One Neighbourhood: CARE's humanitarian response in Tripoli

Leah Campbell

ALNAP

ALNAP is a global network of NGOs, UN agencies, members of the Red Cross/Crescent Movement, donors, academics, networks and consultants dedicated to learning how to improve response to humanitarian crises. **www.alnap.org**

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Cover image: View of Tripoli from citadel. Photo credit: Flickr/Guillaume Flament.

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Acronyms

ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
BPRM	US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PASSA	Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness
UN	United Nations
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene

ALNAP research on working in urban complexity

Over the past decade, humanitarians have found themselves operating more and more in urban areas – responding to earthquakes in Haiti and Nepal, urban violence in Honduras and Colombia, the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa and the ongoing displacement of people to cities across the Middle East and Europe due to the conflict in Syria. As a result, there is growing recognition that traditional ways of working, designed for rural and camp environments, must be adapted to urban contexts. A great deal of time and effort has been spent over the past several years to pilot and document new ways of working, such as methods for needs assessments and urban-specific water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and food security interventions. Many of these new practices were documented in a Good Practice Review (Sanderson, 2019) published by ALNAP and the Humanitarian Practice Network.

However, it is clear that working more effectively in urban areas requires more than simply adapting rural approaches. Humanitarian actors must acknowledge and embrace the complexity that exists in cities and find ways to navigate this appropriately. The humanitarian community's experiences of responding in cities have repeatedly highlighted the humanitarian sector's failure to understand urban contexts and, in particular, its lack of 'connectedness to context' (Zicherman et al., 2011: 9) and a failure to recognise capacities and structures. Recommendations put forward by the Global Alliance for Urban Crises include the need for humanitarians to 'work with the systems that shape cities', to engage local actors and to take steps to better understand urban contexts (GAUC, 2016: 1).

These recommendations reflect recent calls to think differently about urban areas (Campbell, 2016) and indicate a shift in how humanitarians consider and respond to urban crises. Yet despite growing interest, there is a lack of clarity around what it means to truly understand and work within the complexity of a city.

To help fill gaps in understanding, ALNAP produced in 2016 '[Stepping Back: Understanding Cities and their Systems](https://www.alnap.org/our-topics/urban-response)', a paper which explored issues around defining urban contexts and why understanding urban contexts was important (Campbell, 2016). It proposed changes for how humanitarians understand cities, including a typology of urban systems and several principles for how humanitarians could understand urban contexts through a systems lens. The research focused on the importance of changing our understanding of urban contexts as a first step to improving response. While it answered some initial questions, it left several outstanding. In particular, it did not address how humanitarians could, in practice, change their ways of working to operate more appropriately within the complexity of urban environments.

As part of ALNAP's research on navigating the complexity of urban environments, ALNAP developed six potential characteristics of projects that perform well in complex urban settings (Campbell, 2016). This paper is one of three case studies that aim to better understand these characteristics and how they are supported by highlighting examples of humanitarian programming that have found ways to navigate complex neighbourhoods and cities. Findings from the case studies will be used along with additional research to inform a final study on approaches to navigating complexity in urban humanitarian action to be published in 2021.

To find out more, visit https://www.alnap.org/our-topics/urban-response

About this case study

Case study selection

ALNAP identified potential case study projects through a survey circulated to the Urban Response Community of Practice in mid-2017 and through subsequent discussions with key informants. The One Neighbourhood project explored in this case study was one of 173 projects submitted as potential case studies to ALNAP. When identifying cases, ALNAP looked for the following:

▪ Projects that were ongoing in a humanitarian or disaster context

▪ Projects that met as many of the following six criteria as possible:

1. Projects that deliberately sought out and used information about the underlying context, such as politics and power, culture and land issues (either formally through analysis or informally through local staff or long-term local presence)

2. Projects that did not focus exclusively on short-term needs and goals

3. Projects that took into account the complex relationships and power dynamics between stakeholders in the urban context

4. Projects that could be flexible or adapt when either the urban context or situation changed or new information about the context or situation became available

5. Projects that actively engaged or partnered with local authorities and/or municipal government

6. Projects that, overall, took account of the complexity and interconnectedness of the urban context.

Of the projects that met these criteria, ALNAP selected three to provide an appropriate mix of geographic setting, crisis type and organisation type. We also took into account practical and logistical factors around the ability of the lead organisation to host a research visit.

Case study method

This case study is based on a review of literature about the Tripoli context, interviews, focus group discussions and a review of internal and publicly available documentation about the One Neighbourhood project including two external evaluations (El Hajjar and El Saddik, 2017; Parker and Maynard, 2018).

The author conducted three brief field visits in June, October and November 2018, which included site visits, more than 30 interviews with CARE staff and partners and other organisations working in Tripoli, and eight focus group discussions with community members. Further interviews were conducted with key informants via Skype. Interviews and focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed and coded using MaxQDA to identify relevant themes.

The case study used an appreciative inquiry approach to interviews and focus group discussions, and sought to answer the following questions:

- What practical ways of working enabled this project to navigate the complexity of the Tripoli context appropriately?

- What challenges or obstacles did the project face in implementing these ways of working?

- What enabled the project to be successful in using these new ways of working?

The case study focuses on 'what worked' in term of those aspects of the project related to navigating the complexity of the context. It is not a comprehensive overview of all project elements nor is it an evaluation and as such does not explore the overall impact or outcomes of the project.

View from the Tripoli citadel. Photo credit: Flickr/Grigory Gusev.

Introduction

More than half the world's population, and half of the world's 26 million refugees (UNHCR, 2019), now live in urban areas. Since the onset of the Syrian conflict in 2011, increases in hostilities and the economic consequences of war have caused a major refugee crisis, with Syrians fleeing to neighbouring countries. The displacement resulting from conflict in Syria is primarily an urban one. With a total population of approximately 4 million pre-2011 (Nassar and Stel, 2019), Lebanon now hosts approximately 1.5 million refugees (Boustani, 2016). In Tripoli it is thought that one in four people are Syrian or Palestinian refugees (Rule, 2015) – the highest refugee population ratio in the world (Boustani, 2016).

Since the first displaced Syrians crossed the border from Homs to Wadi Khaled in Lebanon on 28 April 2011, the number of refugees has continued to rise, with most settling in Bekaa[1] (East Lebanon) and North Lebanon – particularly Tripoli. By October 2019, there were more than 139,000 registered Syrian refugees in Tripoli (UNHCR, n.d.), although this is likely an underestimate of the true figure, as this fails to account for unregistered refugees or the internal movement of those who may have registered elsewhere (Maguire et al., 2016). The scale and longevity of the crisis, with rising competition over resources and employment and the perceived disproportional distribution of aid, has changed the once supportive attitude of host communities to one of resentment and tension (Boustani, 2016). As the situation becomes increasingly strained, refugees are left vulnerable to inadequate sanitation and hygiene, resulting in severe health conditions, reduced access to education and protection concerns. Many live below the Sphere Minimum Standards for Shelter and Settlement, with some settling in nylon tents (CARE, 2015; Boustani, 2016). Conditions have led to increased school dropouts, child abuse, a rise in early marriage and domestic violence (CARE in Lebanon, 2018). Vulnerabilities are amplified by legal restrictions on access to the labour market in certain sectors, and the 'Kafala' sponsorship system, which exposes refugees to the exploitation of landlords and employers (Maguire et al., 2016).

This case study focuses on the context of Tripoli and in particular on the experiences of Lebanese and Syrian refugee households living in the city's most vulnerable areas. It explores how One Neighbourhood, an integrated shelter and protection project led by CARE and local non-governmental organisation (NGO) Akkarouna,[2] worked in this complex urban environment. The case study focuses on how the project has navigated the dynamics of this particular city, the obstacles it has encountered and the factors which enabled new ways of working. A summary of key takeaways can be found in Section 7.

