SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL

Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection

Collective Site Management and Coordination

The experience of Solidarités International in North Lebanon governorate

March 2016

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For the past 37 years, the humanitarian aid organisation SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL has been committed to providing aid in the event of conflict and natural disasters. Our mission is to help endangered populations as quickly and as efficiently as possible by covering their basic needs: water, food and shelter.

After responding to the initial crisis, our humanitarian aid teams assist the families and most vulnerable communities until they regain the means to survive and the autonomy needed to face the challenges of an uncertain future with dignity.

Drawing on our experience with the most severe humanitarian crises, from Afghanistan to Haiti and including the Balkans, Rwanda, Indonesia and Darfur, we are especially committed to fighting the battle against diseases linked to unclean drinking water, the primary cause of mortality worldwide.

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List of acronyms

CS Collective Site

CSMC Collective Site Management and Coordination

CWC Community WASH Committee

FGD Focus Group Discussion

KAP Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices

IMC International Medical Corps

MEAL Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning

MMU Mobile Medical Unit

PCCM Post Committee Creation Monitoring

SI Solidarités International

WASH Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context and purpose

In March 2013, two years after the onset of the civil war in Syria and the humanitarian crises that followed, SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL (SI) began providing humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees in Lebanon in the Minieh-Dennie and Zgharta districts before expanding its WASH activities to include parts of Aakkar in 2014. The services provided initially covered the areas of WASH, Shelter, Livelihoods and Outreach. SI's activities in WASH and Shelter then evolved to include geographical mapping of informal settlements in the T-5 and Aakkar regions, basic assistance as part of the **Lebanon Cash Consortium**, hygiene promotion and, as of 2016, long-term impact activities[1] that target Lebanese and Syrian communities in Tripoli and Aakkar.

With the substantial number of **registered Syrian refugees accounting to 1 in 5 residents in Lebanon**, effective coordination and monitoring of protection and assistance standards with limited resources has proved to be difficult. Moreover, as the needs of Syrian refugees increase while humanitarian funding decreases with the end of the war in Syria seeming far from a resolution, it has become evident that more attention should be placed on sustainable solutions. What was needed was **re-empowering the Syrian refugee community and providing them with the tools and knowledge needed to be more self-sustaining, independent and able to monitor the standards of humanitarian aid they receive**. Therefore, as of 2014, SI became involved in **community mobilization activities**. First, 85 Community WASH Committees (CWC) were created in 2014 and an additional 95 committees in 2015. The CWC were provided with a basic toolkit and trainings on basic

maintenance of WASH facilities, proper hygiene and cleanliness practices, and water management among other activities.

In 2015 the **Collective Site Management and Coordination (CSMC) program** was established and implemented in 50 sites. The purpose of CSMC was to **provide empowerment to the Syrian community** by creating camp management committees and raising awareness on humanitarian and protection standards, the definition of refugees, their legal status in Lebanon and their rights. The program also provided the community with **lists of service providers and proper referrals and complaints mechanisms** in order to ensure their needs would be referred to the appropriate stakeholders and assistance would be provided with the desired quality according to specific standards. Ultimately, the program aimed to **increase Syrian refugees' autonomy and to mitigate the risks of tensions with host communities and local authorities**.

However, many questions on the effect of the CSMC program remain unanswered: **is the CSMC mechanism effective in linking refugees to aid service providers and reducing dependency? Is the growing limitation on refugees' movements hampering the mechanism?**

In May 2015, the MEAL department in SI conducted a baseline KAP designed to measure the community's awareness of service providers, basic rights, standards and their governance. It is to be compared with an endline to be conducted in March 2016 in order to study the process of implementation, the impact, and ultimately the

1. WASH and Shelter intervention in T-5 and Water Management Committees in Aakkar

success of the program. However, while the KAP study will measure the success of the program in achieving indicators such as the increased awareness of standards mentioned, it will not be able to explain the reasons behind its success or failure in one site or the other. It will also leave out descriptive incidence and evidence of success or challenges that quantitative data collection cannot fully expose.

For this reason, the SI MEAL department designed, in concordance with the Community Mobilization team, and conducted a series of Focus Group Discussions in order to delve deeper into the underlying factors that play a role in the success or failure of a committee. This case study aims at **improving the program in the future using success stories and lessons learned from struggling and fruitful committees**.

1.2 Objectives and research questions

The objective of this research was to provide an in-depth view of sites where CSMC had been implemented, along with stories of success and failure specific to those sites. This research aimed to detail some of the factors that affect CSMC success and to provide learning for programmatic improvement. To this end, five main research questions were posed for this case study, as follows:

1 What are the factors that affect CSMC committee success?

2 What are the challenges faced by committees when trying to uphold their responsibilities?

3 What are some specific scenarios where CSMC may be easier to implement?

4 What can be adjusted to meet the objectives of the program?

5 Can success stories and evidence of empowerment and independence be identified?

> Women committee meeting, Assoun Tower, Minieh-Denniyeh, 2015 © Pauline Gregoire

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Program consultation and site selection

SI MEAL supervisors set up a series of meetings with CSMC Officers and Managers to identify multiple cases of what they believed to be successful committees and struggling committees. During the meetings, details on the cases were gathered and discussed. These details included factors that may have played a role in that success or failure such as:

- The educational and professional background of these cases' sites' inhabitants;

- Demographics (urban or rural origins, ethnic diversity , etc.);

- The sites' current geographical location, relationship with neighbors and local municipalities, etc.;

- Challenges that the site may have faced (evictions/threats of evictions, tension with local authorities, harsh living conditions);

- Training/support from SI or other NGOs;

- The makeup of the committee and the level of acceptance of the community to this committee;

- Whether or not they believed these factors played a role;

- Any other factors that they believed could have played a role in success/failure.

