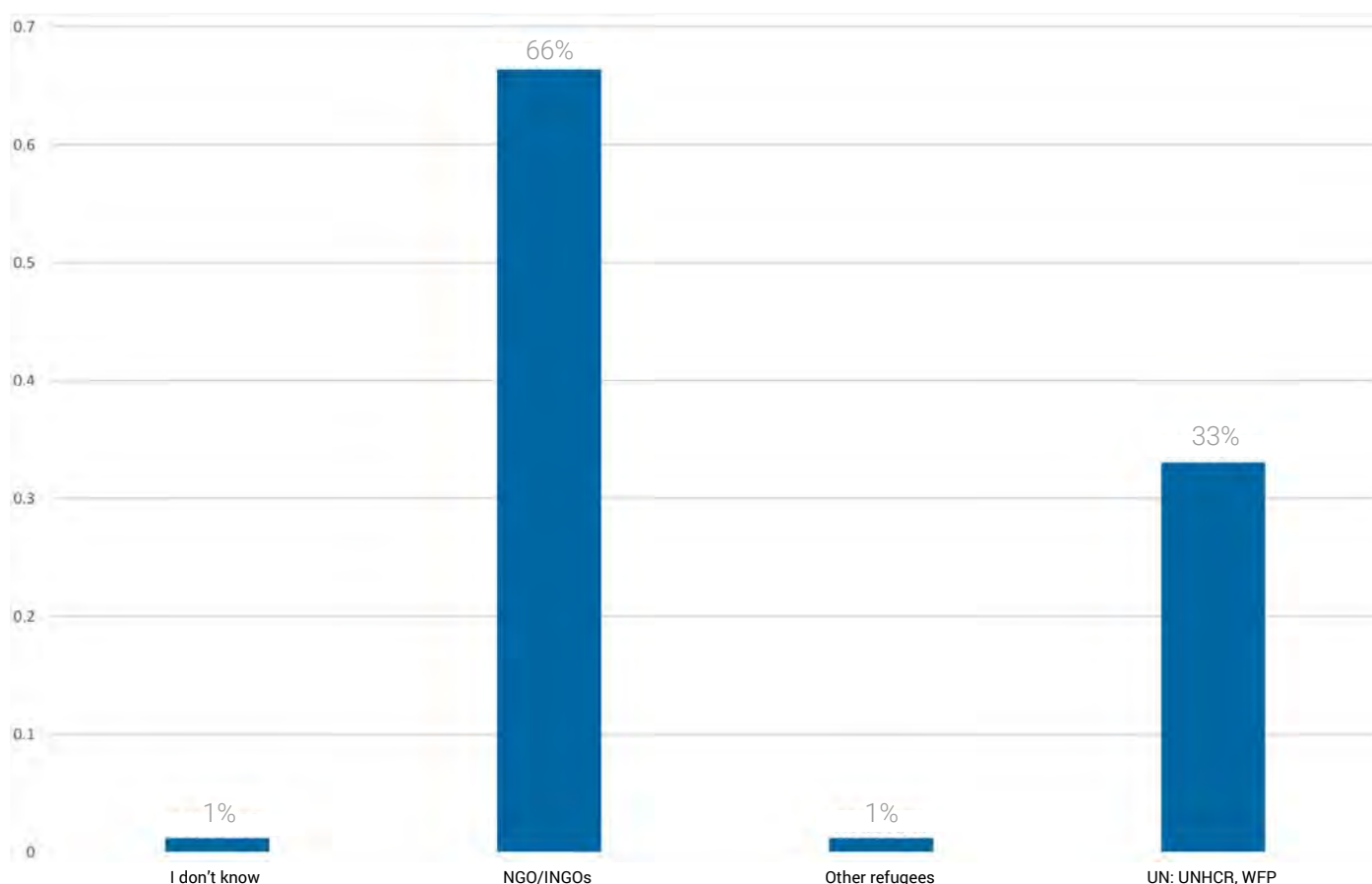


Figure 13: Percentage of sources of receiving humanitarian aid during reconstruction



Refugees received also in kind support during the reconstruction of their homes, from their neighbors and relatives, as they were able to stay with them during that process:

“While we were rebuilding our home, we lived with our neighbors and relatives” (A)

From the experience of social intervention professionals, they witness how self-dismantling is carried out by refugee families, as they fear greater problems if they don't do so:

“Most families decide to destroy their homes themselves, can't take the pressure anymore and avoid more problems like this”. (Org.3)

Finally, support provided by organizations was directed to cover the basic emergency needs, mainly in the shelter sector (reconstruction):

“Considering the fact that it was an unexpected situation, UNHCR were able to cover the basic needs in terms of shelters for the families to rebuild their homes. However basic material ... was provided which is not durable material and can hardly replace the concrete bricks which were there prior to the dismantlement” (Org.2, II)

7.3. ANALYSIS OF ACQUIRED DEBTS

The dismantling process brought along with it an increase of debt on the Syrian refugee population in Aarsal. Of the 379 respondents in the survey, 97% were already indebted prior to the dismantling process, only 3% didn't have any debt.

At a glance, the level of indebtedness prior the dismantling process, ranged between \$ 50-100 in 2% (n=8), \$ 101-200 in 6% (n=20), \$ 201-300 in 17% (n=60), \$ 301-400 (n=92) in 26% of cases, \$ 401-500 (n=89) in 25% and \$501-1000 (n=57) 16%. Only 7% seem to have borrowed amounts superior \$ 1000 (n=24), Figure 14.

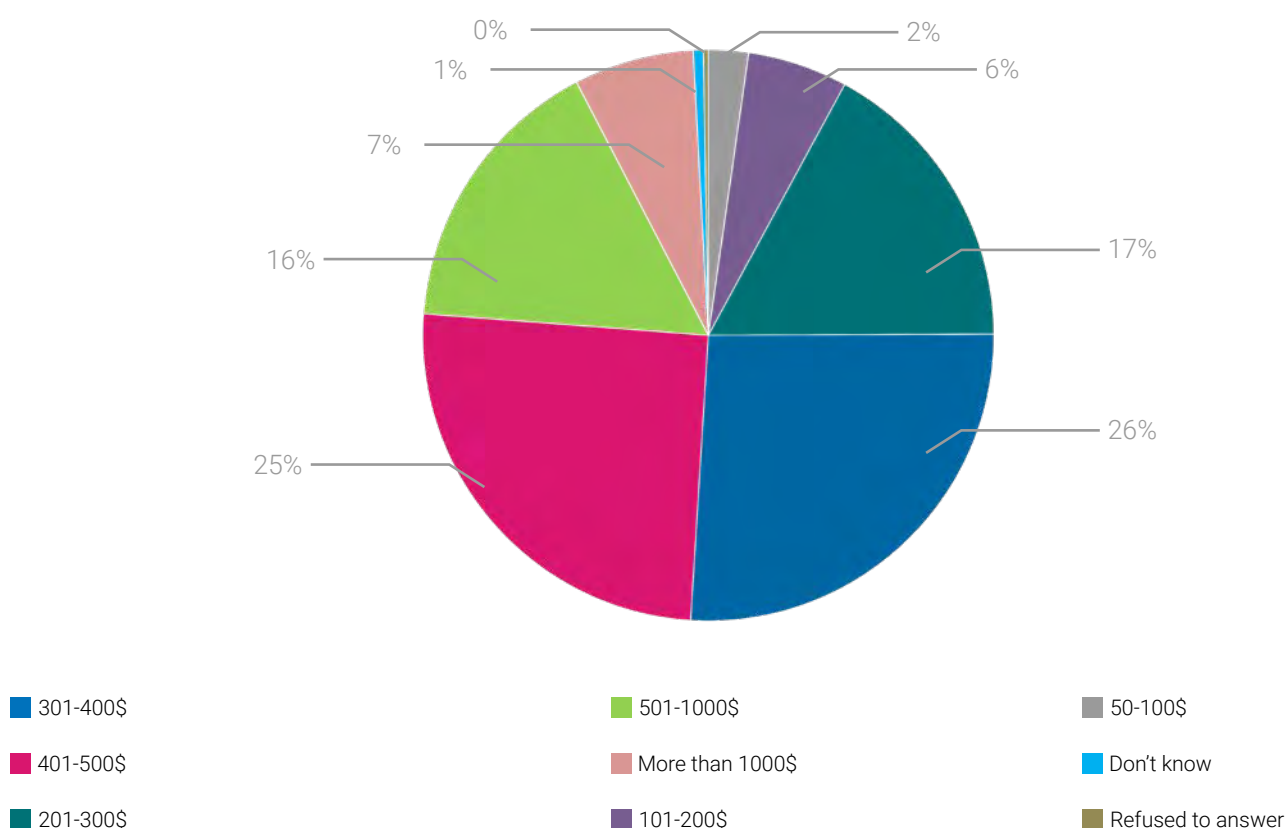
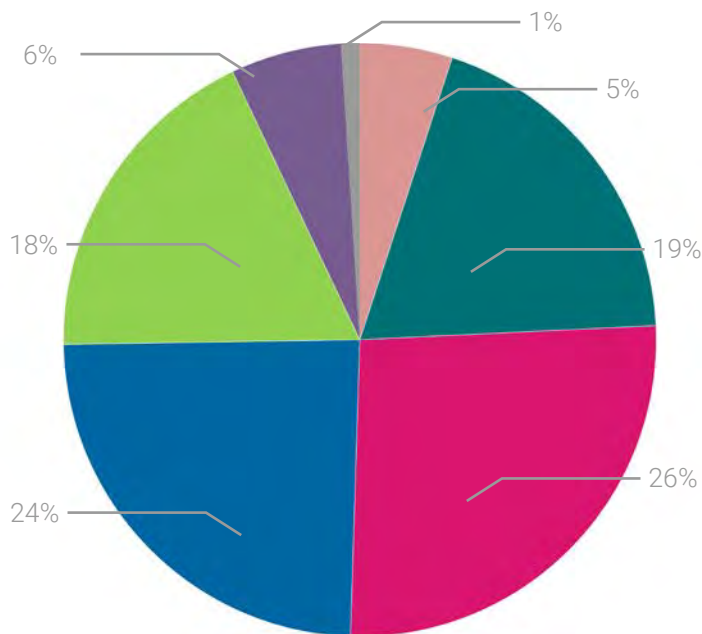


Figure 14: Percentage of debt amounts prior to demolition

Following the dismantling process, 26% (n=99) of the Syrian refugee population was forced to borrow money in order to cover the dismantling of homes but also to rebuild new ones instead 74% (n=279) of the respondents indicated that they didn't borrow any additional money due to the dismantling process. 66% of cases, they have borrowed additional money to cover expenses related to the reconstruction process, only 35% of the respondents indicated that it wasn't necessary.

The level of indebtedness after the dismantling process, ranged between \$ 50-100 in 5% (n=5), \$ 101-200 in 19% (n=19), \$ 201-300 in 26% (n=26), \$ 301-400 (n=24) in 24% of cases, \$ 401-500 (n=18) in 18% and \$501-1000 (n=6) 6%. Only 7% seem to have borrowed amounts superior \$ 1000 (n=24) (Figure 15).



As consequence of the demolition process the respondents have indicated that they have borrowed money ranged between \$ 50-100 in 5% (n=5), \$ 101-200 in 19%(n=19), \$ 201-300 26% (n=26), \$ 301-400 (n=24) in 24% of cases, \$ 401-500 (n=18) in 18% and \$501-1000 (n=6) 6%. Only 7% seem to have borrowed amounts superior \$ 1000 (n=312) (Figure 16).