> " In Tripoli it is thought that one in four people are Syrian or Palestinian refugees – the highest refugee population ratio in the world. "

58%

of Tripoli
residents
live in
poverty

48%

of refugees live
within 10.5m²/
person

1. Understanding the Tripoli city context

With 88% of the population living in urban areas, Lebanon is one of the most urbanised countries in the world (World Bank, 2017). The country's two main cities, Beirut and Tripoli, are home to 64% of the population (UNHSP, 2009). Tripoli experienced exponential population growth in the 1950s, when employment and educational opportunities drove rural to urban migrants to settle in hubs around the city (Fawaz and Peillen, 2002; Maguire et al., 2016).

Since the Syrian crisis began in 2011, Tripoli's population has grown exponentially, increasing in size by 17% (Ismail et al., 2017). Population density is high, exceeding 211,000/km² in some neighbourhoods (Maguire et al., 2016).[3] While some parts of the city have attracted real estate investment, Tripoli is home to many vulnerable neighbourhoods (see Box 1). The city's population growth, in a context of conflict and an inadequate planning framework, has resulted in sprawling, uncontrolled urbanisation (Boustani, 2016).

This section explores the context of Tripoli including its settlements, politics, sociocultural dynamics, economy and infrastructure.

1.1 Space and settlements

Tripoli is Lebanon's second largest city, situated on the coast 30 km south of the Syrian border (Ismail et al., 2017; Parker and Maynard, 2018). Many of the city's poorest neighbourhoods are considered illegal; built on private or state-owned land in the 1950s, structures often do not comply to building regulations (CARE, 2015), were made with poor quality materials and have no access to the electrical grid and are connected to wastewater networks that exceed capacity (CARE, 2015; UN-Habitat, 2018). Adding strain to these informal, illegal settlements is Tripoli's proximity to Syria and the consequent arrival of Syrian refugees. The rapid population increase has led to a housing deficit, forcing families in poor neighbourhoods to live in densely populated buildings, with 48% of Syrian refugees living within 10.5 m² per person (VASyR, 2015). Compounding these challenges, 51% of buildings in the metropolitan area require major structural repairs due to violence, ongoing maintenance and high-poverty levels – a risky combination considering the country's threat of earthquake (UN-Habitat, 2018).

A scarcity of social housing means most shelter agreements are classified as squatting (49%) and renting (47%) (Maguire et al., 2016). These insecure tenure conditions present a significant challenge to residents: informal agreements are common (Maguire et al., 2016), as are refugee evictions, which often fail to comply with domestic or international standards (CARE, 2015). Some municipal authorities were found to be evicting refugees under the rhetoric 'our homes are not for strangers', despite most resident refugees claiming to have had no previous problems with neighbours or landlords (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

In one study, 18% of people with rental agreements faced forced eviction, although only 30% were provided written notice and only 6% of cases resulted in the intervention of local authorities – all of which involved Lebanese households (ACTED, 2016).

Although there are some areas of managed and safe open spaces in Tripoli, few are publicly used. In the neighbourhood of Tabbaneh, open spaces cover just over 2% of the land, but only 21% are publicly accessible (UN-Habitat, 2018). Most publicly used spaces are non-public land such as gardens, unused lots and streets where informal gatherings take place, 75% of which are not always accessible and most with inadequate lighting at night, creating a space that attracts substance abuse (UN-Habitat, 2018).

1.2 Politics and governance

Tripoli's city centre and surrounding areas are divided into different municipalities, four of which work together closely within a 'Union of Municipalities'. While this facilitates better collaboration, each municipality does things their own way. Across Lebanon, central government institutions lack the resources to run effective state services (Sidaoui, 2017) and defer services to local government, where institutions are also weak (Boustani, 2016; ACTED, 2016), and lack financial and human resources (Hilal, 2010) and executive leadership (Karroum, 2017). This in turn influences the quality of service provision (Atallah, 2016). Local governments also find themselves constrained by political structures; central government retains control over local policy, ensuring that it can veto policies if they are deemed politically unacceptable (Boustani, 2016).

Open-faced buildings in Tripoli, Lebanon, 2018. Photo credit: Flickr/'hey tiffany!'.

Tripoli has a history of sectarian division (CARE, 2015; Ismail et al., 2017; The Fares Center, 2018), which influences how services are delivered (Boustani, 2016) and impact political responses to the humanitarian crisis in the city (see Box 1). Pro-Syrian factions in Tripoli are fearful and suspicious of Syrian refugees (Boustani, 2016), whereas Sunni communities show more sympathy to their plight (Naufal, 2012; IRIN News, 2014; UN-Habitat, 2018).

Official government responses to the crisis provide little support to refugees. The municipal government has sought to limit numbers entering the city (Boustani, 2016), restricting the length of stay (Naufal, 2012) and access to services, housing, employment and basic necessities (Naufal, 2012; Ismail et al., 2017). This has increased tensions with pro-refugee communities, who already feel unfairly targeted by government attempts to re-securitise the city.

Tension caused by government policy has been exacerbated by the failure to address long-term economic decline and growing poverty (Alami, 2015; UN-Habitat, 2018). This has led to low levels of public trust in government institutions (ACTED, 2016) and general political apathy (Lebanon Support, 2016). Many of Tripoli's most vulnerable neighbourhoods are viewed as illegal settlements and there is little interest from municipalities to improve services that would encourage these so-called occupations. In the absence of the state, NGOs have stepped in to provide services (Sidaoui, 2017). However, there is no clear framework for working with the government, questioning the mandate of NGO work in the city and ensuring that coordination between international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies and local authorities is poor (Hilal, 2010; Boustani, 2016).

1.3 Social and cultural

Tripoli is home to a diverse population, which at times coexists peacefully and at others, devolves into sectarian conflict – as seen in conflicts between two of the city's poorest neighbourhoods, Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen (IRIN News, 2014; Box 1). The Syrian conflict has exacerbated these tensions, with host communities feeling a lack of support, competition over space and reduced livelihood opportunities (Parker and Maynard 2018; Boustani 2016; Sidaoui 2017).

Concerns have risen over a peak in extremism and radicalisation of Sunni groups in Tripoli, with men groomed to support Syrian fundamentalist groups (The Fares Center, 2018). Fuelled by extreme poverty and the appeal of financial incentives, people are increasingly turning to militant groups that encourage extremism. This has resulted in events such as the twin bomb blast of 2013 outside al Taqwa and al Salam mosques, killing almost 50 people (IRIN News 2014; Maguire et al. 2016; The Fares Center, 2018). The use of drugs in the radicalisation process is a growing concern in Tripoli, facilitated by a weakened government, a rise in illicit economies and the prevalence of armed groups (Taylor and Wilson, 2017). It is estimated that 50% of the out-of-school youth in the city engage in drug use, increasing levels of violence and poverty (ibid.).

Box 1: (Some of) Tripoli's vulnerable neighbourhoods

Abou Samra (Shalfeh and Shoque) is a large, densely populated area on the periphery of Tripoli's city centre that was established in the 1950s and 1960s. Many of those living in Abou Samra originate from the Doniye region (Akkar Governorate) and move between the two locations due to their livelihoods and familial connections. Residents in one focus group described feeling as if they live in an 'abandoned' neighbourhood, where no one takes responsibility. They speculated that, because many cast their votes in Doniye rather than Tripoli, politicians do not bother to address the lack of services in their neighbourhood. Due to the regular movement of residents between Abou Samra and Doniye when Syrians began to arrive, they found many places they could rent. While there is no available data to confirm, those interviewed for this case study speculate that the area is now between 65% and 75% Syrian. Particularly in Shalfeh and Shoque, two areas within Abou Samra, many buildings were built illegally, without official building permits, posing a further problem for Syrian renters who need to provide paperwork to secure their residence permits (CARE, 2015). Most people living in Abou Samra lack consistent access to livelihoods opportunities, water, electricity and waste management.