Other details were also collected on the cases such as the issues and needs of the site, whether or not they were solved, and details on how they were solved and/or the challenges faced trying to solve them that may have prevented them from doing so. The team's perception on the overall capabilities of CSMC committees in these situations was also acquired.

This information was used to identify sites where focus group discussions (FGD) should be run and to provide minor guidance in the analysis. It was also used to provide triggers and site-specific topics to discuss during the FGDs.

Accordingly, the following six sites were selected as sites for study:

Assoun Tower (Dennieh, CS)
Daraya Settlement (Dennieh, CS)
Boutros Nakad (Zgharta, CS)
Mqeatea 026 (Akkar, IS)
Zouq Bhannine 007 (Minieh, IS)
Zouq Bhannine 027 (Minieh, IS)

2.2 FGD guide creation

These team consultations also helped refine the guides used in the data collection, mentioned below, in order to ensure high quality data was collected. The guides covered the following general topics:

- Site details such as educational, professional, and geographical background of the committee and community;

- The major issues faced by the site;

- Details of the case from the perspective of the committee;

- Their attempts, if any, to solve these issues and their success at doing so;

- The motivation behind their initiative and/or obstacles that demotivated them;

- The factors/challenges that played a role in success or failure;

- Obstacles faced by the committee and how the committee overcame them;

- Support received from other stakeholders or lack thereof;

- Any suggested future improvements to the program that could help replicate or further improve success stories;

- Their opinion on the program, its importance, and its effects.

2.3 Data collection and analysis

Two SI MEAL Supervisors, with the help of one CSMC Officer per site, were in charge of collecting qualitative data. 6 FGDs in 6 sites were conducted between Wednesday the 2nd of February through Monday the 15th of February. Data was collected on paper with the discussion being recorded for reference with the consent of the attendees on the agreement that these recording remain internal and are unshared externally.

Data analysis was performed by the MEAL Manager. The present case study also uses results from a Post Committee Creation Monitoring (PCCM) survey implemented in October 2015 on a representative sample of 160 households (cluster sampling, 10% margin of error).

2.4 Limitations

Due to the nature of the situation on the field and because of some choices made in research design, some limitations applied, as follows:

- Only partial membership of the committees attended FGDs (i.e. no committee was present in full for any of the data collection). This was due in part to cases where members had withdrawn themselves from the committee or members had not been present at the time due to work or other commitments;

- It was not always possible to conduct FGDs in separated closed spaces insulated from community members' observation or participation ;

- Due to the qualitative and site-specific nature of the study, not all questions in the guide were always applicable, while other follow up questions had to be added on a case by case basis. Therefore, the questions asked and the order in which they were asked differed significantly from one site to the other, while remaining as faithful as possible to the main research questions.

- In some cases, committee success and effectiveness would have been difficult to assess due to the sites not having experienced any emergency situations or major need for referral.

> CSMC municipality training, Minieh, 2016 © Pauline Gregoire

3 CSMC SUCCESS STORIES

3.1 Quality and frequency of training sessions: sustainable knowledge building on basic rights and services

Training committee members in order to **disseminate knowledge of rights and standards and to ensure ability to function effectively** is one of the foundations of a committee-based CSMC approach. The quality of trainings received by target community members can reflect greatly on the results of the intervention, with higher quality training modules translating into a more effective approach. The general consensus among FGD participants across all six sites was that the training modules implemented by SI were of **high quality**. They felt that they had learned much from their training sessions and were usually able to apply that knowledge into improving their communities. Besides, SI team had tried to limit the number of sessions in order not to overbook or bore the residents but more training might actually not have been a problem (i.e. there were no signs of training exhaustion).

> ❝ **We never refuse any training, and what was done was excellent."**
> **– Mqeatea 026 participant**

Many FGD participants focused on the information/knowledge/referrals dissemination role of their committee. They stated that while they initially had some knowledge of the types of services provided to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, **few of them truly understood their rights and the nature of the various different types of assistance provided to them**. FGD participants reported a variety of factors that had improved their relationships with service providers due to their training.

> ❝ **We know who to talk to and how to talk to them. More issues are solved now."**
> **– Assoun Tower participant**

Participants highlighted improvement in communication as one of the main benefits of their CSMC training. They felt **more capable of reaching out to service providers** and felt more confident due to the newly-acquired knowledge of their rights. **Referral pathways became clearer,** and they discovered that they did not have to wait to be contacted by service providers. Rather, inhabitants could request assistance from their committees, who in turn could reach out to relevant agencies.