Figure 15: Percentage of money borrowed to cover the expenses of dismantlement

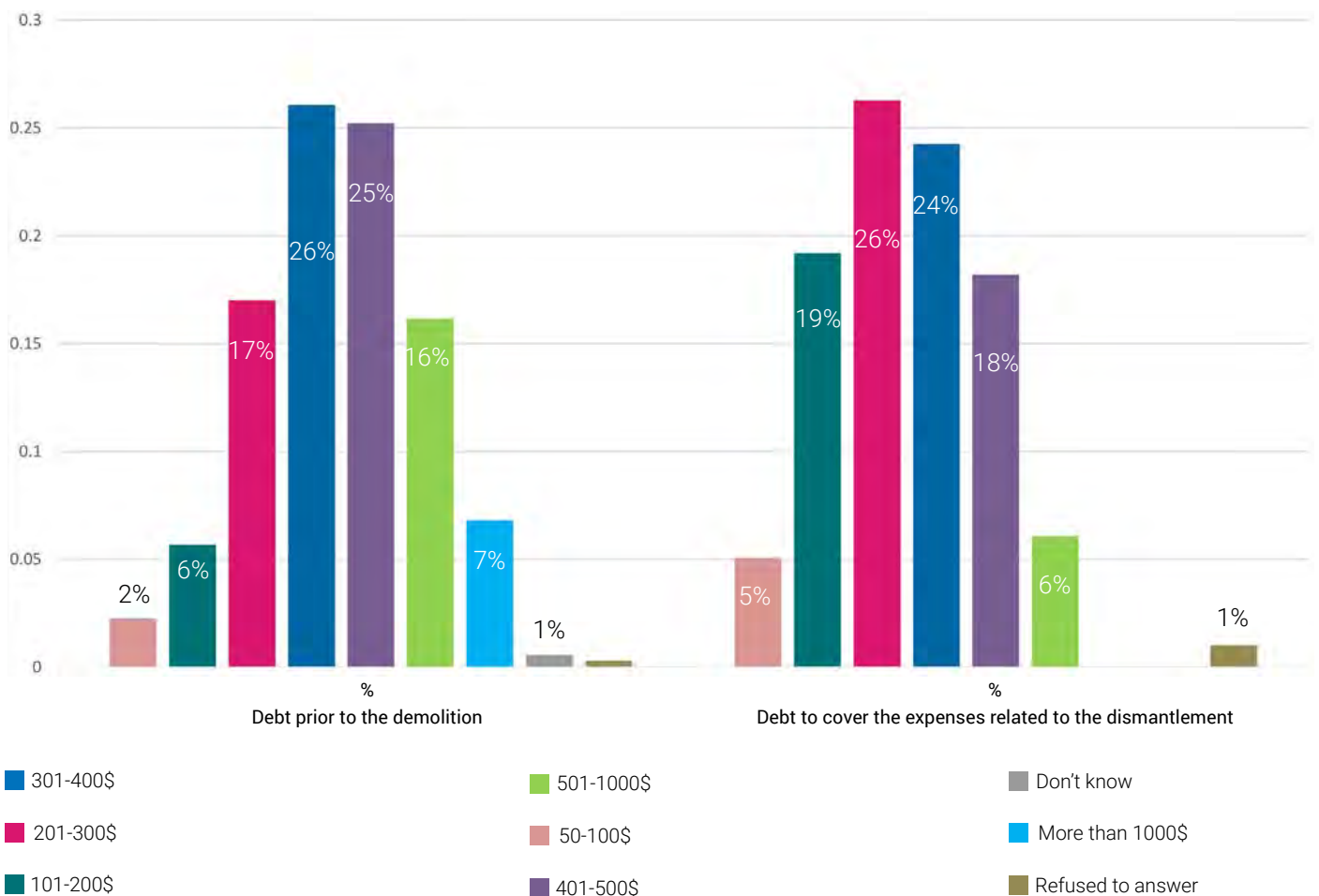
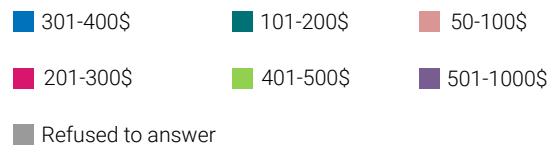


Figure 16: Percentage of debt before and after the dismantlement

Refugees claim that they allocate money owed primarily to pay for dismantling and even for reconstruction, therefore the debt is extended:

“My husband knows some people who lent him money. We gave it to the workers who helped us dismantle some money because they are not supposed to work for free”. (F2)

“I got into a debt due to both the dismantlement and the rebuilding”.

79% of the Syrian refugees have borrowed money related to the dismantlement process for more than one source.

The source from where Syrian refugees borrow money for dismantling, mainly from friends, acquaintances and neighbors 83%; store - credit purchase 39% and family members who are living in Lebanon 12% (Figure 17).

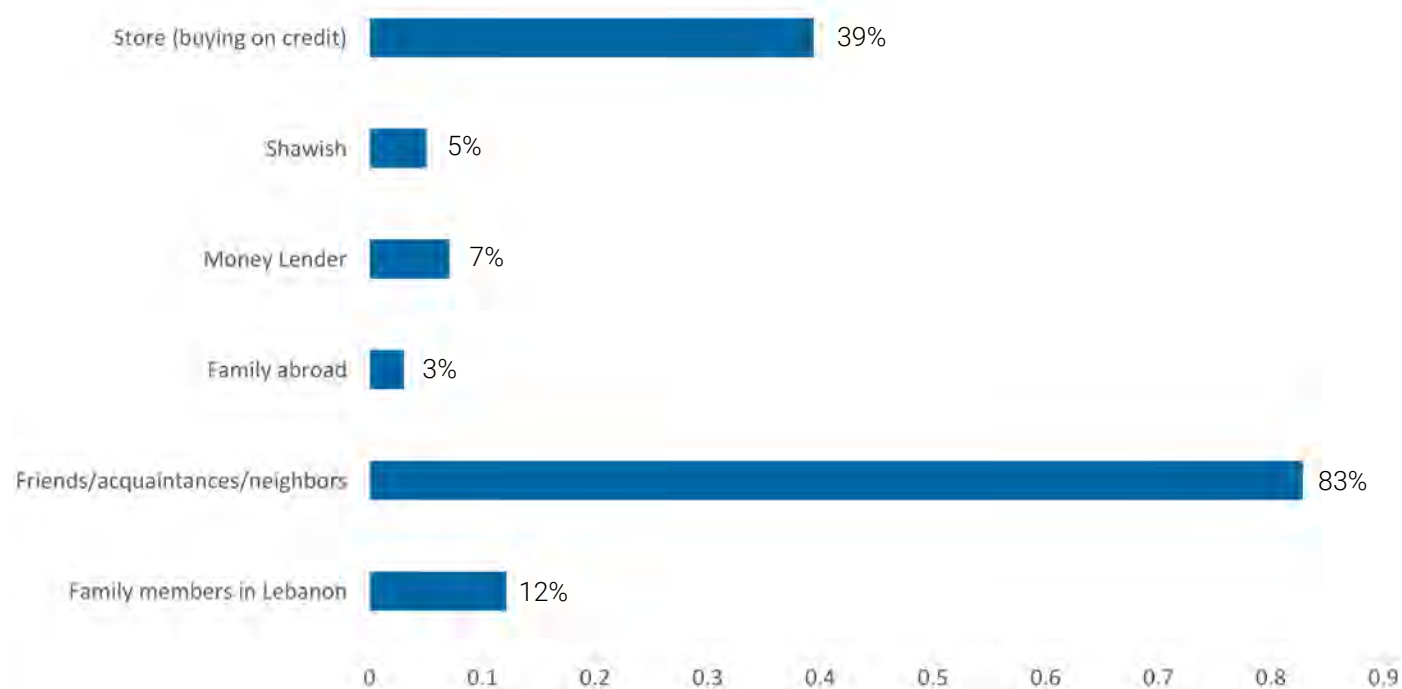


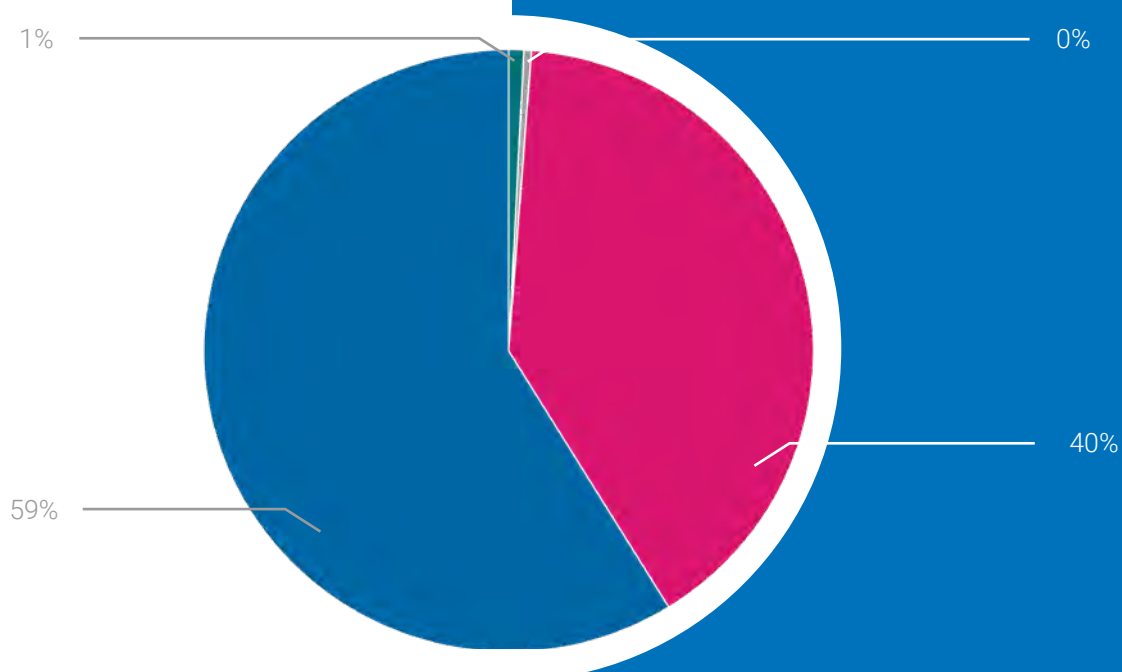
Figure 17: Percentage of sources to borrow money related to the dismantlement

- Part of it
- Nothing
- Don't know
- Everything (i.e. equal to the money borrowed)

Refugees indicate that the origin of their borrowed money is from the direct relatives:

"We got indebted from my mother. She is in a better financial situation than I am". (A2).

To date, only 59% were able to partially repay their debt as opposed to 40% who do not seem to have been able to cover any of the acquired debt (Figure 18).



Refugees express the uncertainty and concern they have to face in repaying their debt:

"I have no idea how I will be able to pay back this debt". (C2)

Figure 18. Percentage of borrowed money returned related to the reconstruction

Study also shows that a 62% of the refugee population is repaying their debts in a monthly basis, 26% of the population is unaware of the frequency through which debts/loans are paid, while 11% cover them post the due date and 2% repaid their debts all at once.

A majority of the respondents, 54%, feel that the terms to repay loans are unfair to them but in the 88% of the cases they don't consider that female refugees have different debt conditions. As for receiving new loans to pay off old debts and the reconstruction of compliant homes, 93% do not seem to be receiving any.

Covering those debts has brought with it additional problems to 86% of the affected population, 8% of the respondents indicated that they didn't have any additional problem and 5% didn't know.

As shown the Figure 19, 88% were seen to purchase food of a lesser quality with a reduction in the number of meals served per day in 84% of the cases. In addition to this, 39% were forced to limit their investment when it comes to health and medical services but also the purchase of medication.

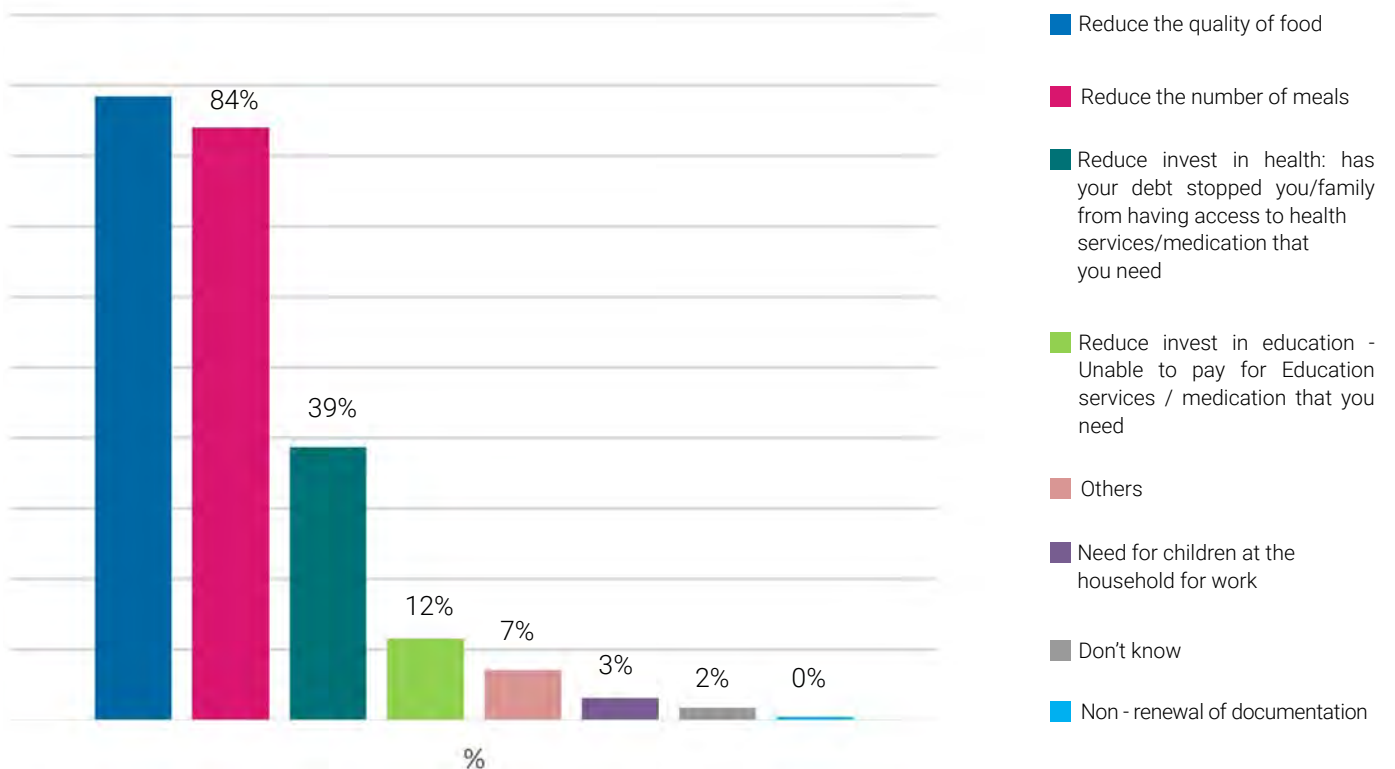


Figure 19: Percentage over how to save/do in order to cover the debt/additional expenses

As shown in the figure 20, 56% of the Syrian refugees in Arsal that needed to borrow money related with the reconstruction of their homes were left stranded and were unable to do anything to cover the debts. To top that, 13% had to sell their own jewelry and part of their household items which had an impact on not providing their children with clothes and/or stationery (also estimated at 13%). Of the 7% respondent that did other things in order to cover they debt have used the following coping mechanisms, mainly they adopt a passive attitude (did nothing)

It is necessary to take into consideration that 34% of the children have worked or helped in order to support their families during the dismantlement.