Mankubin, which translates literally as 'the wretched' or 'neglected', was established in the mid-1950s following the displacement of a community that had lived alongside a river which flooded. Originally, the area

Map of Tripoli's neighbourhoods. Source: Adapted figure based on helpful reference maps of the region provided by UN Habitat.

comprised only government-built structures used to house French officers living in Lebanon. After the flood, the government allowed affected people to move to this area and even began to build social housing. However, this social housing development was never completed and, while people had been given permission to move there, the government did not legally recognise the structures that the new residents built. More structures have since been built and the majority of buildings in the area, while multi-story and solid concrete, are considered illegal by the authorities. Mankubin's residents face a number of challenges, so much so that one focus group participant felt the area was 'a dead neighbourhood', lacking in any opportunity or hope. The community has no access to clean water, poor electricity provision and has experienced the implications of conflict in nearby areas including clashes between Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen residents.

Formerly part of Beddawi, **Wadi Nahle** (the 'valley of the bees') separated in 2014 and formed a new municipal government in 2016. This change was driven by the sentiment that Wadi Nahle's needs had not been addressed while the area remained part of Beddawi. The area lies directly beside Mankubin and experiences many of the same challenges – lack of a sewage network, limited livelihoods opportunities and a high rate of illiteracy, among others. Originally home to a much smaller number of private residences, Wadi Nahle's population grew over time, especially after flooding affected Mankubin. Most of the buildings constructed subsequently were done so illegally, built on private or government owned land. The neighbourhood has a large number of vulnerable Lebanese households, and a growing number of Syrians, who have found that while services are limited, rent is more affordable than in other areas.

View of the neighbourhood of Jabal Mohsen, 2017. Photo credit: Flickr/The Advocacy Project.

Once the economic hub of Tripoli, **Bab al-Tabbaneh** has fallen into disrepair over the past 80 years and now experiences 'very poor infrastructure and economic conditions' (UN Habitat, 2018). Directly across from Tabbaneh, **Jabal Mohsen** faces many of the same challenges. Both areas have limited street lighting, poor road conditions, frequent electricity shortages and low-quality but expensive water (ibid). Housing is often damp due to flooding from sewage water (CARE, 2015).

The two neighbourhoods have experienced periods of significant tension, including armed conflict, since the end of Lebanon's civil war in 1990. These clashes are driven by political and sectarian differences between the Alawite residents of Jabal Mohsen and Sunni residents in Bab al-Tabbaneh and worsened by lack of access to services and competition for resources. Tensions were most recently heightened in 2014 but have been relatively calm since 2015 (UN-Habitat, 2018). The conflict increased vulnerability in both neighbourhoods, with many organisations choosing to avoid work in the area due to safety concerns (CARE, 2015).

1.4 Economy and livelihoods

Tripoli's sustained long-term socioeconomic decline has been exacerbated by conflict, making it one of the poorest cities in the region (Maguire et al., 2016). The arrival of Palestinian and Syrian refugees has also had an economic impact (Ismail et al., 2017), influencing everything from employment opportunities within the city (CARE, 2016; Karroum, 2017) to security within key tourist, trade and agricultural industries (Karroum, 2017).

Employment opportunities are limited: some exist in the construction, agricultural and public service industries (VASyR, 2018), with many employed in irregular daily labour (CARE in Lebanon, 2018) or in informal small and medium-sized or microenterprise operations (The Fares Center, 2018). Consequently, unemployment rates are high among both Lebanese and non-Lebanese populations (UN-Habitat, 2018), with many families lacking financial security (CARE, 2015). As many as 58% of Tripoli's residents live in poverty on an income of less than $4 per day (Ismail et al., 2017; Parker and Maynard, 2018).

1.5 Services and infrastructure

The limited capacity of struggling municipalities in Tripoli is failing to provide its population with suitable living conditions. This is exacerbated by the lack of structures to receive and support high numbers of refugees, with the economic situation of host communities already poor (Naufal, 2012; Maguire et al., 2016). Humanitarian and civil society actors have provided support. However, 37% of households are not connected to a sewage system and 69% lack access to a supply of water to satisfy their basic needs (ACTED, 2016). Settlements deemed to be 'illegal' are particularly prone to this (Sidaoui, 2017). There is a significant threat to public health through inadequate hygiene and over-capacity sanitation systems (CISP and Relief International, 2012).

Access to water is further complicated by regular energy outages that restrict the use of electric water pumps and drive water shortages (Sidaoui, 2017). In a household survey, only 25% reported having access to functional electricity, with 63% suffering from major defects to their supply (UN-Habitat, 2018). Issues around WASH and the spread of disease are worsened by the lack of education on household waste disposal (Maguire et al., 2016). Waste disposal has become a serious cause for concern, with the influx of refugees adding an extra 54 tonnes of waste a day and, with no waste sorting or regulations, the dumpsite has exceeded its disposal limit (Maguire et al., 2016). The toxic liquid residue of this waste drains into the sea, causing severe environmental impacts as it feeds back into the coastal aquifers on which Tripoli relies (Maguire et al., 2016; Sidaoui, 2017).

Across Lebanon, 70% of children attend private schools due to the poor public education system. In Tripoli, only 30% are privately educated and illiteracy stands at 11%, compared to the national average of 7% (Ismail et al., 2017). One of the main challenges to Lebanese and refugee communities is access to healthcare: only 27% of people in Tripoli are covered by health insurance compared to the Lebanese average of 52%, with subsidies rarely enough to cover medical bills (Maguire et al., 2016). The lack of policy on land tenure and dwellers' informal status further restricts refugees from accessing services (Hilal, 2010).
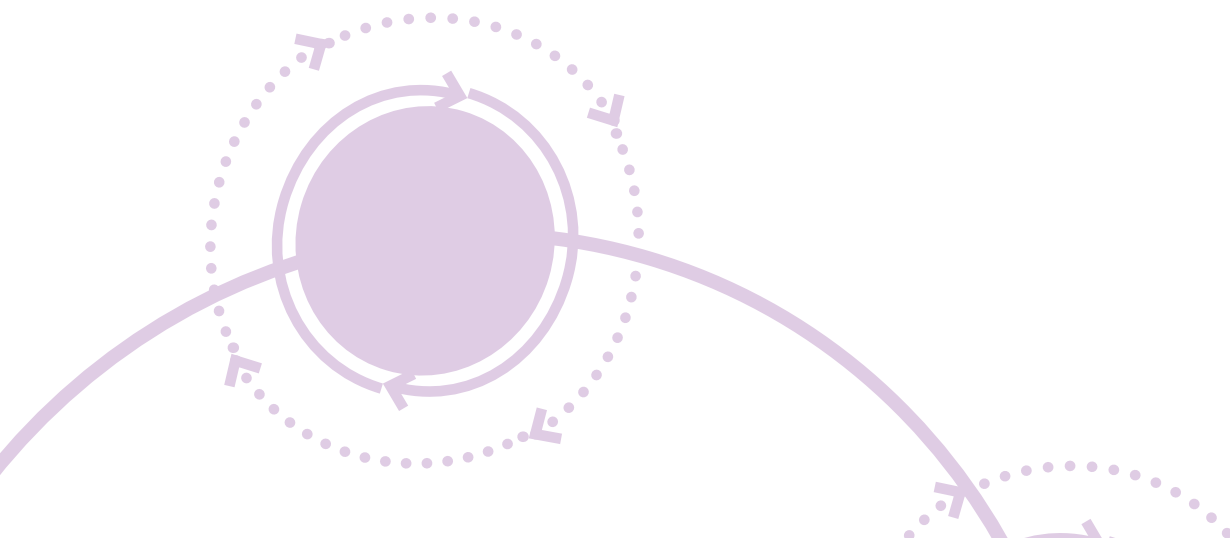
2. Introduction to the One Neighbourhood project

Within the context outlined in Section 1, CARE Lebanon and Akkarouna ran an integrated urban response known as the One Neighbourhood project between 2015 and 2019. Funded by the United States Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM), the project aimed to build the resilience of affected communities and people (both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese) in vulnerable Tripoli neighbourhoods.