> ❝ **We were receiving assistance even before [CSMC creation], but what it added was information. For example, about child registration requirements: how to do it, when and where. About imprisonment, how to follow up on the case, that NGOs cannot get someone out but can keep updating family on his or her status. About service providers in general."**
> **– Boutros Nakad participant**

Indeed, prior to CSMC implementation, SI's Outreach workers had driven across country but only to find and inform newcomers in need of emergency assistance. They answered questions as they turned up. Actual empowerment and timely updates (context in Lebanon is constantly changing – service providers, borders closing and opening, raids, new laws etc.) only started with CSMC.
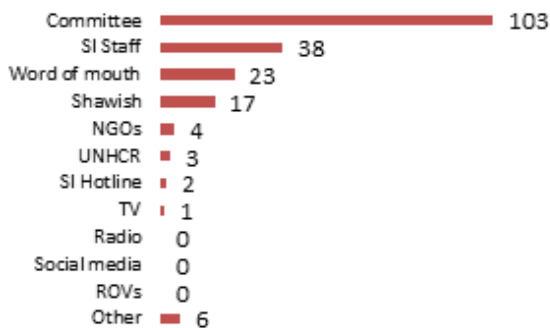
This knowledge of rights and standards remains a key aspect of CSMC. CSMC participants have grown to understand that they have the right to certain types of assistance under specific standards. This has led to **greater feelings of empowerment within their communities**.

> **We submitted our needs [to humanitarian agencies] based on our knowledge of standards."**
> **– Boutros Nakad participant**

> **Before creation of CSMC, we did not know anything and did not know which NGOs to go to or what they offer. We now know our rights."**
> **– Mqeatea 026 participant**

This is further illustrated by the findings of the PCCM survey conducted in October 2015 (see methodology and figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Source of information

Source	Value
Committee	103
SI Staff	38
Word of mouth	23
Shawish	17
NGOs	4
UNHCR	3
SI Hotline	2
TV	1
Radio	0
Social media	0
ROVs	0
Other	6

In fact, so pleased were the Mqeatea 026 committee members with the results of CSMC on their site that they had felt motivated to extend similar efforts to their homeland. They felt that CSMC (or a similar approach) would greatly **help with organizing efforts to rebuild their lives once they had returned to Syria**. Participants from this site stated that they would attempt to evolve CSMC in such a way that would help in addressing the needs of those who had remained in Syria or returned there. They expressed the desire for training modules that could help them learn how to complete such a task.

> CSMC meeting and training on conflict resolution, Minieh, 2015 © Pauline Gregoire

FGD participants from various sites, however, expressed their desire for more training sessions and more refreshers, as some had forgotten what they had learned. Additionally, recurring training sessions were requested, as some sites reported that new people wished to become committee members but were held back from joining because they were untrained. In some cases, such as Zouq Bhannine 007, participants expressed the desire for recurring training sessions because some committee members had not participated in one or more of the training modules.

Participants from all sites recognized the necessity of attending CSMC training sessions due to the essential information provided by the modules. They all agreed that the quality of these modules was high and that they were effective at preparing them for their duties as CSMC committee members. They have reported that the **knowledge gained from these training modules was both essential and invaluable** and have, in general, expressed their interest in attending some of the training sessions once more to refresh their knowledge and in attending more types of training sessions, particularly ones related to communication and information dissemination, to help them better function as a committee.

3.2 *Empowerment of women*

Equal representation remains one of the most importantfactorswhenconsideringCSMCcreation, be it for age, gender, or other demographic factors. All groups within the site must possess the ability to meet their diverse needs and must feel represented by their committee. As such, **CSMC acts as an empowering force for various different community members**, allowing their voices to be heard and paving the way for their needs to be more equally met.

One such group is women. CSMC may empower women by **creating an equal and safe pathway for their specific needs to be met**. The Daraya site highlighted this and provided a strong case for the empowerment of women through CSMC. Initially, the Daraya CSMC committee contained an equal mix of both men and women (four men and four women). However, the men claimed that they were not comfortable with sharing leadership roles with women and attending training sessions with them. For this reason, three of the four men withdrew from the CSMC, leaving a largely-female committee to fend for itself.

> **There are still people with out–dated mentalities. [They do not like] that a woman would attend [trainings].”**
> **– Female Daraya participant**

The women of the Daraya committee, however, took this as a challenge to prove that they could be successful without the help of the men from their site. This finding is significant, as men usually hold the traditional role as leaders within Syrian households and committees. This committee has managed to find success as leaders within their community, regardless of culturally traditional gender roles.