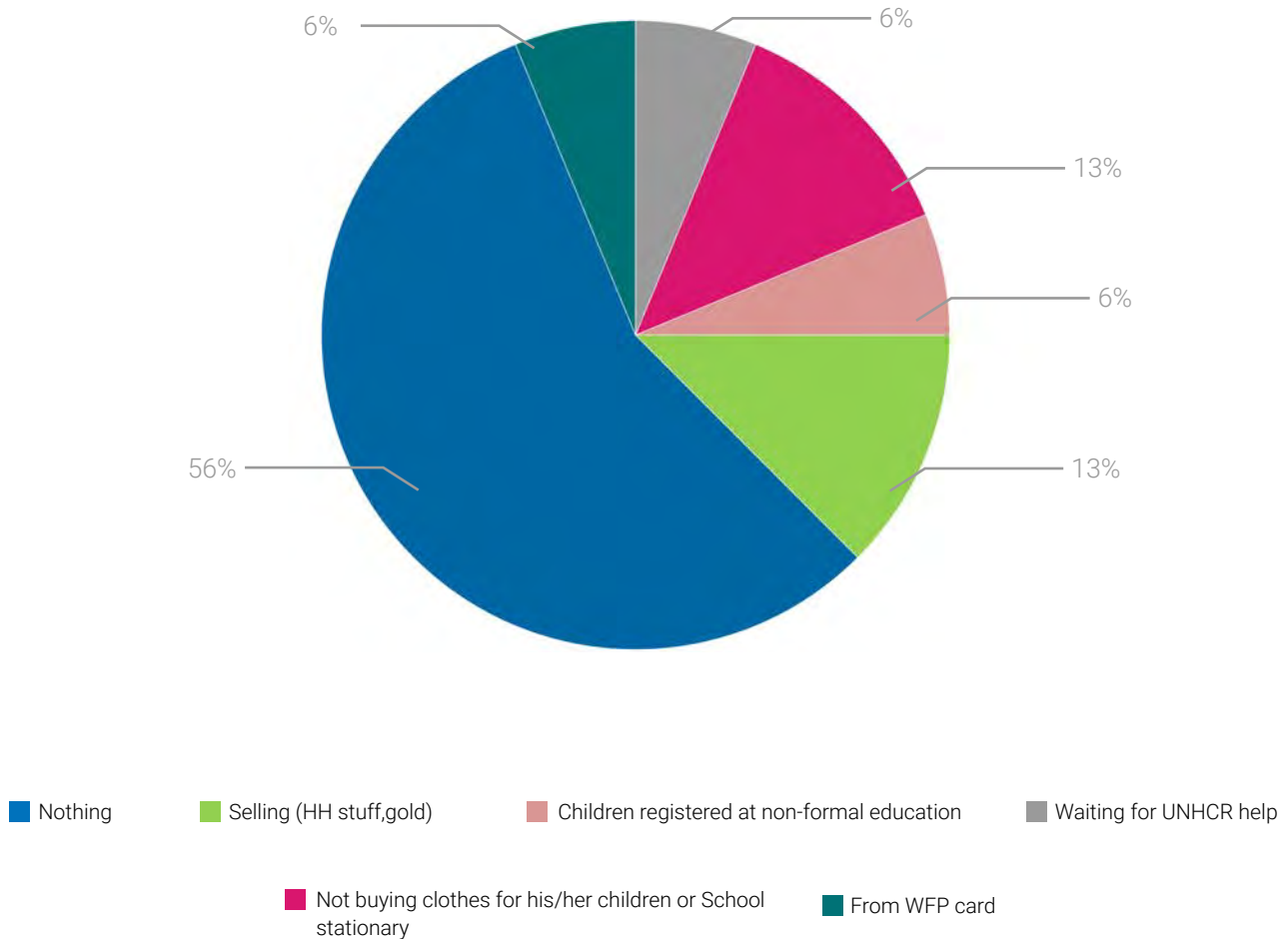


Figure 20: Percentage of other coping mechanisms implemented in other to cover the debt/additional expenses of their Household

The dismantling debt payment is causing problems in covering the most basic needs, such as food:

"This debt is causing me a lot of problems; I find myself unable to buy my essential needs like bread because I have this debt". (C2)

In other cases, the Syrian refugees claim that the problems are related to how they feel psychologically:

"This is not causing us any particular problem within the family, but it is such a burden that we keep obsessing about it" (I2)

In some cases, they describe other methods of paying debt through indirect ways, with important consequences on the health and well-being of their families:

"I am repaying this debt a little bit every month through the food assistance card". (H2).

In addition to Syrian refugees who claim to have debt for dismantling, there are others whose debts of different origin

"I didn't get indebted because of the dismantlement but I did get debt to buy food and pay school tuition". (C2)

It has been shown that the Syrian refugees did not perceive that women have different debt / loan conditions in 88% versus a 3% that consider that Syrian female refugees have different loan conditions.

Interviewed field workers were unable to provide the team conducting this research any concrete information with regards to the debt level of Syrian refugees

"Not sure about the amount however between 100 and 130\$ is the range". (Org.2, I).

In this same sense, they are unaware of the increase in debt:

"Not sure about the amount however with the dismantlement situation their debts increased quickly." (Org.2, II).

However, professionals know the consequences of debts on the Syrian refugee population:

"The debt has had a negative impact on the Syrian refugee population, if you do not find work to pay it, need to resort to other forms of income generation; this increases thefts, exploitation towards women, girls and boys, illegal work, even sexual exploitation". (Org.3)

"People can't afford to cover 25% health services (test, operations...). You can see beneficiaries choosing which items of the blood test they can do. They will sell materials, assistance (food assistance) to cover the debt". (Org.1, II).

7.4. DESCRIPTION OF NEEDS AND STRESSORS DUE TO DISMANTLING

The main priority needs for Syrian refugees in Aarsal affected by the home dismantling are identified as follows: cash 30%, food 29% and fuel 27%. Other priorities mentioned are: access to medication 9%, electricity and water 2% (each) and access to diapers 1%. 87% of refugees do not perceive themselves able to meet the above mentioned needs.

As Figure 21 shows, 98% have not met other needs such as: education needs, debts coverage, fuel, wood for tents, bed mats.

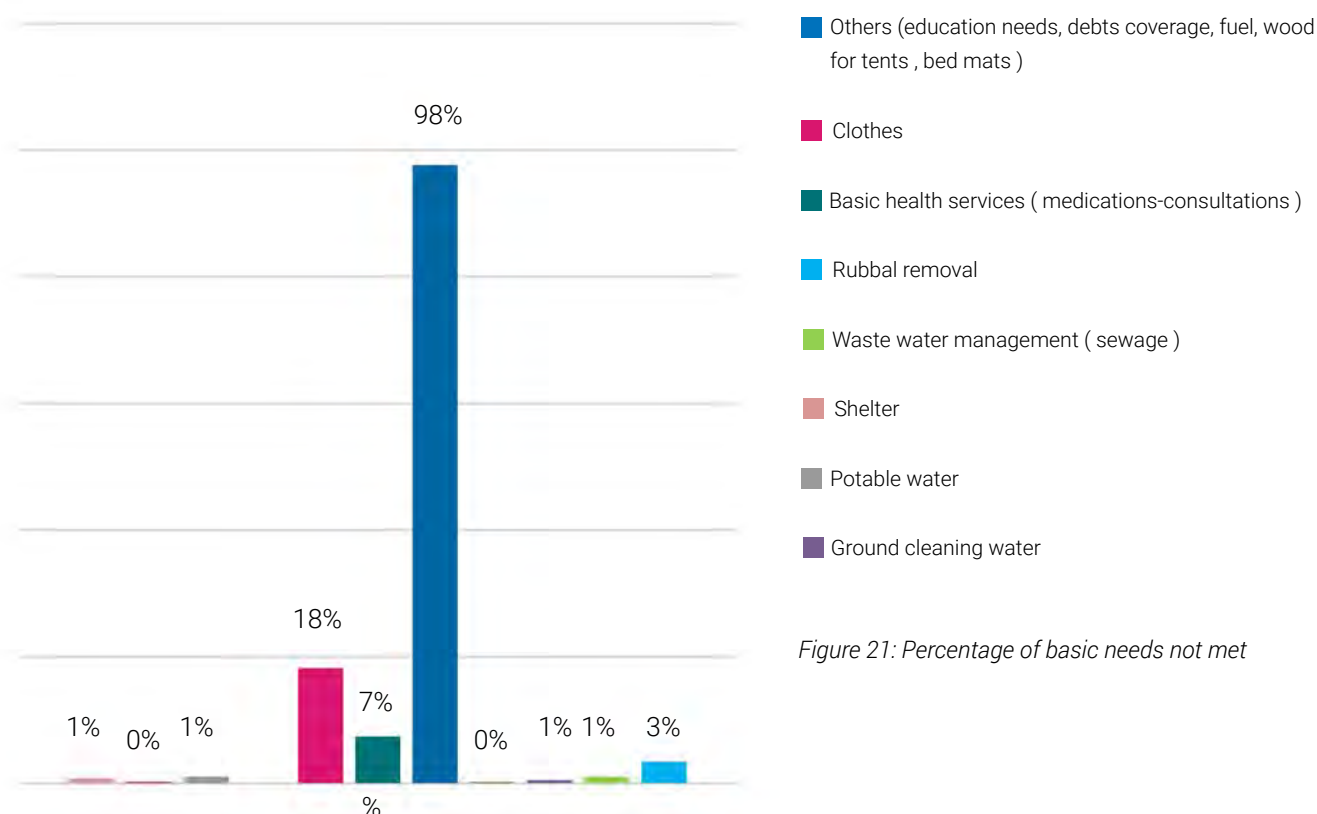


Figure 21: Percentage of basic needs not met

When asked about other needs, the respondents have indicated that their concern is regarding: access to formal education 32%, covering debts 24% and any need that their children might have 20%. Other needs mentioned are: access to work/ employment, wood for tents and cleaning detergents 8% (each).

Syrian refugees have indicated that wood is very important for them, in order to rebuild their shelters:

"The wood provided to us was of poor quality". (A2)

"I asked her to give me some money because we were only provided with quarter of the needed amount". (E2)

"We also waited quite some time to receive the wood" (F2)

Needs may also vary based on the season – with that said, and during winter, Syrian refugees highlighted the following: fuel 74%, cash 17%, food 7% and medication 2%. The majority of the 379 respondents (92%) perceive themselves as unable to meet those specific winter needs, 7% indicated that they don't know if they will be able or not and only 1% stated that they are able to do so.

Regarding the classification of how help is provided to cover basic needs, the Syrian refugee population is self-dependent when it comes to covering basic needs such as clothing 100%, basic health needs 66%, shelter 70%¹ and food 60%. They receive help from others for the wastewater treatment 68%, solid waste management 52% and drinking water 27%. The aid comes from both themselves and others to cover all needs in general, but mainly in drinking water 46%, ground and water for cleaning 37% and solid waste management 35% (Figure 22).