In March 2015, while scoping the One Neighbourhood project, CARE undertook several site visits and a rapid household assessment to identify which Tripoli neighbourhoods were most in need. A number of specific neighbourhoods were selected from among the most vulnerable, informed by access to and emerging relationships with communities. Over the project's lifespan, neighbourhoods have changed somewhat – the project has worked primarily in Manukbin, Wadi Nahle, Abu Samra (specifically in Shalfeh and Shoque) as well as more briefly in El Mina, Quobbe, Bab al-Tabbaneh, Beddawi and Old City. See Box 1 for more detail on some of these neighbourhoods.

2.1 Phases of the One Neighbourhood project

Following scoping studies conducted by CARE in North Lebanon between December 2014 and February 2015, the One Neighbourhood project began in 2015 as a 12-month project. It was renewed annually for three further years, with adaptations made each consecutive year. Key developments are outlined as follows.

Scoping | **2014–2015**: In 2014, CARE conducted a gap analysis to understand shelter needs in Lebanon, which was followed by a more specific urban assessment conducted in 2015 (CARE, 2015) which informed CARE's application to BPRM for funding.

Year 1 | **September 2015 – August 2016:** The project provided direct support to 2,800 individuals, 50% refugees and 50% vulnerable Lebanese households, through the rehabilitation of 512 housing units, upgrades to streets and communal areas within buildings, creation of 15 community committees and awareness-raising sessions to build life skills, address protection risks, etc.

Year 2 | **September 2016 – August 2017:** With increasing support to communal area upgrades, the project provided direct support to 12,826 individuals, 46% refugees and 54% vulnerable Lebanese households.

Year 3 | **September 2017 – August 2018:** The project provided direct support to 3,359 individuals, 58% refugees and 42% vulnerable Lebanese households. By this time, 20 neighbourhood committees had been established and awareness-raising sessions were being delivered for both adults and children and included engaging theatre performances.

> " The [One Neighbourhood] project aimed to build the resilience of affected communities and people (both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese) in vulnerable Tripoli neighbourhoods. "

Year 4 | **September 2018 – August 2019:** The project continued to provide direct support to 2,921 individuals, 53% refugee and 47% vulnerable Lebanese households. The project supported three master neighbourhood committees (which each brought together a number of smaller committees) with capacity-building and committee-led initiatives. The project completed 550 household upgrades and 11 common space upgrades. A total of 1,751 individuals participated in awareness raising sessions.

2.2 Components of the One Neighbourhood project

The One Neighbourhood project involved a number of specific elements, which are outlined below.

Individual shelter rehabilitation projects. A significant component of the project focused on rehabilitation of individual homes: more than 2,000 households were rehabilitated over the project time frame. Households were referred and then assessed according to vulnerability criteria. If selected, Akkarouna engineers would assess the needs in the home – some only needed a door or a water tank, others needed multiple significant repairs. The approach was therefore tailored to the specific condition of each house. CARE sought to harness economies of scale by employing contractors to take on multiple rehabilitations at once. CARE and Akkarouna then performed quality checks on a sample of the rehabilitated properties. Agreements were signed between landlords and tenants and, while not legally enforceable, the project found it very rare for tenants to be evicted post-repairs by landlords seeking higher rents and in some cases were able to negotiate reduced rent.

Communal projects. Throughout the project, CARE and Akkarouna identified and rehabilitated approximately 40 communal and public areas. This included improving access to utilities, such as undertaking safety work on electrical connections or installing drainage, fitting staircase handrails and barriers in buildings to improve safety and installing street lighting. Initially, potential communal projects were identified by project staff through observation. Over time, community members themselves proposed potential works, eventually through a structured process (Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness, PASSA)[4] within committees established and supported by the project. Communal projects addressed physical and protection risks and also contributed to building social cohesion and reducing potential conflicts.

The project team took steps to share learning from the individual shelter and communal upgrades with other actors, contributing to the development of standard operating procedures for neighbourhood upgrading (Global Shelter Cluster, 2018).

Awareness-raising sessions. Awareness-raising sessions were delivered to community members in parallel to housing and communal upgrades and covered topics including domestic violence, early marriage, positive parenting, tenant rights and sexually transmitted diseases. The project trained social

workers from the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) to deliver the sessions. Initially the project team identified topics for the sessions, but these were later shaped by community feedback.

Household outreach. Learning from earlier phases of the project, in Year 3 the project recruited nine information volunteers who received a range of protection and psychosocial training. The volunteers visited households to share information about the awareness sessions. Volunteers and project staff also made referrals to specialist protection services when households required additional support.

Committees. Over the life of the project, 20 community committees were established, each with a mixture of Syrian and Lebanese members, landlords and tenants, and people of different ages and genders.[5] In some CARE documents, these committees are described as 'Unity Committees'. The committees shared information and would also nominate communal projects and households for CARE and Akkarouna to assess for possible support. Having received conflict-resolution training, committee members also acted as mediators between landlords and tenants. In year three, the committees were trained in PASSA to build their capacity to identify shelter and protection risks, contribute to community action planning and act as a source of information for the wider community. In total, 213 individual members participated in these community committees. In the final year of the project, CARE and Akkarouna supported committees to plan for the future once the project was over.

Other activities. The project also trialled a number of other components, including awareness sessions and activities specifically for children, bringing together community members and municipal authorities to advocate for improved pest control and waste management, and interactive theatre performances to reinforce awareness messages.

"

Over the life of the project, 20 community committees were established, each with a mixture of Syrian and Lebanese members, landlords and tenants, and people of different ages and genders.

"

2.3 The One Neighbourhood project and area/neighbourhood approaches

CARE and Akkarouna's One Neighbourhood project was implemented at a time when a number of other neighbourhood-based (also called area-based) projects were also underway in Lebanon and globally. While this case study is focused on one individual project, ALNAP also conducted interviews to learn about other neighbourhood-based projects in Tripoli (in particular, Solidarités International's 'El Hay' project,[6] ACTED's area-based response and Utopia's neighbourhood approach in the Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tabbaneh neighbourhoods).

As many of these projects emerged in Lebanon at the same time, it is difficult to know which came first. However, the projects do appear to have influenced one another to some extent, sharing information which informed targeting – especially when one project moved into a neighbourhood where another had ended. Consequently, organisations working on neighbourhood-based projects came together to agree technical standards for the upgrading component. Unfortunately, the opportunity to coordinate more systematically between similar projects appears to have been missed.

The neighbourhood-based projects weren't identical, but collectively they differ from traditional approaches in Lebanon, which target with a particular sectoral intervention, such as shelter, the most vulnerable households spread over a large area. The emergence of so many neighbourhood-based projects in Lebanon illustrates the burgeoning global interest in these approaches, as explored in more depth in the first case study of this series, on Barrio Mio and Katye (Campbell, 2019). Many of the projects also reported using the neighbourhood and city profiles developed during this time by UN-Habitat Lebanon (Maguire et al., 2016; UN-Habitat, 2018). These profiles were featured in previous ALNAP research on context analysis (Campbell, 2018).

3. How the One Neighbourhood project navigates urban complexity

The contextual background in <u>Section 1</u> of this case study highlights the many ways in which urban areas such as Tripoli are dynamic and interconnected. Previous research from ALNAP (Campbell, 2016) and others have emphasised the 'broad failure' of the humanitarian sector to understand the complexity of the city (Brown et al., 2015: 9). This manifests, as described by one interviewee, as 'off-the-shelf, sectoral, non-integrated solutions that fail to maximise opportunity or, worse, actively conspire to make things worse' (Campbell, 2016: 20). The problem is that, both individually and institutionally, many of the current ways of working in the humanitarian sector do not lead to a response that is appropriate to the urban context.[7] Specifically, the following challenges arise repeatedly for humanitarian organisations:

1. focusing on individuals or individual households

2. working in sector silos

3. creating new, duplicative structures

4. inflexibility to adapt based on changes or new learning

5. lack of meaningful coordination to address challenges beyond the capacity of any one organisation (ibid)

These challenges present 'an adaptive challenge rather than a technical problem' for the sector to solve (ibid: 51). The following section explores why the One Neighbourhood project was selected as an example of good practice when it comes to navigating the complexity of an urban context. It describes the new ways of working employed by CARE and Akkarouna to address these challenges and the effect this had on the appropriateness of the response in the Tripoli context. The sections that follow describe obstacles to these new ways of working and factors that enabled success.