> **It became about a point for [female committee members] to prove. The men believe that the female gender is impotent, so we put all our efforts into [committee success].”**
> **– Female Daraya participant**

> **It strengthened us. Before [CSMC] we felt like we could not do any–thing. Now, this has empowered us.”**
> **– Female Daraya participant**

> Women committee meeting, Assoun Tower, Minieh-Denniyeh, 2015
© Vianney Le Caer

That is not to say, however, that CSMC was successful at empowering women across all six sites. In some cases, such as when dealing with municipalities, the women on the Daraya committee felt that they would have been more successful with more male counterparts. In Zouq Bhannine 027, a site whose committee contained an equal mix of both men and , participants from this site felt that women's role on the committee was to represent only women, and not the site as a whole. They held more traditional views regarding the leadership roles of women and believed that the women on the committee acted more as support to the men, rather than as leaders in their own right.

❝ Women are on the committee to make sure women's needs on the site are met. Men are more active on committee."
– Zouq Bhannine 027 participant

Women in Zouq Bhannine 027 also reported attending fewer sessions than their male counterparts. They felt that it was not as necessary for them to be there as it was for men. This highlights an issue, as women must attend CSMC training sessions with the same frequency as men in order to ensure full and equal representation.

3.3 Symbiosis: the case of Assoun Tower and Daraya

> Distribution of water in Assoun Tower, A woman from the CSMC committee is going to fill her jerrycans. Minieh-Denniyeh, 2015

The villages of Assoun and Daraya lie in close proximity in the upper elevations of Dennieh. This places the Assoun Tower settlement and the Daraya settlement in a unique situation, generally disconnected from surrounding communities and having to rely on their own sites for support. Both sites, however, recognized that they were in similar situations, with their inability to reach out to nearby communities due to physical separation.

> **One woman needed to be transported to a hospital, but we could not find her transportation. So we reached out to Assoun tower, and they helped us [transport her]."**
> **– Daraya participant**

FGD participants from both sites reported that a somewhat symbiotic relationship had developed between these sites. They had recognized that they faced common needs: water, waste disposal, and lighting. While these two sites stated that they had some difficulty in reaching one another physically, they developed ways to communicate and reach common goals. They reported collaborating on a variety of issues. When they suffered from water shortage issues, for example, the two sites' committees worked together to form a plan wherein residents would fairly split the costs of the water trucking. Both sites were successful and implementing this plan and thus overcame their water shortage issues.

The two sites also collaborated to overcome **waste management issues**. They worked together and with their municipality to distribute waste barrels to the sites and successfully managed their solid waste problem. They did the same when it came to lighting, requesting and receiving LED light bulbs simultaneously, solving a long-standing lighting issue on both sites.

This case of collaboration between Assoun Tower and Daraya brings to light a potentially powerful advantage for CSMC. These two committees worked together to meet common needs and overcome common issues. **By nurturing a symbiotic relationship between nearby communities' committees and training them to plan and strategize together, CSMC may become even more successful**. CSMC need not be limited to a site, and collaboration between different sites could be further encouraged. Agencies implementing CSMC may wish to consider developing such strategies for inter-committee cooperation in the future.

3.4 Community mobilisation towards autonomy

The main, and perhaps most ambitious aim, of CSMC is to provide target communities with the **ability to function with autonomy and to deal with any issues that may arise independently**. While this is difficult to fully achieve in preliminary stages of CSMC, one of the cases within this study showed early signs of moving towards greater autonomy: FGD participants from the Mqeatea 026 committee reported a significant degree of autonomy in dealing with their issues.

In Mqeatea 026, the committee has been able to convince inhabitants to **pool their money in order to help out when an inhabitant was unable to pay an unexpected cost**. This has helped them come to the aid of community members in need on several occasions. At times when Mqeatea 026 had found that members of their community were unable to receive assistance from health providers, for example, residents have come together to help pay for their medical costs.

❝ We are able to solve our own internal problems now. If someone [from our site] is unable to pay for healthcare and does not receive assistance from agencies, then we can help them pay for healthcare [by pooling money] – up to 400,000 LBP, we can handle it."
– Mqeatea 026 participant

The Daraya committee was able to solve its water issues in a similar manner. Having long-suffered with a lack of water on the site, the committee organized attempts at water trucking, with each household paying for its own share. In Assoun tower, the committee organized waste barrel distributions to their site to ensure that all residents had access to proper solid waste management.

Furthermore, four of the six sites reported successful attempts at **organizing lists of inhabitants in order to facilitate the actions of mobile medical units** (MMU) that visited their sites on a monthly basis. These sites had assigned volunteers to keep lists of people who would need to be seen by the MMUs and to register these people.

A health officer at International Medical Corps (IMC), the agency responsible for providing the MMUs to many of the aforementioned cases, was contacted to provide feedbacks on the interactions between the organization and CSMC committees and the effects of CSMC on their activities. She mentioned that IMC had multiple activities in many areas but through SI's CSMC officers, they were introduced to sites in Sir, Assoun [Assoun Tower and Daraya CS], Beit Fakes and Kfar Dleqos [Boutros Nakad]. These sites were outside of their targeted areas but were in real need. They were introduced to the committees as focal points to communicate with, and an individual focal point was assigned for each committee.