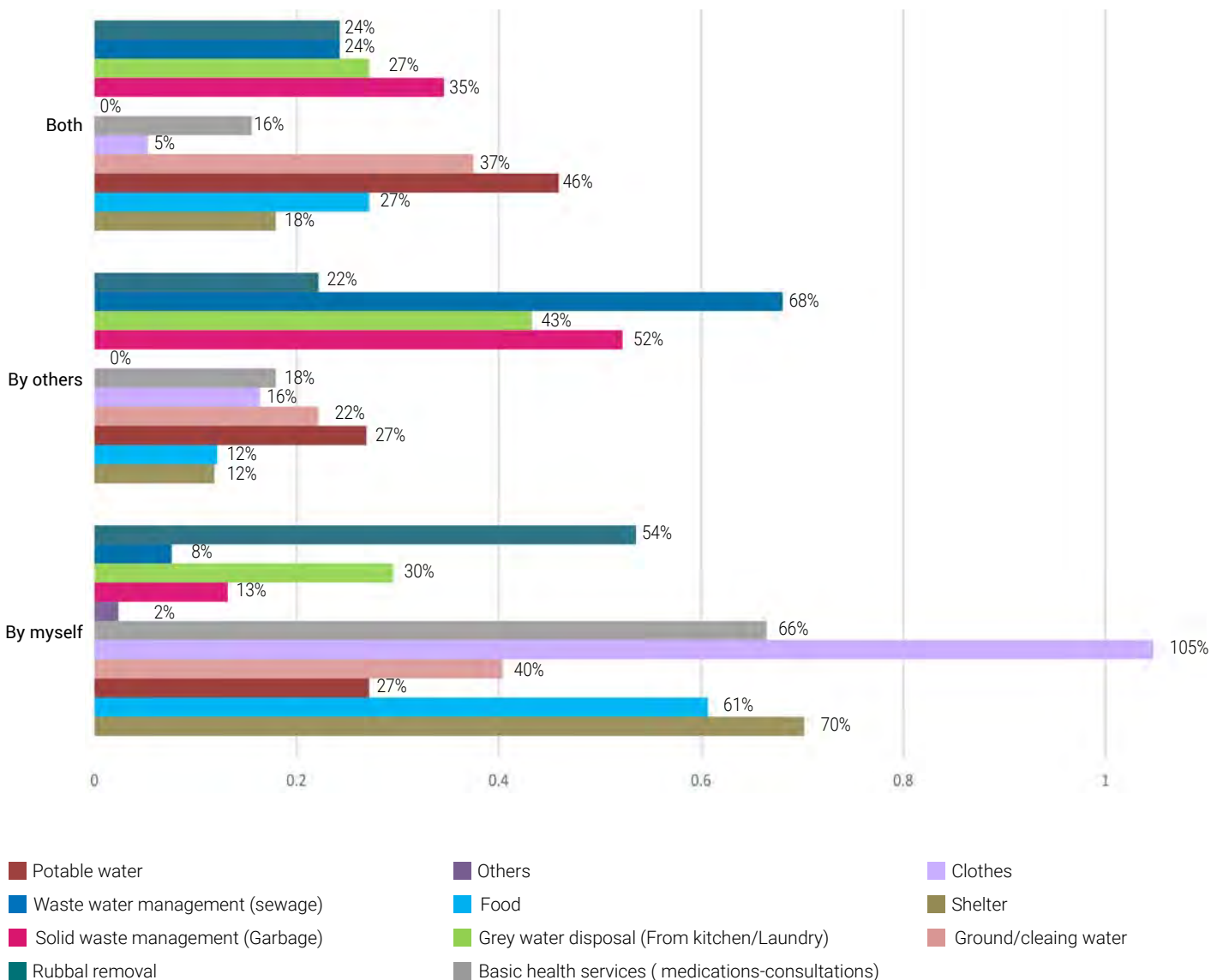
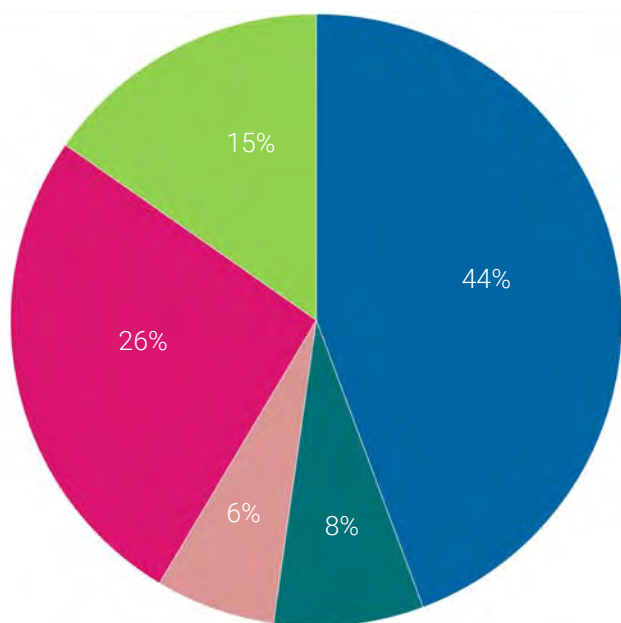


Figure 22: Classification of how help is provided to cover needs

¹As per the shelter working group more than 80% of HHs are been assisted with basic shelter materials.

After the demolition or self-demolition, 44% of children under the age of 18 are attending the 2019/2020 scholastic year as opposed to 26% who are out of school (Figure 23), while in 15% of the cases some of the children but not all are attending school. As for households in which only males go to school, they are 8%, while in cases where only females attend, they are 7%. It is worth mentioning that the dismantling of homes had no impact on the decision not to continue the education of any of the children in 98% of households.



In 98% of the cases, people's disabilities were not taken into consideration throughout the dismantling and rebuilding of shelter.

The professionals interviewed highlight that the affected population needs are not homogenous and it is of utmost priority to provide them with tailored response in order to cover their specific needs

"Wellbeing of families to overcome stress and anxiety developed or increased following the dismantlement. Additional shelter support for children activities is needed." (Org.2, II).

■ Some of them ■ Girls ■ Boys
■ All of them ■ None of them

Figure 23: Percentage of children at household level going to school on 19-20

In addition, security-related needs are identified:

"One of the main concerns is that they live in shelters that are unsafe and do not have the least habitability requirements (especially after the dismantling)". (Org.3).

The organizations interviewed find necessary to implement new intervention actions with female groups and children, as groups of greater vulnerability:

"...Increase child protection activities, increase women empowerment projects (literacy and numeracy for women would be very important), mental health related activities are needed" (Org.2, II).

Education and school attendance are also an issue; it has been indicated that the intervention in this sector is a must:

"There aren't children begging, but working. They drop out of school for many reasons: they need to help with the house/ family; they are unable to register in the Lebanese schools. They also need to think: do they continue in the Syrian unofficial schools or not? It will depend on their interest, expenses associated (transportation...)". (Org.1, II).

In this sense, some organizations carry out specific actions on specific problems associated, for example, with the problem of gender or sexual violence:

"Through the partners, UNHCR has implemented activities related to gender-based violence, which include, among others, awareness raising, case management, referrals, emergency cash, health" (Org.2, II).

7.5. WELLBEING SITUATION IN RELATION TO THE LOSS OF HOUSING

As Figure 24 shows, with multiple problems experienced by survey respondents, most problems occur over several days. Along with the loss of their housing, the data shows that 43% of respondents felt half of the days in the two weeks prior survey (November, 2019) 38% nervous; 35% fearful, 34% felt tired, 31% unable to control their worries; 34% claimed they were easily irritated and irritable leading to outbursts of anger and/or aggressive acts in the 32% of the cases. Moreover, 34% felt hopeless and 33% were overcome with sadness.

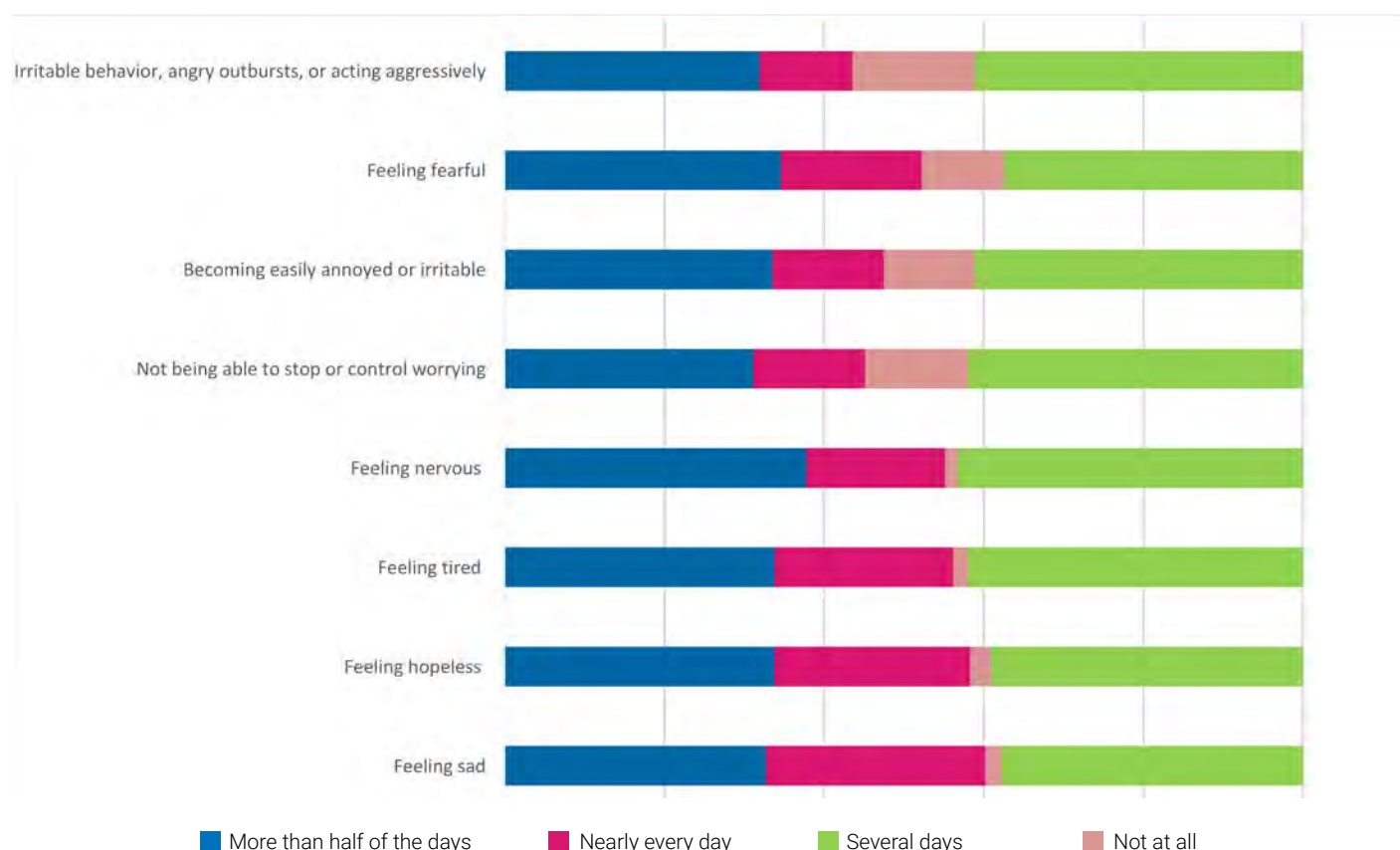


Figure 24: Percentage of problems experience over the last two weeks by Syrian refugees in Arsal affected by the dismantling Figure 24: Percentage of problems experience over the last two weeks by Syrian refugees in Arsal affected by the dismantling

Syrian refugees due to the dismantlement of their homes, in general, indicate that they are pessimistic and it is affecting their mental health:

“We felt sadness, homelessness, oppression, depression, missing our families” (E2).

“Besides the dismantling, there are other pressures in our lives”. (F2).

“We are in a foreign place and we felt that we have nobody to support us”. (I2).

The professionals also describe the vulnerability factors detected in the Syrian refugees who have lost their homes as follows:

“There was an increase in anxiety and stress in men also as they felt they could not protect their families any longer and were unable to protect against harsh weather” (Org.2, II).

As per figure 25, 73% of Syrian refugees in Aarsal indicated that they have not experienced any new or increasing problems after the dismantlement at household level. On the other hand, 21% claim they have faced problems due to social isolation while 7% showed aggressiveness towards one another and 6% showed impulsive reactions.

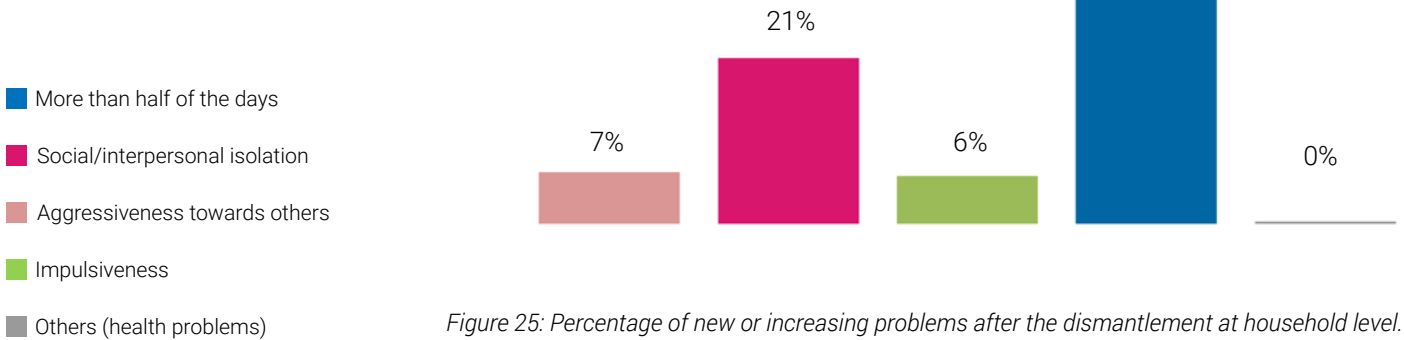


Figure 25: Percentage of new or increasing problems after the dismantlement at household level.

It was also noted that 78% of refugee children have not experience new or increasing problems, at the same time; this is not the case for all. On the other hand, 22% of refugee children were affected by the demolitions and effects were translated into enuresis (bed-wetting) 9%, aggressiveness towards others 7%, hyperactivity 6% in addition to fear, sadness, depression, non-education and social isolation 6% (Figure 26).