3.1 Responding to the whole neighbourhood

Urban environments are highly interconnected (Campbell, 2016) – a reality that challenges many of the ways in which humanitarians work, including sector-siloed responses and an exclusive focus on households in need. The One Neighbourhood project focused on responding to the entire community within specific neighbourhoods, emphasising holistic and integrated ways of working. Specifically, the project took a number of key actions to ensure the project focused on the whole picture.

> **We found that it's much better to consider community spatially, and in terms of networks, consider that wider aspect, rather than doing individual targeting.**

The project targeted communities first, and then households. While most other humanitarian shelter interventions in Lebanon identify vulnerable households over a wide geographic area, the One Neighbourhood project first targeted specific neighbourhoods, which were identified and evaluated against vulnerability criteria as a whole. As one CARE staff member explained:

> I guess, from working in Haiti, and having worked on some of the projects there, we found that it's much better to consider community spatially, and in terms of networks, consider that wider aspect, rather than doing individual targeting.

While individual households within the neighbourhoods were then selected for some components of the response (the individual household rehabilitation), the entire community was able to access the results of communal rehabilitation projects and protection activities.

The project provided support equally to Syrian and Lebanese households. The project intentionally sought to support both Syrian and vulnerable Lebanese households, and for the individual household component this support was provided to each group evenly – 50:50. This approach was greatly appreciated by community members, who said 'They treat Lebanese and Syrians in the same way, without any discrimination.' Monitoring by CARE in 2018 suggested that 98% of community members felt the project had either reduced tensions (26%) or had at least not created any new tensions (72%) within the community (CARE, 2018a). The initial scoping had identified equality of support to Syrian and vulnerable Lebanese households as important – a finding supported by other studies of the context (Boustani, 2016) – and the ratio was maintained throughout the project's life.

The project worked at different scales. To ensure a community-wide approach, the project was designed to include components at multiple scales: individuals could participate in awareness-raising sessions about quite personal topics; at the household level, individual homes were repaired; at the community level, common goods such as street lighting and roads were repaired; and at the city level, project staff sought to bring communities together with municipal authorities. Communal activities were especially appreciated by neighbourhood residents, who explained these meant 'everyone will benefit'.

The project integrated sectoral activities with one another. While the project focused on a small number of specific sectors (rather than taking a broad, multi-sectoral approach), care was taken to deliver these sectoral activities in an integrated way. The project team found creative ways to achieve this. For example, they asked contractors working on household repairs to hire between 10% and 15% of their labour from the local area, to boost the local economy. Project staff also worked together closely, with those focused on different activities within the project doing field visits together.

Across the team, interviewees explained, 'We're not working [on] protection and shelter. It's an integration project … The shelter team when they enter the house, they can see the protection issues, and they do highlight it.'

The project sought to build sustainability and longevity. By focusing on the whole community, the project aimed to 'go beyond individual unsustainable assistance to Syrian families, and include activities that have more longevity and a wider impact' (CARE, 2015: 6). In particular, the project focused on building social cohesion and stability that would be sustained long after project activities had ceased.

3.2 Using an understanding of context to inform action

ALNAP's research has emphasised the importance of understanding the context (including politics, land rights, cultural dynamics, and environment) and not just the situation (scale and depth of the current crisis) (Campbell, 2016; Campbell, 2018). The One Neighbourhood team took steps to understand the context of the neighbourhoods in which they were working and used this to inform action. To do so, the project worked intentionally in the following ways.
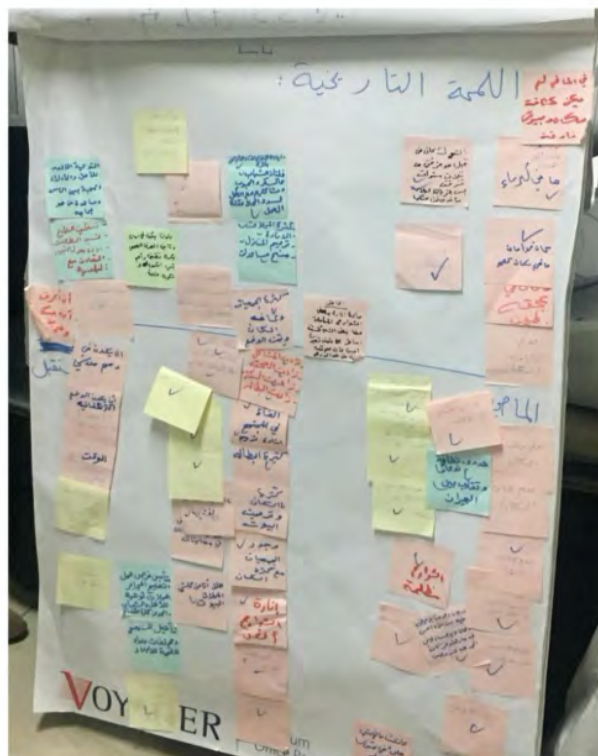
Neighbourhood mapping created on flip chart paper with coloured sticky notes. Source: CARE International UK (n.d.). Reproduced with permission.

The project began with a context analysis. The project scoping phase included a mapping of different vulnerable neighbourhoods. This looked at both the physical condition of housing stock in the area as well as the governance and economy of the area. Over time this knowledge evolved into a 'deep understanding of neighbourhood dynamics, generated through multiple layers of engagement and mapping' (CARE, 2018a: 3) – a sort of engrained understanding that comes only from working intently in a particular area and 'getting to know it', as one interviewee explained. The project made use of information that staff and community members already had about the context.

Tailoring activities to context. The project team applied their understanding of the context to tailor their approach in the different neighbourhoods in which they were working. For example, vulnerability criteria were amended from one neighbourhood to the next based on what was appropriate for that area, taking into account the specific economic and sociocultural dynamics. Communal projects varied by area, having been identified in consultation with community committees.

3.3 Building on existing capacities within the city

Unlike rural or camp settings, where infrastructure and resources may need to be brought in, urban areas contain a wealth of existing capacity among the many stakeholders found in the city (Campbell, 2016). The One Neighbourhood project aimed to make use of existing capacities in the city, rather than importing them or starting from scratch. A number of approaches were used to ensure this happened.

The project was delivered jointly by CARE and Akkarouna. The partnership between CARE and Akkarouna was immensely helpful to the ability of the One Neighbourhood project to navigate complexity. Akkarouna's understanding of the Northern Lebanon context and ability to engage effectively with community members was critical. In turn, CARE's approach to partnership was noted by several interviewees to have empowered and built the capacity of Akkarouna. For example, one Akkarouna staff member said, 'We designed the project together … they took our experience from the field and they tailored it into the design of the project. It was really a combined project together.' CARE's own documentation describes Akkarouna as having 'become partners instead of having a sub-contractor role' (CARE in Lebanon, 2018: 8).

The project used a participatory approach with community members. The project team aimed to have 'a more participatory approach' wherein the team 'actually work with [community members] to actually get their opinions out; make sure that they understand that they have a say in things'. This was a particular consideration during the project's final year, when efforts were made to strengthen the committees established earlier in the project with the hope that they would continue working together on communal advocacy after the project ended.[8] Section 4 explores related challenges of the sustainability of committee-based community engagement.

The project brought in capacity from different organisations. Throughout the project, CARE and Akkarouna made use of UN-Habitat's Tripoli city and neighbourhood profiles. When designing awareness-raising sessions, they brought in social workers from MoSA and trained them to deliver the sessions. When community members specifically requested sessions about drug abuse, they found a local NGO specialising in this, Omanour, and worked with them to deliver sessions on this topic. By bringing in existing expertise, the project team were efficient with their own time. It also meant that they built the capacities of other resources, such as the MoSA social workers, which would have an impact beyond the life of the project itself. An independent evaluation praised the project for having 'brought in and built various collaboration and partnerships with national and local NGOs that have the expertise needed' (El Hajjar and El Saddik, 2017: 16).