The health officer believed this helped in the organization to a great extent, allowing IMC to give the highest quality of assistance possible. The sites were told about IMC's services and described what an MMU was and what it could provide. They were also taught to organize their needs, how to triage these needs (into patients requiring the assistance of an MMU or medical center for example) and the dangers of auto-medication and ignoring illnesses. The sites' awareness on how to obtain assistance in cases of SGBV and mental health was also increased. Furthermore, because of this high level of organization and communication, trust between IMC and the sites' committees was established and activities and information dissemination

became more efficient and more accepted by the sites' inhabitants.

When asked on the difference between dealing with a site with CSMC committee and a site without one, she said it was "80-85% facilitated", emphasizing on the efficiency and organization of dealing with a CSMC committee. The officer also added an interesting note on multidisciplinary approach of the humanitarian field. **"Regarding multidisciplinary approaches, thanks to CSMC programs, communication between NGOs and within different departments of the same NGOs increased and became better and easier"**. She gave the examples of communication between SI and IMC as well as the mental health, primary health and SGBV departments within IMC.

" **We know who in the sites to communicate with and refer to. It makes referrals easier."**
– IMC Health Officer

This exemplifies scenarios where CSMC has allowed a community to solve its own problems internally. When they have found themselves in need, the committee has brought together the people of its site. They were able to assist one another and to fulfill their own needs without external assistance.

4   KEY DETERMINANTS OF CSMC SUCCESS

> Hygiene promotion session regarding the distribution of bins, Minieh, 2015

4.1 Motivation and building trust: responsiveness of humanitarian agencies and municipalities

CSMC aims to provide refugee communities with the ability to solve their own problems in order to be capable of functioning in the absence of humanitarian agencies and external aid. However, this does not mean that in their current state, CSMC committees are capable of being fully self-sufficient. Rather, the opposite seems to be true at this point in time. While conflict resolution and non-material problems are generally solved by committees, **more material issues, such as garbage collection, water, and legal processes, have been reported as a difficult point for established committees**.

FGD participants in all six sites arrived to a general consensus that **continued support and responsiveness from humanitarian service providers and from municipalities is crucial for the success of CSMC**. That is, committees are more empowered when their requests are met by these actors. This is particularly true when it comes to issues they cannot solve on their own, without external aid.

> **I need [humanitarian agencies] to give me support. When I ask the inhabitants for something, I need someone to back me up, so that I do not receive backlash [from the site's inhabitants]."**
> – Assoun Tower participant

> **If we receive no support from service providers, then we cannot support our community."**
> – Mqeatea 026 participant

Committee members from all sites reported that **when requests submitted to humanitarian agencies or to municipalities on behalf of site inhabitants were met, overall trust in the committee from their respective site inhabitants increased**. They also, worryingly, reported the opposite. When they were unable to obtain that requests assistance, trust was broken and inhabitants felt like they were less likely to go to their committees for assistance.

This is also illustrated by the PCCM survey results.

Figure 2: Why would refugees not be satisfied with the committees

> 66 **"[We hope] that our requests continue to be met so that we feel like we are not alone and people start to rely on us more."**
> **– Daraya participant**

This in turn creates a cycle of motivation. When committees feel that the needs that they cannot solve independently are being met by external actors, they become more motivated to carry forth with their assigned tasks. This can further motivate site inhabitants to trust their committees with their own issues. **Committee members who feel that they are listened appear to be more hopeful about the future and generally more optimistic**.

> 66 **When your requests are met, you feel that someone watches out for you and cares about you. [That they] have your best interest in mind."**
> **– Daraya participant**

> 66 **We have hope that our situation will improve."**
> **– Assoun Tower participant**

The Daraya committee reported some **difficulties in communicating with their local municipality**. They had been facing issues with water, and their voices were not being heard by the municipality. While their interactions with the municipality and with site inhabitants remained positive overall, they still reported some decrease in motivation due to their inability to solve the issue. However, and upon the request of the committee, the site eventually received assistance in the form of water trucking from SI, and trust and motivation increased once more.

> 66 **Two or three days after the municipality training, we attained access to water. When the community saw that the water came through us, they started to trust us more."**
> **– Daraya participant**

Conversely, participants from two sites felt the needs they could not resolve on their own were not being met by external actors and reported less motivation and less optimism for the future. In Zouq Bhannine 007, for example, participants felt that they were not receiving equal assistance amongst site inhabitants from humanitarian actors and that they had not received their share of assistance. This, however, is not necessarily accurate, as some FGD participants admitted that they understood that not all inhabitants would receive the same assistance in all cases (e.g., shelter kits of different sizes). Within this particular site, inhabitant responded negatively when they felt the committee could not bring in the requested assistance. Committee members reported that they sometimes felt helpless in the face of issues they could not resolve.

This was echoed in various other sites. Committee members reported feeling stressed on a frequent basis when they, as a committee, requested assistance but were left with their sites' needs unanswered. However, not all sites experienced the same extent of negative backlash as the Zouq Bhannine 007 committee did. In some cases, such as Boutros Nakad, committee members reported that inhabitants were generally understanding when their committee was unable to procure the required assistance. They did not place blame on the committee and understood that they would face some limitations. Additionally, over the long run and as the committee became more sure-footed and provided the site with more assistance, Boutros Nakad committee members reported relief from stress and comfort in their positions. Frustrations with their positions were resolved. They reported increased motivation and more willingness to work to improve the living conditions within their site.