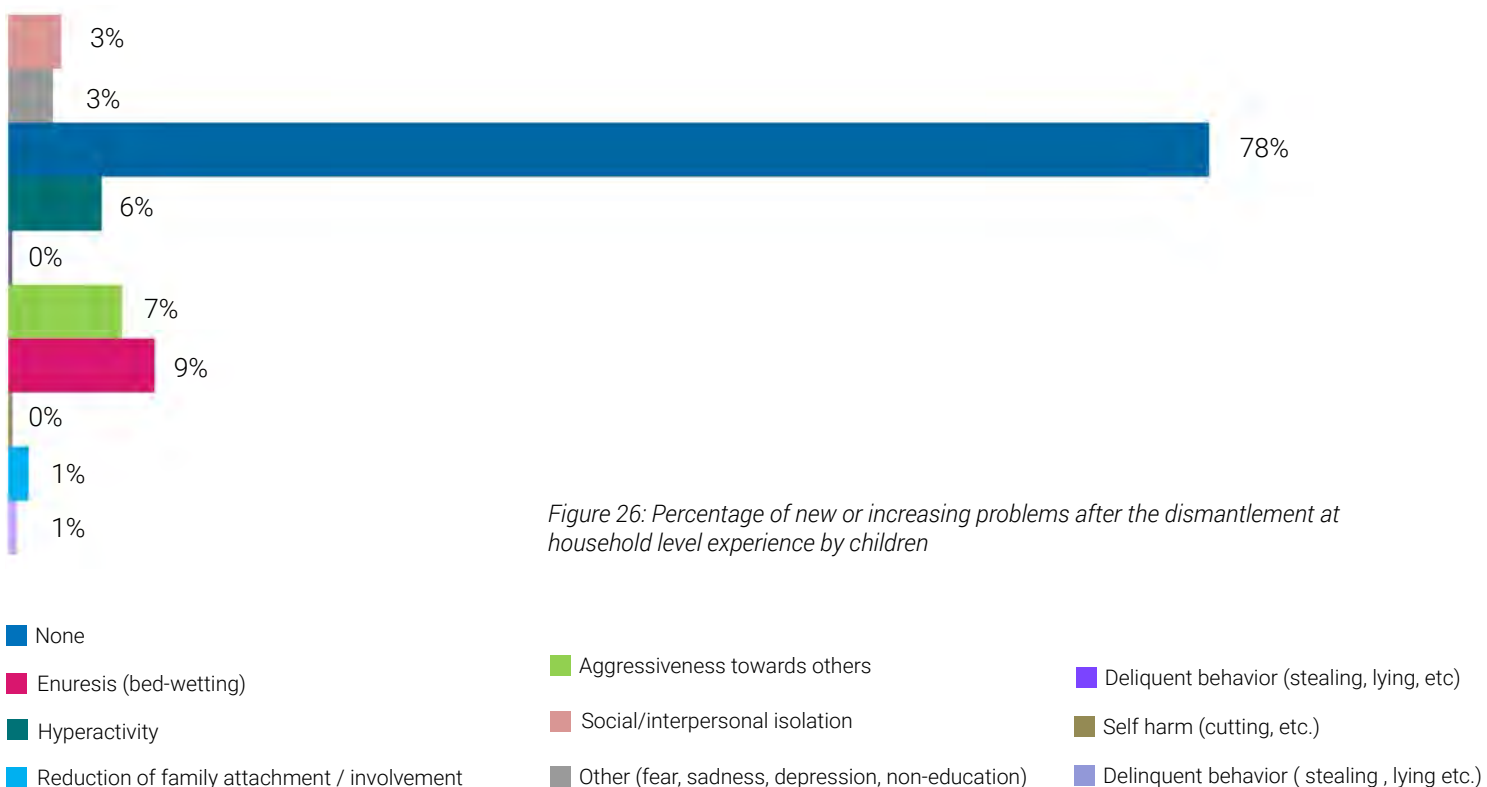


Figure 26: Percentage of new or increasing problems after the dismantlement at household level experience by children

The professionals also described the problems of the Syrian refugees adapting to their new housing as follows:

“It was really difficult for the refugees, especially in Aarsal, with all the extreme weather conditions, and having them to live in plastic sheets, that they weren’t used to doing so before”. (Org.2, II).

The professionals’ opinion is that the effects of the debt and the loss of the house have important negative consequences on the welfare of the families:

“The anxiety they have for the future and the fact that they would be even less able to provide basic needs for their kids. (Org.2, I).

“They have particularly reduced the medical expenses which means deterioration of their general health” (Org.2, I).

During the interview, it was also noted by the professionals the negative effects on mental health and self-perception of refugees:

“Anxiety, stress, fear, feel of loss of dignity for the way, uncertainty, among others are some of the feelings that they expressed” (Org.2, I).

These problems are mainly associated with the pressure that exceeded the payment of the debt. In addition, there is an accumulation of mental health problems, and inappropriate sexual practices that increase vulnerability:

“The accumulation of debt causes them to have no income and to feel pressured; this generates problems such as suicide, or behaviors that generate discomfort and mental health problems, for example, inappropriate sexual behaviors”; “People are living in traumatic situations that keep on going” (Org.3).

“Problems such as depression sleep problems, mood swings, lack of energy, feelings of guilt, increased aggression, etc...” (Org.1, I).

“The families indicated the kids are acting out; they are more aggressive, acting out kids. Parents can’t control them; they don’t have work... They also mentioned that teens are developing an addictive behavior. That is what the community says, she didn’t meet any teen with addiction issues”. (Org.1, II).

7.6. IDENTIFICATION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH DISMANTLING

During and/or after the dismantlement the respondents indicated that they become vulnerable in the 17% of the cases to animal bites such as snakes, rats, or scorpion stings. In addition to that, 14% of households' inhabitants suffered injuries as a result of the movement of rubble as part of the demolition. But it is necessary to take into consideration that the 68% of people respond that no noticeable event occurs during and/or after dismantling (Figure 27).

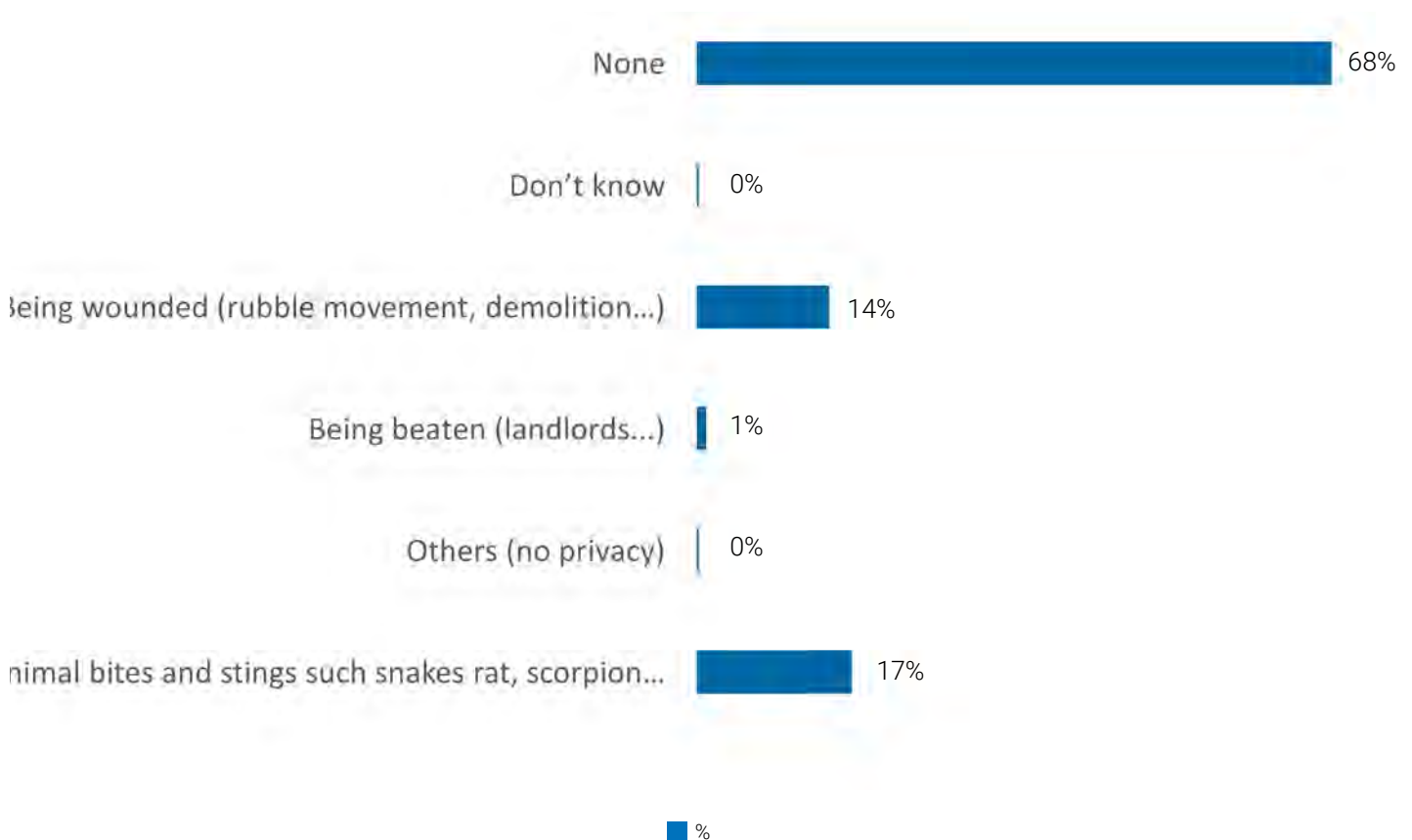


Figure 27: Percentage of the experiences that the household members went through during and/or after dismantlement

After the dismantling of their housing structure, a change in the behavior of household members was observed 6% that lead to the increase of bad words, insults and cursing among household members. Other households witnessed aggressive acts such as breaking of things at home through violence 2%. However, in 74% of households none of the above was experience. Figure 28.

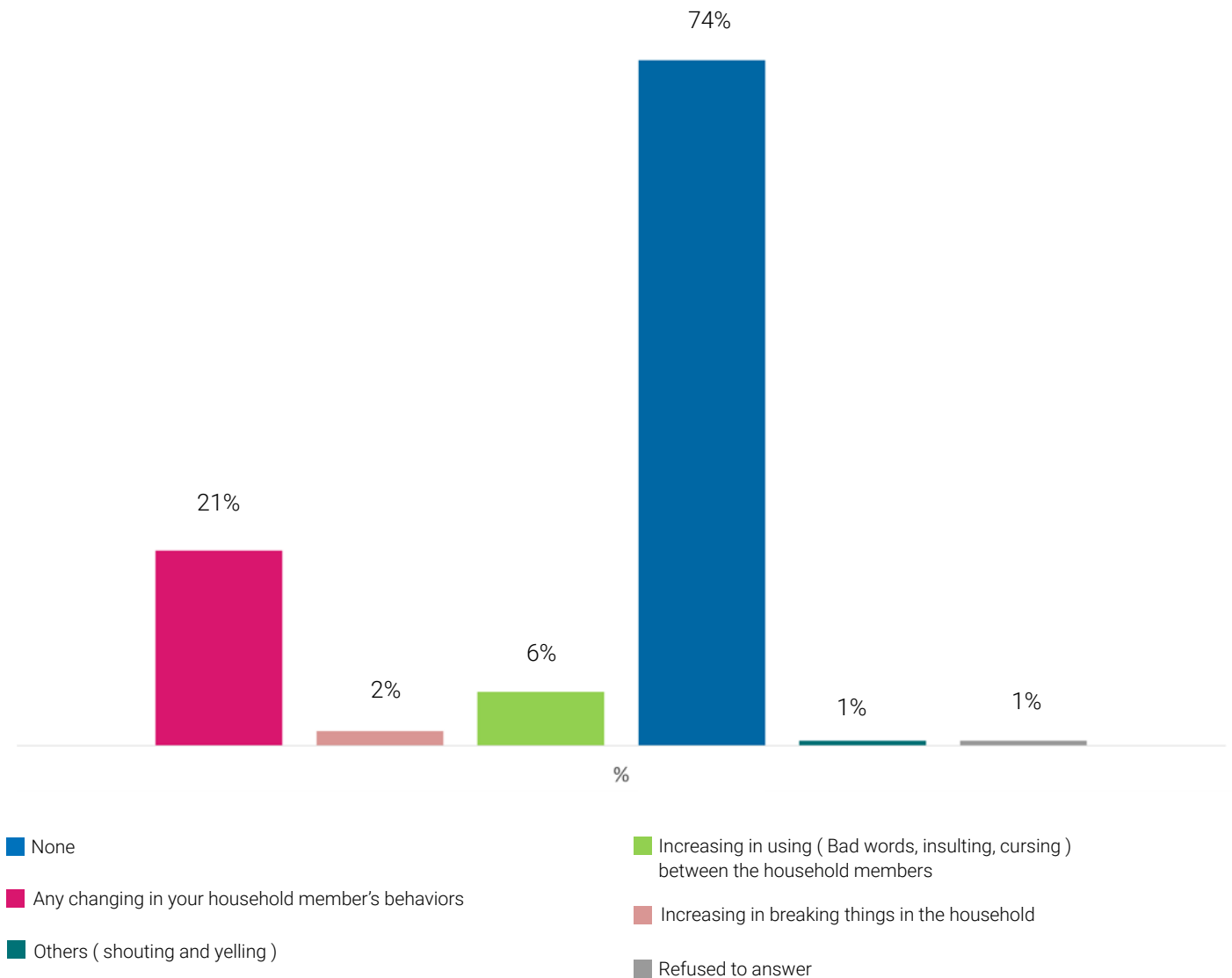
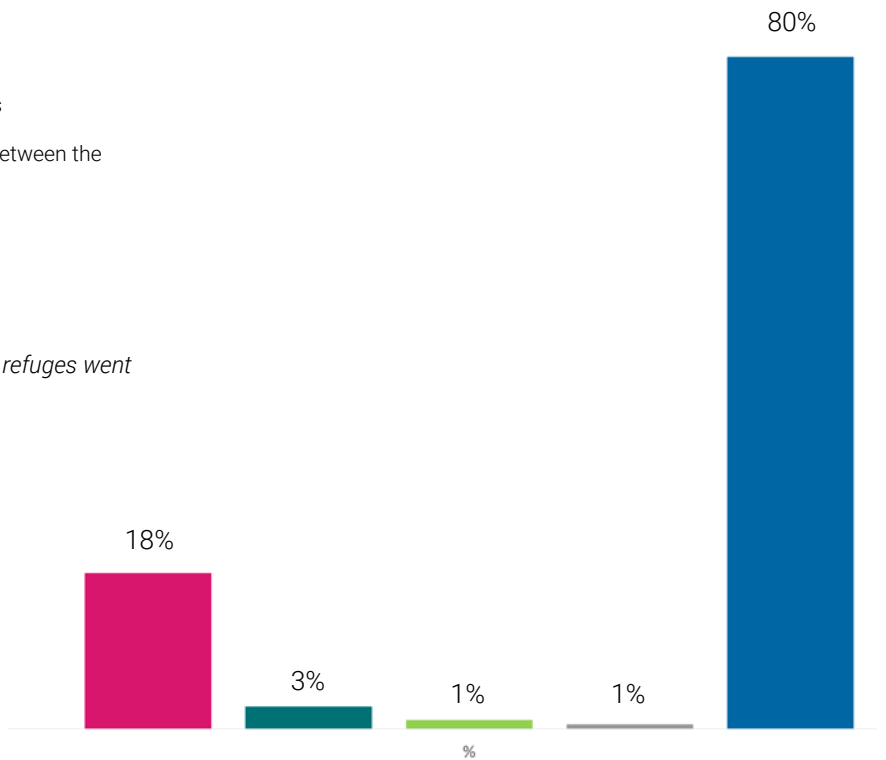