Building social cohesion was a specific objective. By fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in communal activities and improving the safety of communities, the project intentionally aimed to improve social cohesion within the targeted neighbourhoods. One project team member explained, 'You can't go into these communities, support a few households and then leave. You need to leave something behind to empower them.'

> By fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in communal activities and improving the safety of communities, the project intentionally aimed to improve social cohesion within the targeted neighbourhoods.

3.4 Being flexible and 'thinking outside the box'

The urban environment is inescapably dynamic, with things constantly changing, and the scale of interconnectedness will inevitably ensure that some key connections or insight is unknown when initial plans are made. Among other reasons, these factors make it important that humanitarians working in urban areas can be flexible (Campbell, 2016). CARE and Akkarouna incorporated flexibility and innovative thinking to respond in Tripoli. To do this, the project took the following steps.

The project identified gaps. From the outset, the One Neighbourhood project sought to identify areas of unmet need. While working on other projects in 2013, CARE found that 'a lot of actors were working in Akkar' but that 'there were some really unmet needs in terms of displaced Syrians in the city [Tripoli] that weren't really being captured by UNHCR data'. It was for this reason that the project focused on Tripoli. The project was also open to moving on when appropriate. For example, in the fourth year, the project stopped offering psychosocial support because 'there are a lot of other NGOs doing PSS [psychosocial support] … so we thought why duplicate the work?'

The team and donor were willing to make changes when problems arose. Throughout the project, there were times where something wasn't working. For example, the project initially sought to negotiate rent reductions with landlords who received repairs to their properties at no cost to them. However, it became clear this was not realistic (most landlords were also economically vulnerable) so this objective was dropped. One interviewee explained that, 'We all brought

Syrian refugees waiting in front of UNHCR registration centre. Photo credit: Flickr/ World Bank Photo Collection.

that urge to make it better every time. How do we do things differently, and how do we make it better? And not to be afraid of going back to the donor and saying we want to change things, we don't think this is working.'

Changes were made each year. One of the advantages of the project's funding being renewed annually (see Section 4 for discussion on several disadvantages of this) was that the team had the opportunity to make changes each year, to continue improving the project. Over the course of the project, the team made changes organisationally (moving project staff to Tripoli), logistically (improving the procurement process) and programmatically (changing how vulnerability scoring worked and the balance between the different programmatic activities).

4. Obstacles and challenges

While the One Neighbourhood project offers many good examples of how to work appropriately in an urban environment, it also illustrates a number of obstacles and challenges to working in this way.

The project focused on three sectors, rather than taking a truly holistic approach. In the original project proposal, CARE had intended for the project to include legal support, governance, economic development and livelihoods components. However, these components were removed during consultation with the project donor, whose preference was to focus on fewer sectors. While CARE tried to create links between the One Neighbourhood project and other economic development and education projects they were running, in practice these projects were quite distinct and the One Neighbourhood project was essentially a shelter, WASH and protection project, falling short of a truly holistic, multi-sectoral response.

In focus groups conducted for this case study, community members identified a number of areas they wished the project had addressed, including vocational training, legal assistance, language courses and basic cash assistance to buy food and clothing. One individual said, 'We need more fields to be covered by these organisations. We have more problems than the organisation numbers in our region.' As one of the few humanitarian organisations working in Tripoli, the project may have had a much bigger impact if it had been able to address other needs identified by the population, which remain unmet.

While the project did take steps to integrate its activities across sectors (see Section 3.1), this 'was not straightforward' and posed challenges. Working in an integrated way gave some project staff the sense that 'everyone has to be an expert in everything' and that this increased the capacity demands on the organisation: 'You need more specialised staff, you need more outreach, more coordination, more field work.' This is a common challenge for organisations trying to work more flexibly (see Obrecht, 2019: 78).

Some of the problems identified by community members were beyond a humanitarian scope. There were other issues also identified by communities and CARE's assessments that go beyond the scope of a humanitarian response project. Interviewees explained that many of the problems being faced by vulnerable communities in Tripoli often have deep roots: '40 years of dysfunctional community services, to be fixed in one year? It's ambitious … This can't happen.'

One common complaint from community members was that the project was unable to fix their roof. 'We told them about the roof and they did not agree to fix the roof. They said they couldn't do anything', said one individual in a focus group. CARE engineers explained that this is because the buildings, while being multi-level concrete structures erected decades ago, are considered illegal constructions and so the municipality would not support the project in making any structural repairs. The project could install toilets, taps, bathroom doors and railings, but could not provide a secure roof.

Multi-story buildings in Tripoli. Photo credit: Elizabeth Parker.

While the project may have been able to address a larger variation of needs, and a governance component in particular may have provided more support for community members to advocate with the local government to address these issues, this challenge does raise the question, to what extent are these issues the responsibility of humanitarian actors? One interviewee explained, 'What more can we do? It's an important programme; we've been doing this for four years but now what? Is [the donor] going to fix all the shelters in the north?'

Even community members themselves recognised this, with one individual stating:

> People are asking CARE and Akkarouna for many things that are beyond the capacity of these two organisations. Sometimes things that people are asking for like legal permits, they're asking for things that even the country or state or government are not being able to treat or handle or deal with. We hope that people understand that these two organisations are doing their best but sometimes it's beyond the capacity of the organisations.

It was difficult to refer or escalate out-of-scope issues due to lack of capacity. As explored, many of the challenges communities in Tripoli are facing are long-term development issues, out of scope for the One Neighbourhood project. The project team tried to support committees to reach out to local government to address these issues. One focus group participant said, 'Sometimes they're responsive ... the municipality is helping' but also noted, 'they cannot go beyond their capacity.' Another interviewee explained, 'One of the things I've been surprised by is just how little these guys have to operate these municipalities. The money they get from the central government, it's kind of astounding.' The project also tried to refer concerns to other organisations, but an external evaluation found that 'referral cases were not systematically followed up by organizations to whom the cases were referred' (Parker and Maynard, 2018: 7).

Context analysis was not always done mindfully. While project staff reported that they had made use of an understanding of context (see Section 3.2), several also recognised that this understanding wasn't always done in a structured or mindful way. One said, 'I'm sure we've done a lot of contextual analysis, and contextual adaptation, but we may not be aware of, or

have documented it.' In some areas, the project team overestimated their understanding of a problem, such as the illegality of many of the settlements in Tripoli, thinking initially that they knew enough to 'get around' the problem but later realising 'We didn't know enough. So, how much did we really know about the context? There's a lot of lessons, I think, in there.'

The impact of the One Neighbourhood project is hard to measure. It has been difficult to articulate the full impact of the project – a challenged faced by many projects taking a holistic approach, including Barrio Mio case study (Campbell, 2019). In part, this is due to the indicators. One interviewee explained, 'We have these very shelter-y outcome indicators … that's one of my regrets. We never sat down to really fully design a theory of change.' As a result, the project has ended up 'with indicators that aren't really suitable.' One evaluation found that this resulted in a 'mismatch between the project plan and its implementation' (El Hajjar and El Saddik, 2017: 4).

The project may have started with these shelter-focused indicators because they are more easily measured than some of the other impacts of the project. Another colleague explained:

> Sometimes … the impact we did … we don't know how to report on it … when we report to [the] donor, we have this log frame that we report on under each indicator … in reality we did a lot of things to reach this indicator … so it's not easy to show this impact.

The project donors agreed with this, explaining, 'We can feel the impact that we made … however on paper … how would you describe that? How would you measure that?' Simply put, in the words of one of the project team, 'maybe you cannot measure all the successes of the [One] Neighbourhood project'.

Community participation beyond the committees was limited. While the project had a significant impact on those individuals who participated in the community committees, engagement with the local population did not extend much further than this. The project's external evaluation found that 'there were not enough events – quantity and frequency – and enough people attending to bring residents together' (Parker and Maynard, 2018: 7) and that 'there is limited evidence to suggest that the committees are developing bonds with external stakeholders' (ibid: 41). Figure 1 shows the number of community members in three of the project's neighbourhoods who were actively engaged in activities.