" **At one point, I wanted to quit. It is very stressful when everybody asks you for everything, and it was frustrating. But now that most major issues have been resolved, the stress is less and motivation is higher."**
– Boutros Nakad participant

As such, it is important for CSMC committees to be able to **build trust with their communities during the initial stages of CSMC**. Once that trust is built, a cycle of trust can be established, leading to higher motivation of committees and greater reliance of site inhabitants on these committees.

>Hygiene promotion for a women committee, Minieh, 2015

4.2 *Timing and launching: a two-phase approach*

Because of its relative novelty and perceptions of CSMC as an exit strategy, the optimal timing for CSMC implementation is under constant discussion. Amongst all focus groups, consensus settled on the idea that CSMC would have been more effective with an earlier launching. Many participants expressed that when they had arrived in Lebanon, they felt helpless and lacked the information they needed to find service providers and assistance in general.

> **When I arrived in the Daraya settlement, I had been in Lebanon for one year, and I did not know about NGOs or service providers. I remained unaware of any assistance for another 7 months.”**
> **– Daraya participant**

FGD participants generally agreed that the information dissemination facet of CSMC **would have been especially useful during the initial phases of the crisis and during early settlement formation**. The need to inform refugees of their rights and of the pathways they can take to ensure that their rights are met earlier during the crisis was echoed amongst most FGD participants. Many, however, also noted that a committee approach would not have been quite as useful early into the site's formation, and would rather be more useful a few months after the information dissemination process, once the residents of the sites had become more "settled down".

> **The CSMC program started late. It should have started has as soon as refugees came in, especially information dissemination, as we did not have access to essential information.”**
> **– Assoun Tower participant**

This idea that CSMC should be implemented during the earlier phases of crises is relatively new, and recently, some consideration has been made for earlier CSMC implementation in humanitarian crises. CSMC had initially been implemented as an exit strategy for the refugee population in Lebanon affected by the Syrian crisis. The outcomes of the process seem to have resonated strongly amongst affected populations. They believe that the **impact of the project would have been even greater had it been implemented sooner and in two different phases**: information dissemination regarding basic rights and service providers in newly-formed settlements, followed by official committee creation well-established settlements. It may be worthwhile to consider these points for future implementation of CSMC in order to design more effective programming and improve quality.

4.3 Pre-existing social cohesion, tensions and conflict resolution

One of the aims of CSMC is to increase social cohesion amongst target communities in order to reduce conflict and to improve how these communities come together to solve common problems. For this reason, the presence of social cohesion (or conflict) due to similarities or differences in background, values, and culture of members of the target community (and the created committees) before CSMC creation cannot be ignored. This **cohesion or conflict may play a key role in the success of CSMC on a site**, particularly in how it affects interactions between the committee and site inhabitants and between committee members themselves.

Generally, committee members in most focus groups appear to come from rural backgrounds, with few reporting that they were from urban backgrounds. Most committee members reported literacy, to varying degrees. All FGDs had some mention of working together to achieve goals due to shared needs. That is, because these communities had been affected by similar loss and by the same conditions, they felt that they had been brought together by circumstance and had to find ways to survive as a unit.

This is not to say, however, that perceived differences did not exist and that tensions were not created by these differences. Different committees reported dealing differently with tensions, and the results of this conflict resolution varied greatly amongst sites.

In Zouq Bhannine 027, participants claimed that most inhabitants came from the same area, with very similar ideals and values, and this meant that few pre-existing tensions existed on the site. Additionally in Assoun, for example, FGD participants reported that no lasting tensions existed due to minor differences in background/culture.

> **The diversity doesn't create tensions. We are all Syrians. We are family regardless of where we come from [within Syria]."**
> **– Assoun Tower participant**

Similarly, in Daraya, reports of tensions were limited, with participants focusing on the positive aspects that bind them. They claimed that convergence of needs allowed them to act as a unit.

> **At the end of the day you have to transcend these differences, and overlook them. At the end of the day, you have to survive. We are one nation."**
> **– Daraya participant**

Boutros Nakad CS (mix of urban and rural) and Mqeatea 026 (mostly rural) participants, on the other hand, reported that some conflict did exist due to differences. They did, however, also report that most conflict was successfully mitigated and tensions had been effectively defused.

However, the same could not be said for Zouq Bhannine 007, a site with a diverse mixture of urban and rural backgrounds. Committee members from this site mentioned frequently recurring conflicts due to large amounts of tension on the site. These participants claimed that pre-existing tensions had often led to disagreements and issues amongst the inhabitants of the site. The committee, in this scenario, had often been unable to resolve conflict.

Several conflicts had occurred over time, particularly related to distributions and the perception of a lack of equality between inhabitants in the reception of assistance from service providers. Rather and surprisingly, some committee members reported involvement in

some of the conflict themselves. This highlights why the committee may have faced trouble in mitigating conflict and reducing tensions.