Figure 28: Percentage of the experiences that the household members went through after the dismantlement

Following the dismantling of homes within the Syrian refugee community, 80% reported that there have not been any changes in the behavior. Among those who reported changes in the behavior of their members, 20% indicated an increase with the usage of bad words 18% and insults and curses in 3% of the cases (Figure 29).

- None
- Any changing in your household member's behaviors
- Increasing in using (Bad words, insulting, cursing) between the household members
- Don't know
- Increasing in breaking things in the household

Figure 29: Percentage of the experiences that Syrian refugees went through at community level after the dismantlement



Separation of household members was not reported as a result of the demolitions (reported at 1%). Separations were mostly related to death or members gone missing.

After the dismantling in 98% of the cases the Syrian refugees indicated that they haven't experiment social tensions with the host community, landlord or shawish (Figure 30).

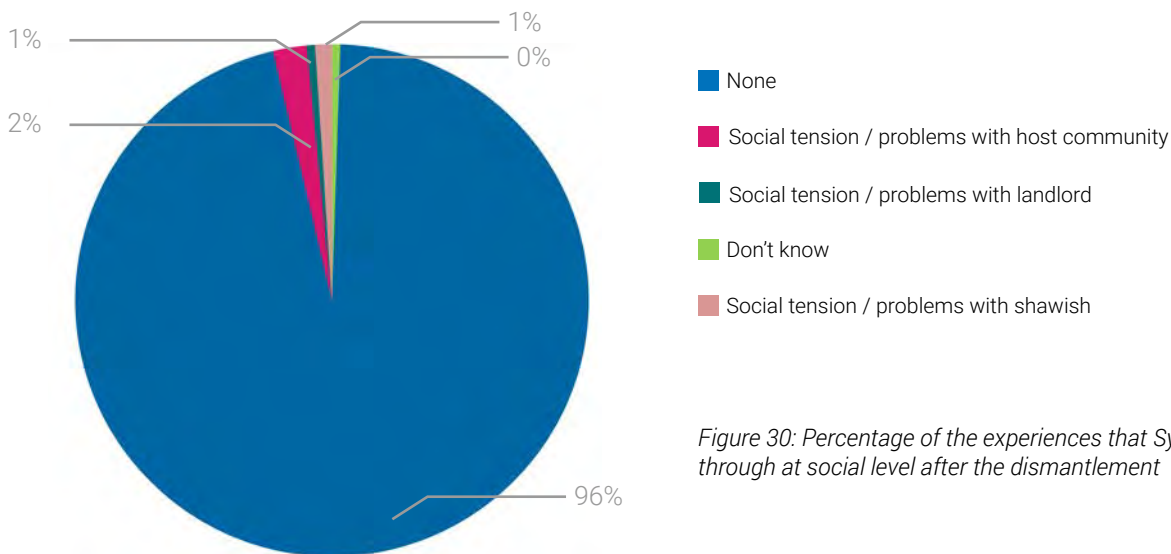


Figure 30: Percentage of the experiences that Syrian refugees went through at social level after the dismantlement

If this study is to assess the situation of Syrian refugees living among the host community before and after the dismantlement of homes, it remains more or less the same – 95% feel that the situation has not changed for them. It only worsened in 3% of the cases (Figure 31).

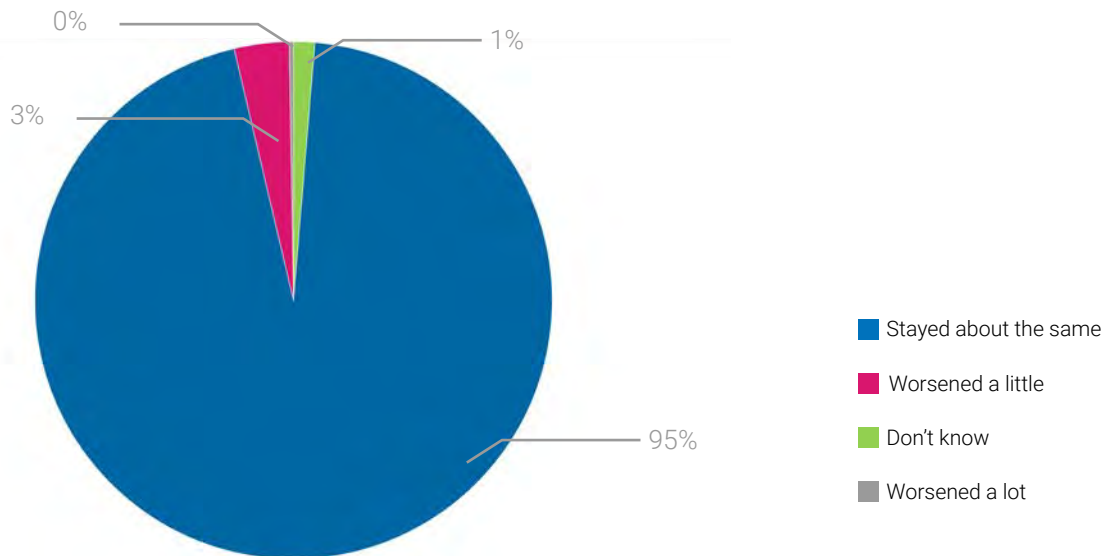


Figure 31: Relationship between Lebanese and Syrians in Arsal compared to five months ago, before the first demolition.

In general terms, 44% of Syrian refugees shared a neutral opinion on the security of the area they live in during the day, while 33% described it as safe and 21% as very safe. It is only perceived as insecure by 1% of the population and very insecure by only 1% (Figure 32).

The perception of the Syrian refugees' when asked to assess the security of the area during the night, indicate that almost reminds the same as during daylight: neutral by 44%, safe by 34% and very safe by 20%. It is only perceived as insecure by 2% and very insecure by 1% (Figure 32).

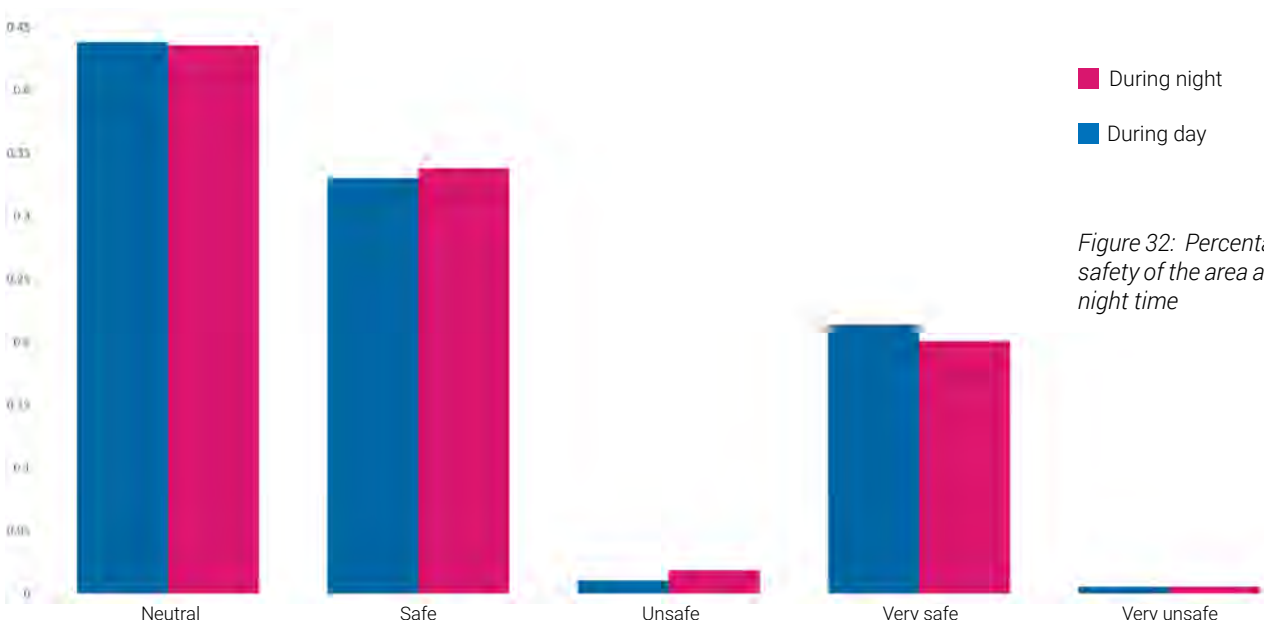


Figure 32: Percentage of rate the safety of the area at day time and night time

Compared to the five months prior to the first demolition, the feeling of security (feeling safe) for refugees in Aarsal remains at 95%. The security situation seems to have worsened for 4% of the population.

The perception regarding the willingness of people in their community inside the ITS to help their neighbors was also assessed. As a result, 74% agreed that the willingness is indeed there – 8% strongly agreed to the latter. On the other hand, 10% of refugees disagree with the availability of help among neighbors while 8% strongly disagree (Figure 33).

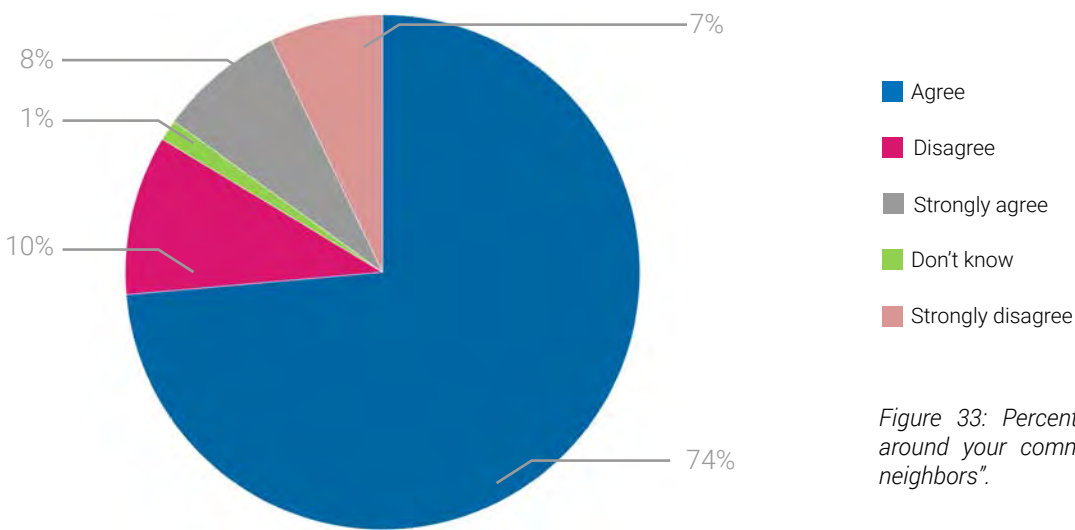


Figure 33: Percentage of agreement on "People around your community are willing to help their neighbors".

Finally, in relation to the perception of trust among the people in their community, 69% of the refugees agree that there is trust and 7% strongly agree to it. At the same time, 13% of refugees disagree on the possibility to trust amongst one another and 9% strongly disagree (Figure 34).