The uncertainty around whether or not the project would receive renewed funding each year caused a number of problems. The project had to be resubmitted annually for a subsequent year of funding. This was disruptive to the flow of the project, which had to wind down activities from the current year while proposing new ones. Once a funding decision had been made, the project had to rapidly scale up again. This process compressed the actual time available to deliver the project activities. One member of project staff explained, 'The situation that we're put in is that, each year, we have no idea if they are going to fund us, and it's hard sometimes to get an idea from the donor … each year it's still a stab in the dark.'

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The impact of the One Neighbourhood project is hard to measure… a challenged faced by many projects taking a holistic approach.

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Figure 1: Percentage of total population that attended 'positive parenting' or psychosocial support sessions

Mankubin

262   146   5,716

Wadi Nahle

575   147   5,049

Abu Samra (Shok and Shalfeh)

499   324   11,910

● Attendees of positive parenting sessions

● Attendees of psychosocial support sessions

● Non-attendees
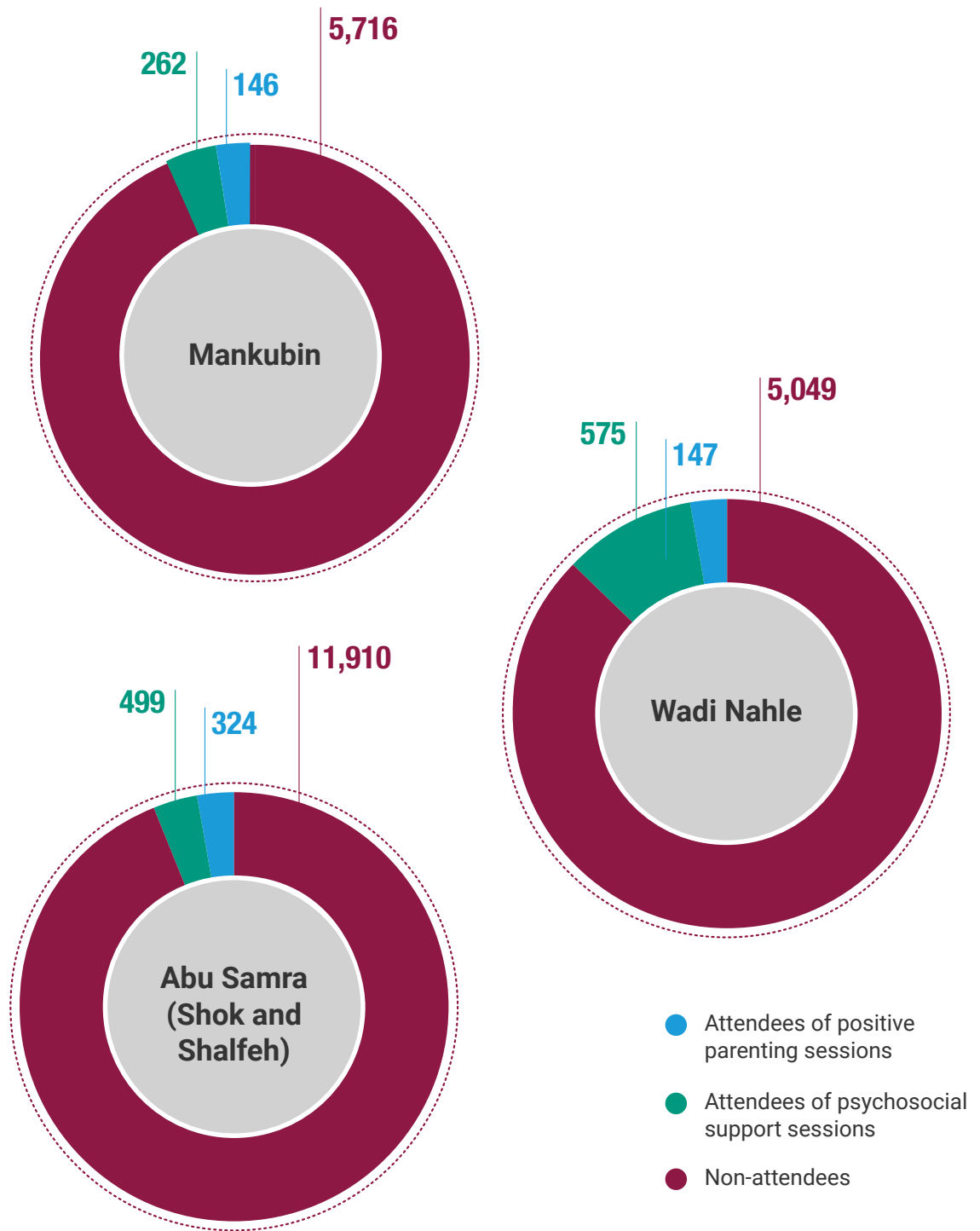
Source: Adapted from Parker and Maynard (2018: 46).

Because of this, the project experienced high staff turnover, who each year faced the possible loss of their position and sometimes found other work elsewhere before the project's renewal was confirmed. Recruitment for these posts also ate into each new year's time frame – representing 'a lot of wasted time and resources', according to one project team member. In the end, the only CARE staff member working continually on the project throughout the four years was the Deputy Director. Thankfully, Akkarouna was able to retain four key staff members for the duration of the project.

This uncertainty also caused confusion for project recipients and interfered with the trust between the community and CARE and Akkarouna project team. At one focus group, a community member said:

> They haven't fixed my house. I called them. They said that they stopped fixing houses. My house needs to be fixed and I need to have my windows closed because thieves are entering my house. I'm on the ground floor.

Care staff quickly responded, 'The project was about to end one month ago. I think you called when the programme was at its end. We will reconsider your application and work with you to fix your house.'

The project team viewed the four years as one overall, continual project, but in practical terms it was four concurrent projects. The reality of the scale-down, scale-up cycle, combined with uncertainty about the project's continuation, made it difficult to think outside of the one-year time frame and to incorporate learning. An interviewee elaborated:

> On one hand, we want time to think more strategically ... if it was a five-year programme, how would you stagger the activities? How would you start a theory of change and start to look at how to work towards that? ... At the same time ... you're only going to get one-year funding, and the following year won't be guaranteed.

The reality of the annual funding cycles meant that, 'it's really difficult to work on the big, transformative changes, if you [only] have a 12 months window to do that.' An independent evaluation at the end of Year 2 found that the 'second phase did not benefit enough from the learnings of phase one' (El Hajjar and El Saddik, 2017: 4).

The final project evaluation found that its one-year funding cycles was not the most effective for programme delivery and increased the risk of doing harm to communities (Parker and Maynard, 2018).

The tight time frames sometimes compromised response quality. While most repairs completed as part of the project were done well, monitoring from CARE and Akkarouna found that 20% of households reported in May 2018 problems with repairs that had been done three months earlier (Parker and Maynard, 2018). In focus group discussions conducted as part of this research and for an external evaluation, individuals shared examples of this. These quality control issues seem to relate to two interconnected factors. The first is that individuals

were not sufficiently aware of how to report issues with repairs (which were completed by contractors) via the programme's hotline. The evaluation stated, 'more than 40% of households that received housing upgrades were not aware of any means of reporting complaints or disputes, despite the fact that a hotline card was provided' (Parker and Maynard, 2018: 28). Secondly, while project staff did spot-check a number of the repairs to check quality, the delays and subsequent rushed time frames limited the ability of staff to undertake quality control consistently.

Organisational procedures needed to be adapted to realistic humanitarian time frames. Especially in the first year, the project faced delays in scaling up and, as a result, had a compressed timescale within which activities had to be delivered. Those involved in the project found that CARE's own organisational procedures for procurement, which required multiple levels of sign-off) were not flexible enough to respond to 'humanitarian projects which are short in timescale and needs are urgent' (Rule and Lisa, 2016: 6). As a result, for example, although Year 2 of the project started in September 2016, the tender only opened at the end of January 2017 and contractors did not sign agreements until April. A year's worth of household repairs was then completed in just four to five months (El Hajjar and El Saddik, 2017). The project illustrates the importance of having organisational procedures that can be adapted in an emergency context. (See Obrecht (2019) for more on how organisations can make their processes more flexible.)