66 **We are often part of the conflict."
- Zouq Bhannine 007 participant**

That is, in sites where reports of pre-existing tensions due to diversity in backgrounds/values were low, committees seemed to have been more effective at conflict mitigation and tension reduction. However, in sites with higher pre-existing tensions, committee members claimed to have been ineffective in doing the same, and were often themselves involved in internal conflicts. This points to the idea that **studying pre-existing tensions and finding ways to resolve those tensions before CSMC implementation may help committees become more effective after implementation**.

> Community meeting introducing the CSMC program, Minieh, 2014

4.4 *Communication, organisation and sense of responsibility*

As with any committee-based approach, some key elements are required amongst committee members in order to ensure consistent success. Three of these elements are **clear and effective communication, robust organization, and a strong sense of responsibility**. When committee members reported feeling successful, these three factors were commonly reported from FGDs on all sites.

No CSMC committee can be successful without effective communication channels, both internally and externally. Internally, committee members reported that they felt most successful when a two-way communication channel was formed between the committee and site inhabitants. Committee members from most sites recognized their responsibility to act as disseminators of information when it came to referrals and to service providers.

> **[It is] our responsibility to get the information [our community] needs. What we learn we pass on. We have gained experience."**
> **– Daraya participant**

This is not always an easy task, as site inhabitants may be resistant to the idea of being told what to do. Some committee members reported an initial struggle in organizing internally but have met success with time.

> **Some people do not like being told what to do. They respond negatively to our attempts to organize the site."**
> **– Daraya participant**

Nonetheless, participants from different sites' committees have reported that they have found the need to develop different communication tactics to deal with different people in a variety of situations. FGD participants reported that they felt a sense of responsibility to reach out to all people within their site. They believe that this helps them to better-organize and strategize in order to meet the needs of their sites' inhabitants.

Conversely, Zouq Bhannine 007 and Zouq Bhannine 027 participants reported difficulty in organizing their respective sites. Both of these sites, for instance, did not utilize a volunteer and a list to organize and register people for MMUs. In Zouq Bhannine 007, this was reportedly due to the committee feeling it was not necessary for them to commit to organizing their site because they would receive aid from service providers regardless of their efforts. In Zouq Bhannine 027, participants reported difficulties in communicating with inhabitants of their site, particularly when it came to issues arising due to perceptions of lack of fairness/equality during distributions of aid.

4.5 Relationship with host community and local authorities

The **relationship between a site and its local host community/authorities may play a role in the continued success of CSMC committees**. FGD participants in sites with more successful CSMC committees reported having generally positive interactions between their host community and themselves. In Daraya and Assoun Tower, participants reported few but overall positive interactions with their respective local communities and with their municipality. While they felt that it was sometimes difficult to reach out to their local municipalities, mainly due to the remoteness of their communications, they reported constructive communication and relationships with those municipalities.

In Boutros Nakad, FGD participants reported frequent and positive interaction with local authorities and with the local community. They said that the current mayor and the municipality, unlike the previous mayor, were quite supportive and were often prepared to help residents of the site through the committee. Zouq Bhannine 027 participants similarly reported few problems with the local community and with local authorities. They stated that they had positive interactions with the landowner of their site, and that they felt supported overall.

Conversely, committee members in Mqeatea 026 felt that while they had a positive relationship with the local community, they faced some troubles with an unresponsive municipality. Participants from Zouq Bhannine 007, however, reported tensions with their local community. They felt unwelcome in their area and felt that their children were treated badly by Lebanese children at their local school. They reported feeling insecure due to the actions of the Lebanese Armed Forces. They also felt that their local municipality had been taking advantage of their presence and perhaps "stealing" from them. These reported tensions and lack of support from their local community/authorities have contributed to feelings of helplessness for the committee and a lack of hope for improvements in their living conditions from future CSMC efforts.

> Discussion with a committee member during a shelter kit distribution, Akkar, 2016

5   RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Mitigating negative impacts

1. Reducing stress on committee members

In order to reduce the stress on committee members, further develop awareness rising toward other agencies and explain during training sessions that committee members should approach humanitarian agencies if valid referrals are not met by agencies.

2. Effects of responsiveness of stakeholders

A key success factor for CSMC, at least in its early stages, appears to be the responsiveness of external service providers of municipalities. When committees are unable to acquire a response from these stakeholders, it loses its sites trust and may experience reduced motivation. Humanitarian agencies must find ways to train these committee members to better-deal with external actors and to mitigate negative effects that may arise when their response for assistance is not directly met.

Encouraging autonomy and empowerment

1. Training freshers

Refreshers and follow-up trainings should be performed in order to enhance knowledge building on rights and services. Committee members must be kept up-to-date on standards and rights, and new members may need to be trained to expand these committees.

2. Participation of women

Invite communities to discuss women's participation in the leadership process and in training sessions during the early stages of the projects. Women should be encouraged to increase their participation in committees.

Nurturing inter-site collaboration

When possible, sites with similar need profiles should be encouraged to work together. By implementing training modules on cross-site communication and cooperation, collaboration and synergy can be nurtured between sites whose inhabitants face common difficulties and needs.