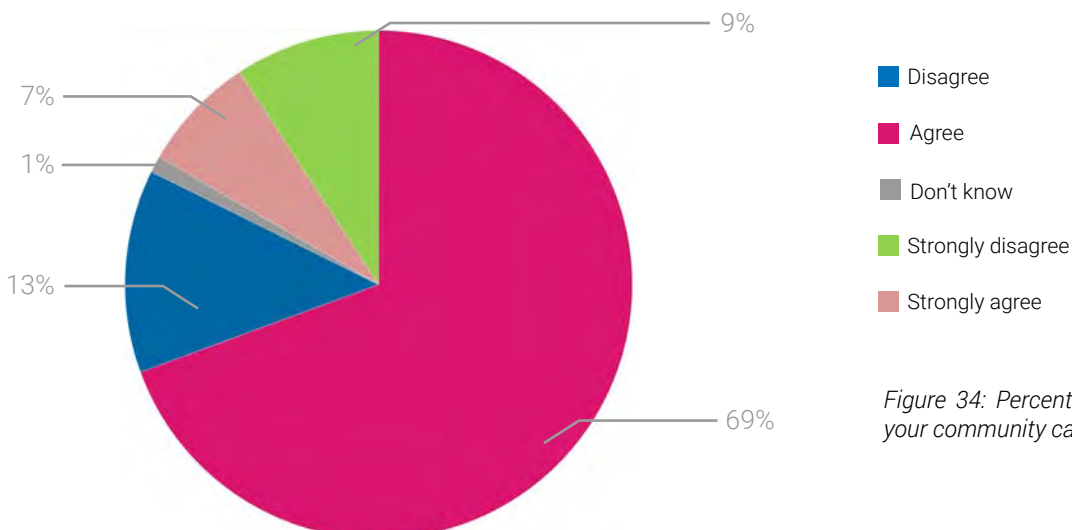


Figure 34: Percentage of agreement on "People in your community can be trusted"

Social intervention professionals detect serious social problems related to violence in the most vulnerable groups, women and children:

“Men are very frustrated by the whole situation they are living, and this causes and increase violence against women and children”. (Org.3).

In addition, professionals discover that one of the main social problems that prevents the autonomy and well-being of refugees is unemployment:

“Context of Aarsal, low job opportunities and dismantlement they are also the most affected profiles as they don’t have anyone to assist them to build their house the way they wanted”. (Org.2, I).

7.7. BASIC ASSISTANCE NEEDS

The main priority needs for refugees for the coming weeks are for 30% to have cash for 29% to have food and 27% to have fuel. The Syrian refugees also highlight their need of medication in the 21% of the cases. Refugees generally express that they cannot meet their basic needs:

“We are not able to get our basic needs”. (D 2)

In addition, access to health services as well as materials for housing reconstruction are among the main needs:

“When we came to Lebanon the health services were free, but now they are no longer free, the medicines are very expensive”. (C 3)

“Hospitals are taking advantage of us, once they know that the UNHCR covers the cost of the hospitalization”. (F 1)

“There’s no NGO that covers the birth costs and it costs \$ 500”. (H 3)

“We waited for the wood, but they didn’t give us any”. (H 3)

In addition, there are other needs such as formal education for 32% of refugees; cover their debts in 24% of the cases and their children needs for 20% of cases (Figure 35).

In general terms the study indicates that 87% of refugees do not perceive themselves able to meet these three needs.

Other needs expressed by refugees are the materials for the construction of their shelter, which leads to the debt increase. In the same way, in addition, job loss and lack of employment opportunities are additional problems:

“We all have debts due to the extra wood and tarpaulin we had to buy” (H3)

“We lost our livelihood and jobs” (I3)

With regard to the top three priority needs for the winter, the Syrian refugees mentioned fuel (74%), food (30%) and cash (24%). Once again Syrian refugees also highlight their need of medication in the 20% of the cases.

In addition, other needs for winter are formal education, 35%; heater, 23% and school needs 15%. For 12% of the respondents, another main need is to cover their debts, 8% to have a job and 8% to cover their children needs. (Figure 36).

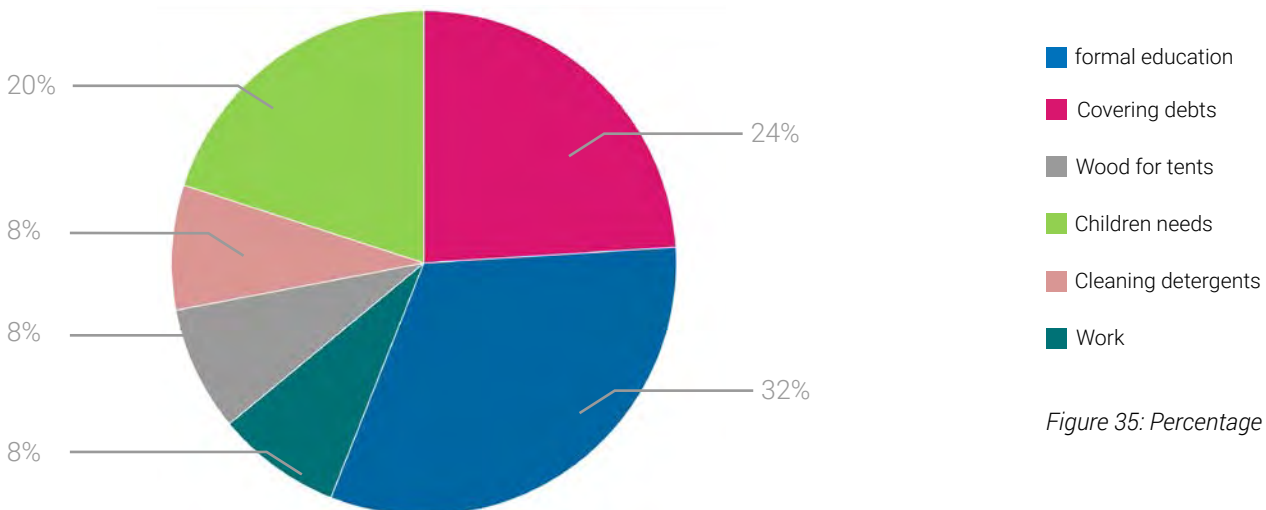


Figure 35: Percentage of other needs

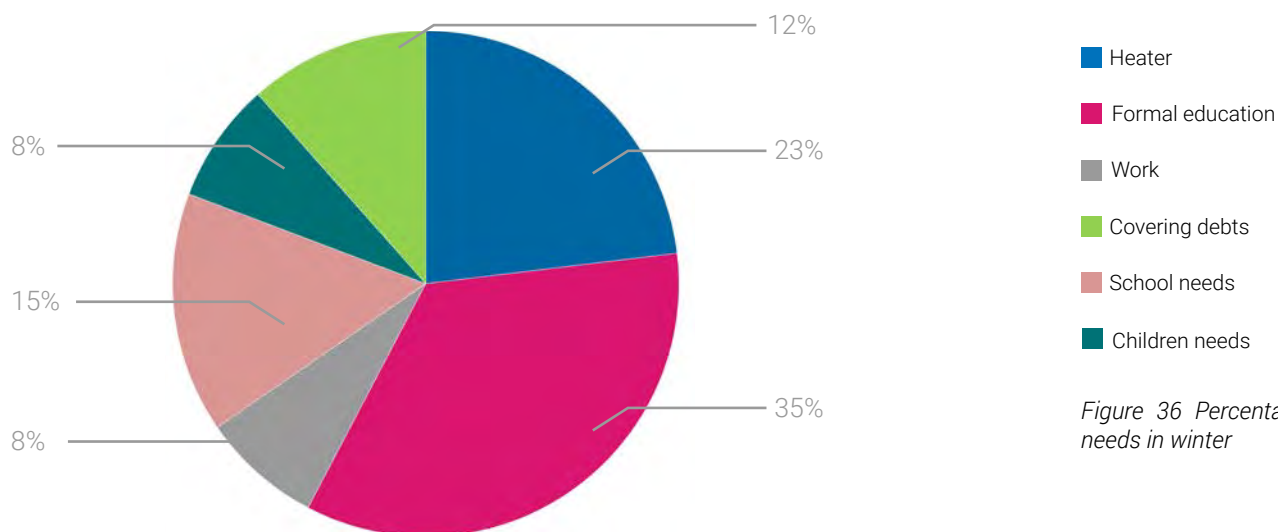


Figure 36 Percentage of other needs in winter

In most cases, 92% (n= 349), refugees are not able to meet these specific winter needs (Figure 39).

The needs that refugees assign to winter are those related to the lack of proper shelter during adverse weather conditions:

“Especially during winter, we are not protected from the rain or the snow”. (A 3)

The professionals indicate that the intervention is difficult especially in the case of sexual violence:

“Cases of sexual violence against women and children are observed but it is very difficult to intervene”. (Org.3).

Assistance to basic needs is also understood by professionals, through psychological reinforcement activities to the most vulnerable groups.

“Young people are also a very vulnerable group, they are receiving a lot of pressure, it is necessary to do specific activities for them, to help them in their future and also so that they can vent, it is important to involve them in activities.” (Org.3)

In particular, professionals find serious problems in attending to housing needs, as well as knowledge of the circumstances of dismantling:

“In terms of helping those families to find other accommodations or you know all the difficulties that come with having your home dismantled in such a way”. (Org.2, I).

In addition, they indicated of the impossibility of planning their interventions, given the progressive increase in dismantling:

“I think not thriving was about planning, but I think the number of dismantled tents was much higher than initially thought”. (Org.2, I).

About the new possibilities for intervention, the professionals affirm that it is necessary to improve the speed of the intervention, the effectiveness and the coordination between organizations:

“On the one hand there is the response mechanism and on the other the period of response. Sometimes we take longer than the established time to respond and there are “delays” of one or two weeks”. (Org.2, I).

Basic care is extended to essential products for survival, in addition to shelter

“It is mostly shelter, but we also included whether there are also any basic assistance needs, like core relief items in place, whether there are food needs....” (Org.2, I).

But emergency assistance actions are also very important when dismantling occurs:

*“Cash assistance in coordination with WFP for their food program; winter assistance. Core relief items assistance; Multifunctional team – cash assistance / protection Emergency in the field.
In dismantlement, it was a miss organization of the activity in the field”.
(Org.2, I).*



Since the demolition of their homes, 73% of the respondents have faced stress by spending time with family / friends / acquaintances / neighbors, 27% through spiritual practices / prayer, 7% watching TV or videos, following by 5% that indicated social activities, smoking and others as coping mechanisms (Figure 37).

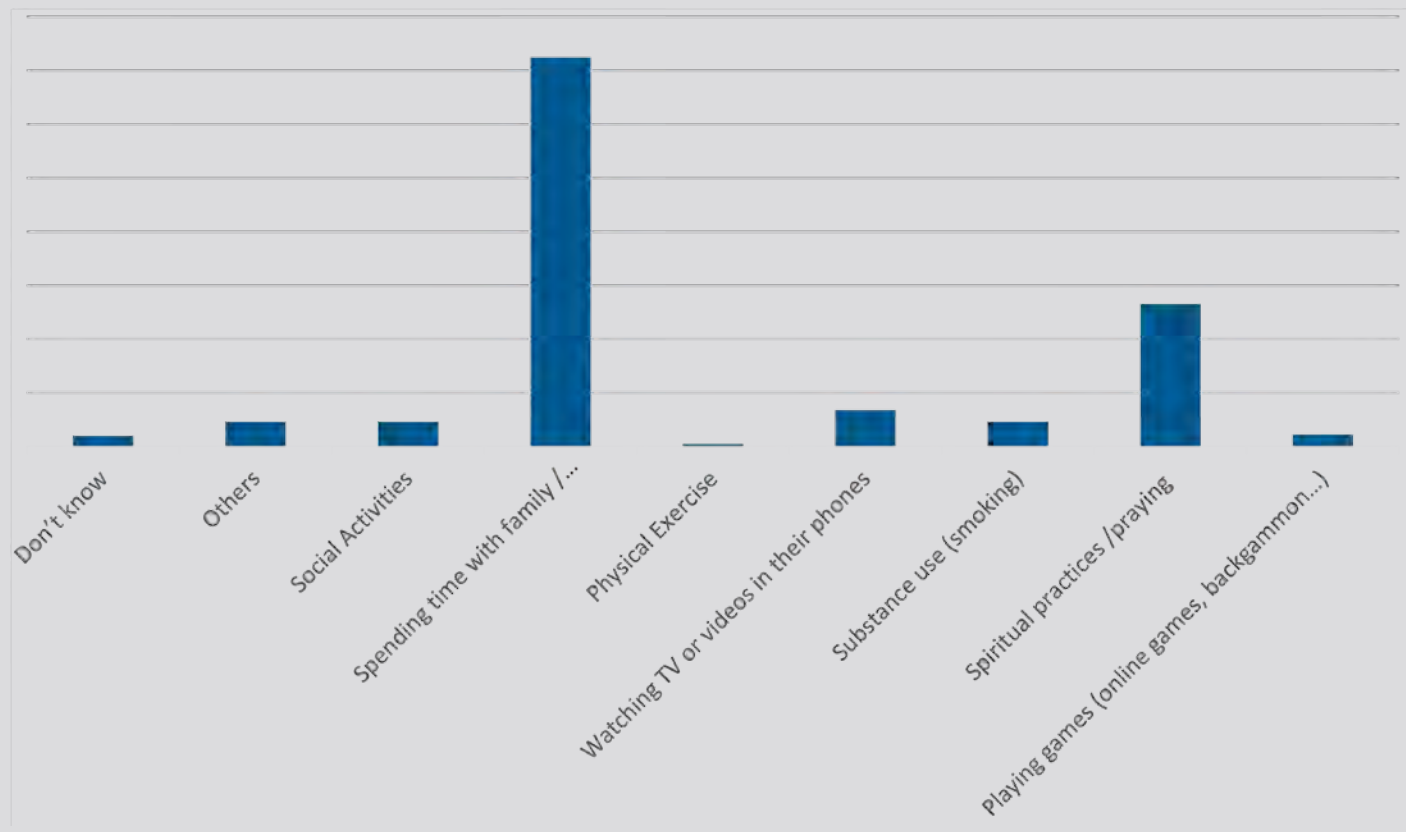


Figure 37: Coping mechanisms adopted at household level since the demolition

Regarding the availability of a safe space or space for children to play, most refugees claim that it does not exist 91%

Intervention professionals affirm that the main mechanism identified is support among members of the same family, sharing the stores in case of dismantling of any of them.

“The same community comes from the same area, they have relatives, and people always come together. They prefer to stay with their relatives”. (Org.2, I).

That is why the feeling of belonging to their Syrian community makes them feel more protected against their vulnerable situation.

During the investigation process we have found the following limitations:

- Lack of a theoretical/conceptual framework related to the dismantling and its impact on refugees in the Middle East. Some research has been conducted in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OpT) regarding this issue and has been analyzed by the research team.
- Challenges faced during the data collection phase include:
 - A lack of collaboration from some refugees as the survey didn't benefit them directly with material supplies/resources, such as relief kits.
 - People other than the survey respondents would frequently ask about the purpose of the visit. Although all measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality of the survey's participants, such inquiries delayed the process and increased the time for the data collection.
 - Heavy rains in the area negatively impacted the collection of surveys in Aarsal as well as those collected online/over the phone (exceedingly poor connection).
 - Days on which other organizations would distribute material resources very often prompted the target population to reschedule or cancel their appointments with FPS field workers, thereby delaying data collection.
 - Informal Tent Settlements can be quite loud environments, requiring questions to be asked several times and lengthening the overall survey collection time.
 - An outdated master list of phone numbers for the potential respondents further delayed the data collection as the enumerators were required to spend more time attempting to schedule interviews.
 - The urgent need for cash has made the identification of other needs more difficult by prompting potential respondents to conditionalize their participation in data collection efforts.
 - The harsh living conditions and numerous needs of respondents increased the difficulty of identifying the specific needs that resulted from the demolition.
 - The social unrest experienced in Lebanon since mid-October 2019 greatly affected the work plan of the research:
 - The road closures between Zahle and Aarsal and the security conditions in the area forced FPS and the consultancy team to cancel several visits, limiting the access to the target population.
 - As per the reasons mentioned above, the FPS team decided to conduct the survey via WhatsApp/phone, requiring the methodology to be adapted.
 - Friday prayers reduced the amount of time available for data collection, further limiting the work of the enumerators (i.e., finishing by 13.00h instead of 15.00h).

In summary, this research highlighted the problems of the dismantlement of Syrian refugees' houses in Arsal, and its impact on Syrian refugees' debt status, wellbeing, and household expenditure in the first half of 2019. In general, Syrian refugee population in Arsal indicated facing a difficult situation due to dismantlement. In almost all cases, dismantlement was partial and most of demolitions were carried out without conflict. Not everyone was able to complete his/her house reconstruction up to November 2019. More than half of the families rebuilt their houses, turning to their families, friends and neighbors. In some cases, wage laborers supported and in almost all cases NGOs, INGOS, followed by UN agencies supported.

Syrian refugees' households borrowed money to destroy/build their homes. They felt that terms of debt repayment were unfair. In general, they couldn't repay the money and if they did, it was breaching conditions. Many paid back some of the borrowed money. Debt brought with it significant problems, including reducing expenses (on food, school, health, etc.). Occasionally, children had to take on jobs to contribute to the overall economy. Also, this generated family problems and increased family tensions. It also forced families to adopt to many negative coping mechanisms and few positive coping mechanisms.

Regarding Syrian refugees' basic needs, as reported, there was access to low quality food and water. Also a requirement to cover basic needs such as: education, debt coverage, fuel and/or firewood, mats and clothing was stated. Arsal aid actors provided wastewater treatment, solid waste management and drinking water. Other needs such as drinking water, groundwater, brushwood and solid waste management were covered by both Syrian refugees and aid actors.

The main priorities that Syrian refugees highlighted were cash, food, medication, fuel, formal education, covering debts and other needs for their children. Majority of the Syrian refugees perceived themselves not able to meet needs, especially if specific winter needs were taken into consideration. It was clear that food assistance was considered by the Syrian refugees a basic need and a method to payback their acquired debts.

The study also showed that the refugees' well-being was affected by the dismantlement, yet suffering began before the demolition. Syrian refugees expressed persistent feelings of nervousness, tiredness, worry, irritability, anger, aggressiveness, despair and sadness. Children continuously experienced symptoms such as enuresis, aggressiveness towards others, hyperactivity, and other feelings (fear, sadness, and personal isolation). Some families indicated that Lebanese/Syrian children in Arsal did not have safe spaces to play, thus children no longer play and fight instead.

Some household members reported an increase in inappropriate behavior (insults, bad language, and breaking objects) within families following dismantling. Despite the fact that survey and FGD participants did not report such behaviors, however, interview respondents reported numerous occasions on increase in aggressive behaviors especially towards women and girls (gender and sexual violence).

Also, the study revealed high percentages of the affected population with specific needs (physical and intellectual impairments). Neither the demolished nor rebuilt structures were adapted to specific needs of people with disabilities who couldn't take care of themselves, requiring a caregiver.

As for the separation of household members, this hardly took place during the dismantlement and reconstruction phase. After dismantling, Syrian refugees were found to be more vulnerable, not only to the weather conditions and fire breaks, but also to snake/rat bites, scorpion stings or injuries from the movement of demolition debris.

Overall, the study shows that refugees perceived Aarsal as safe living space (in contradiction with the secondary data provided by UNHCR and other actors), where the demolitions have had no impact on this perception.

Based on evidence, facts and findings described in this report, recommendations can be identified whose objective would be to improve the responses of the different actors working in Aarsal area in order to mitigate the effects that Syrian refugees are experiencing as a result of the dismantling. In order to draft these recommendations, it has been taken into consideration that contributions of professionals and organizations that aren't not only present in Aarsal but have provided a response intervention during the dismantling process. The research team proposes the following recommendations and actions.

• REFUGEES MAIN PRIORITIES, BASIC NEEDS AND DEBT

It is recommended to:

- a. Support Syrian refugees affected by the dismantlement process through cash assistance interventions.
- b. Develop initiatives for the development of sustainable economic income to be able to finance their debts.
- c. Reinforce the coordination plan among the organizations operating in the area to plan the coverage of basic needs, taking into account the specificities of the winter.

• HEALTH SERVICES

It is recommended to:

- a. Support Syrian refugees access to health services and medication, through health or cash assistance interventions.
- b. Primary practitioners in the area and surroundings should receive training for managing envenomation cases taking into consideration the updated guidelines and references to raise their knowledge levels.
- c. District public health institutions should be provided with resources and training for the use of anti-venom during envenomation cases.
- d. District public health institutions should update their knowledge on Asthma diagnosis/management and stocked with the relevant medications.

• MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING

It is recommended to:

- a. Promote the detection of mental health and psychosocial problems and use of referral systems for mental health (MH) care
- b. Coordinate actions, as well as approaches and methodologies of MH care. The effect of the consequences suffered by Syrian refugees, their needs, problems and associated symptoms is also heterogeneous and differentiated according to gender or age.
- c. Design specific actions for women, men, girls and boys.
- d. Develop awareness actions to raise mindfulness of the importance of access to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and to fight stigma against those who need help.
- e. Identify community leaderships that favor the implementation of MHPSS actions and whose focus is on building the capacities of the Syrian refugees to face adversity.
- f. These actions should be coordinated with an access to psychotropic medication (a current challenge in Lebanon for both for vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees).



• • DESIGNING SPECIFIC PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IS A NECESSITY, AS THEY ARE IDENTIFIED AS A VULNERABLE GROUP.

It is recommended to:

- a. Provide safe areas and materials for children to play.
- b. Strengthen protection services and referral mechanisms from other actors.
- c. Develop early stimulation programs to support the normal development of children.
- d. Develop joint outdoor activities between boys and girls that allows for building relationships and bonding on the basis of equality.
- e. Support formal and non-formal education related costs (some families have indicated that they can't assume the extra costs related to their children's education such as transportation, school materials, proper clothing...)
- f. Provide specific vocational training initiatives tailored to their needs, to improve their skills, capacities and livelihood opportunities (within the legal framework of the Lebanese labor law).
- g. Offer recreational activities that help youth live different situations from the ones they were living, hence contributing to their entertainment and improvement of their well-being.

- **PROMOTION OF AWARENESS AND/OR PROTECTION ACTIONS AGAINST GENDER -BASED VIOLENCE**

It is recommended to:

- Promote awareness and/or protection actions against gender-based violence as an essential component when planning and implementing psychosocial support interventions.
- Develop specific actions for the detection of survivors and intervene to work transversally with organizations for the detection/referral of gender violence cases.
- Deepen the diagnosis of the situation of women and girls are facing.
- Create a resource guide to assist women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence.
- Build the capacity of professionals, through complementary modules and trainings with topics that focus on human rights, gender, attendance of survivors, sexual violence, women and children with disabilities, children's exposure to GBV, masculinities and attention to perpetrators.
- Plan wide scale awareness raising campaigns that combat gender violence and guarantees a life without violence for women. Furthermore, raise awareness for involvement of all actors in achieving this purpose.



- **ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS**

It is recommended to:

- Design cross-cutting strategies, with the participation of the men and boys themselves and especially the leaders of the communities, to increase their participation in community activities.
- Establish a center for men, within the community, where specific support and care spaces can be created offering psychosocial support and males are helped to be aware of the situation they are experiencing.
- Hold specific sensitization sessions for men and boys on their roles, with concepts such as equality, masculinity, marital and sexual aggression and violence against women and girls. These sessions should be developed by specialized professionals, in order to decrease resistance and increase males' involvement.

- **IT IS NECESSARY TO INCREASE THE SUPPORT TO PWSN AND MAKE ALL INTERVENTIONS ACCESSIBLE**

It is recommended to:

- Local, Regional, and international organizations must adopt the IASC guidelines on inclusion of PWDs in humanitarian action, and implement them during emergency responses.
- Ensure all humanitarian actors are aware of inclusive services and how to make their interventions inclusive.
- Ensure the referral of PWDs to inclusive specialized and non-specialized services (health, rehabilitation, social, educational, livelihood,)
- Ensure accurate mapping of PWDs in refugees' settlements, to provide a better response and to facilitate their transportation.
- While designing the interventions ensure that transportation is accessible for PWDs to facilitate their access to the services provided.
- Ensure that all shelters are inclusive and accessible from planning to implementation.
- Shelter actors should ensure independency and mobility of PwDs inside ITSs and their community, to facilitate their participation in all aspects of life.
- Support children with disabilities and their caregivers to access the required services.
- Ensure women with disability good access to health, education, livelihood services on an equal basis with others.
- Ensure the availability and accessibility of the information related to the provided services.

Also, the need for access to services for children with disabilities was reported, as well as the need to increase the support of PwD caregivers.

- **SHELTER**

It is recommended to:

- Sector actors to ensure that safe shelter kits always include materials that can resist harsh weather conditions and fire incidents.

- **LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

It is recommended to:

- Take into account that demolitions and other restrictive measures have an acute humanitarian impact on refugees, and may be construed as pressures for return.
- Measures which are not in accordance with Lebanese and international law should not be implemented.
- For measures which are legal, it is very important that adequate advance notice is given to both refugees and humanitarians. In general terms, they should be implemented in a humane manner that is respectful of refugees' protection and dignity.
- When relocation is requested, alternative accommodation should be provided. It is important to keep in mind that temporary water and sanitation infrastructure is critical to mitigate diseases and protect the environment.
- It is also advisable that authorities are coordinated, in particular between law enforcement, different ministries and local authorities. Measures should be implemented in a way that does not affect unnecessarily the education cycle.

• THE INTERNATIONAL DONOR COMMUNITY SHOULD INCREASE THEIR SUPPORT

It is recommended to:

- a. Increase dialogue and advocacy with authorities on the points above, including encouraging authorities to refrain from taking decisions and / or issuing orders that could lead to an unsafe, involuntary and undignified return to Syria.
- b. Donors should encourage the Lebanese authorities to refrain from taking decisions and/or issuing orders that could lead to an unsafe, involuntary and undignified return to Syria.
- c. Donors should increase funding of the shelter sector. Only 4% was funded on the first quarter of 2019 [shelter sector to provide update (preferably all 2019)]
- d. Ensure that donors support advocacy and programs adapted to the new needs of refugees, which have emerged because of the demolitions and the current economic crisis and tensions.
- e. Donors to be prepared to fund emergency assistance, namely heating system and fuel
- f. Donors should increase funding of cash assistance, including winterization. The study has shown that cash assistance is routinely used to absorb shocks, such as the impact of measures such as dismantlement, which are not foreseeable. The vulnerability of refugees to such measures increases in the absence of adequate cash assistance.
- g. The humanitarian community to continue supporting more sustainable solutions in ITSs including on- site and adaptive infrastructure and connections to public networks when possible and/or upgrade ailing infrastructure which can continue to serve Lebanese communities after any refugee returns

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