Implementing a two-phase approach

Separate CSMC into two different phases: an initial information dissemination during the early formation of a site, followed one followed by committee creation once the site residents have settled. Disseminating information regarding basic rights and services is necessary to improving the dignity and empowerment of refugees early on. Committee creation should follow once the residents are secure on their new site.

APPENDIX 1
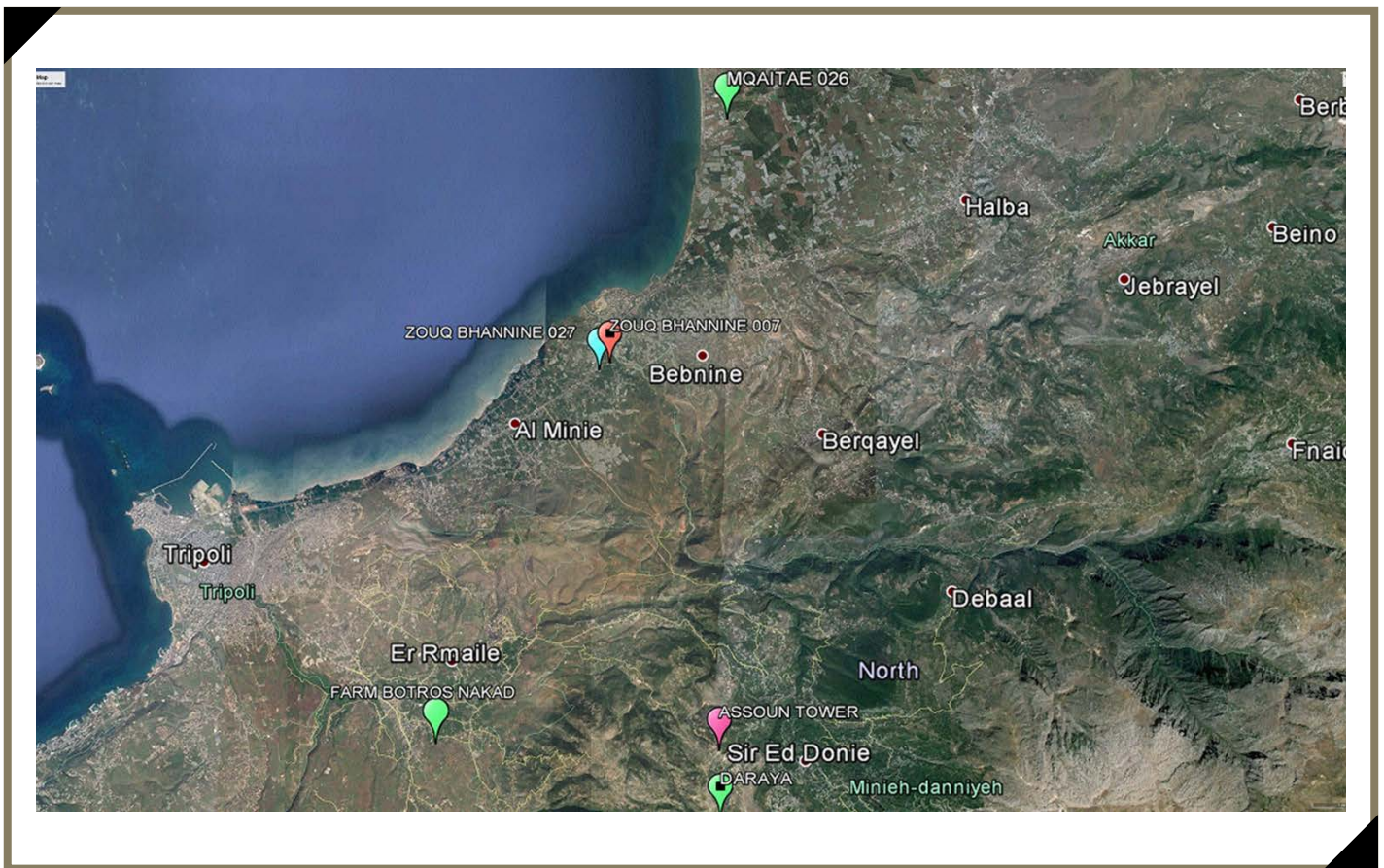
APPENDIX 2

SUMMARY OF CSMC TRAINING MODULES

After the creation of the committees, capacity building sessions are given to further strengthen the committee structures. The 6 core modules are:

1. Introduction
2. 2 Group building
3. 3 Refugee status and legal framework
4. 4 Protection and referral principles
5. 5 Representation
6. 6 Participatory mapping

Additionally, external training sessions are organized in two forms: conflict management training and training at the municipality. The conflict management training is conducted with the help of Search for Common Ground. These training sessions are attended by representatives of the collective site administration, the collective site coordination, and the site committee.

The objective of these training sessions is for the committee to better understand and distinguish the roles and responsibilities of the collective site management, collective site coordination, and collective site administration.

> Syrian refugee family living in an informal settlement, Minieh, 2016 © Vianney Le Caer

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