Kitchen following repair through the CARE project. Photo credit: Elizabeth Parker.

5. Enabling and supporting factors

A number of factors enabled the different ways of working adopted by the One Neighbourhood project to navigate the complexity of the Tripoli context.

The project was run by one cohesive project team. While individuals within the team had different roles and responsibilities, the team worked together within a dedicated project team. Team members felt this was important 'because they [colleagues] need to know what we do and we need to do what they do.' Another explained, 'It's essential to work as a team, to have the teamwork spirit to target this one community to get what the community requires.' This feeling was echoed across all project team interviewees.

The project built relationships with the community. As the project worked in particular neighbourhoods year on year, field staff were able to develop long-standing relationships with community members. This was aided by the community's perception of the project as a whole. One interviewee explained:

> People out in the community are starting to share information with us, and this is what it's all about. It's about the people in the community, that they feel that they can trust us with information, and that we act upon this information in a transparent and participatory manner. I think that it has built itself up a little bit over the last four years.

The project donor was willing to be flexible. Despite some perceived rigidity from the donor (as explored in Section 4), interviewees pointed to numerous examples where One Neighbourhood's donor, BPRM, had been willing to change plans to suit emerging circumstances. One commonly cited example was in relation to an original objective of the project for landlords to reduce the rent following household repairs. When this objective proved unfeasible for landlords, most of whom were vulnerable themselves, the original target was significantly reduced. BPRM issues cooperative agreements, which are more flexible than contracts, and the project found this particularly helpful. One interviewee stated, 'It's quite easy to change a cooperative agreement with BPRM, and they want the project to be responsive to what's happening in Tripoli.' BPRM representatives explained, 'I think we're known to be the most flexible donor ... usually if it makes sense, we're very flexible.' The project team also felt that the donor was interested in developing the project together, and was willing to make changes based on feedback from the field.

CARE encourages thinking. When asked about working for CARE, several interviewees emphasised that CARE 'is an organisation that really welcomes ideas'. Another explained, 'You have a lot of room to think and you have room to innovate ... CARE as an organisation is very reflective ... It's an environment that actually allows you to think outside the box.' This thinking culture was particularly important in nurturing the approaches outlined in Section 3.4.

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When asked about working for CARE, several interviewees emphasised that CARE 'is an organisation that really welcomes ideas'.

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> The One Neighbourhood project had a lot of support within both organisations and benefited from the consistency of two longstanding project team members and an international advisor who demonstrated passion for and dedication to the neighbourhood approach.

The project approach had strong champions in both CARE and Akkarouna. The One Neighbourhood project had a lot of support within both organisations and benefited from the consistency of two longstanding project team members and an international advisor who demonstrated passion for and dedication to the neighbourhood approach. This energy was transferred throughout the team, creating an 'urge to make it better every time'. And efforts to make changes proved successful: many of the issues raised in the independent evaluation had been addressed at the end of Year 2 and resolved in Years 3 and 4.

CARE also articulated the project as a critical part of their in-country strategy (CARE, 2018b). This helped to ensure the project had buy-in and received support from country and HQ leadership and advisors. Within Akkarouna, the project received a lot of support from the founder and director, who was described by colleagues as being motivational and inspiring a democratic approach to decision-making through which all voices are heard. The local staff recruited to work on the project from Tripoli brought a wealth of contextual understanding that was also especially helpful.

6. Questions for further study

This case study has documented the One Neighbourhood project as an example of how humanitarians can respond more appropriately within an interconnected, dynamic space by adapting their ways of working. As one of several case studies that will feed into a final research study, this discussion has been largely descriptive, offering examples of what happened in the One Neighbourhood project. But it also raises a number of questions worth further consideration:

- How many sectors is enough – or too many – when it comes to integrated or multi-sectoral response in an urban crisis?

- What kinds of funding models could support urban response projects such as One Neighbourhood, especially in terms of predictability and flexibility?

- What further evidence is needed around funding urban host and refugee populations, or around multi-sectoral funding?

- What should humanitarians do when working in urban contexts where the greatest needs are not due to the crisis itself but are related to long-term vulnerabilities?

- How can multi-mandate (development and humanitarian) organisations working in urban settings adapt their processes and procedures to be fit for purpose in emergency contexts?

7. Key takeaways

The One Neighbourhood project was designed to provide an interconnected humanitarian response to the pressures placed on vulnerable neighbourhoods in Tripoli following the arrival of a significant number of Syrian refugees. The project has used new ways of working to tackle the complex nature of the urban crisis in order to address common challenges faced by organisations responding in urban areas. These are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: How working differently helped address the common challenges of working in complex urban settings

Common challenge	How this was mitigated or avoided
Focusing on individuals or individual households	• Responding to the whole neighbourhood by targeting communities, not just households • Communal upgrades as well as household improvements • Providing equal support to Syrian and Lebanese households • Deliberately seeking to improve social cohesion
Working in sector silos	• Including multiple sectors within one project • Integrating sectoral activities with each other
Creating new, duplicative structures	• Beginning with context analysis • Working with other organisations to bring in capacity • Working participatively with community members
Inflexibility to adapt based on changes or new learning	• Using understanding of context to inform action • Tailoring activities to neighbourhoods • Being open to make changes and actually making them • Focusing on unmet needs
Lack of meaningful coordination to address challenges beyond the capacity of any one organisation	• Working with a wide variety of organisations including local grassroots organisations, religious leaders municipalities and MoSA

The One Neighbourhood project encountered several challenges to these new ways of working. These included the following:

- Some problems identified were beyond a humanitarian scope.

- The project focused on particular sectors, rather than a completely holistic approach.

- The project experienced difficulties in referrals due to lack of capacity.

- Context analysis was not always done in a structured way.

- The impact of the project was difficult to measure.

- Community participation beyond committees was limited.

- There were problems due to the uncertainty of funding at the end of each year.

- Tight time frames compromised the quality of the response.

- Organisational procedures needed to be adapted to suit (short) humanitarian time frames.

But there were also a number of enabling factors that supported the One Neighbourhood project:

- The project was run by one cohesive team.

- Staff built long-standing relationships with the community.

- The project donor was flexible.

- CARE welcomed thinking, new ideas and innovation.

- The project had strong support in both CARE and Akkarouna from both leadership and project staff.

Lastly, it is crucial to reflect on the applicability of learning from the One Neighbourhood project for other humanitarian projects. This case study raises a number of questions worth further consideration, such as: how many sectors should be involved to achieve a multi-sectoral approach? Can humanitarian donors provide more stable and predictable funding for urban humanitarian response projects such as One Neighbourhood? Can further research build an evidence base around multi-sectoral funding, or funding of urban host and refugee populations? How should humanitarians act in urban contexts where fundamental needs are not due to the crisis but related to long-term vulnerabilities? How can multi-mandate organisations adapt their standard processes and procedures to be fit for purpose in urban emergency contexts?

Endnotes

1. Al-Biqāʿ has been translated from Arabic using various spellings including Beqaa.

2. Akkarouna is a national non-governmental organisation based in Northern Lebanon. Akkar is a region further north than Tripoli, and the organisation's name 'Akkarouna' translated means 'Akkar belongs to us'. The organisation initially provided vocational support to young people and aimed to build brides between local authorities and youth. When Syrian refugees began to arrive, the organisation expanded their area of focus and eventually moved outside of Akkar, into Tripoli.

3. By comparison, London has a population density of only 5,590/km².

4. PASSA is a facilitated participatory method developed by the IFRC which raises awareness about shelter risk and develops capacity to analyse and take action about shelter risks in a community (IFRC, 2011).

5. 90% of committee members were women (Parker and Maynard, 2018).

6. 'El Hay' (transliterated) means 'The Neighbourhood' in Arabic.

7. See Section 6 of Campbell (2016) for more detail.

8. This case study was written shortly after the project ended. It is not yet known to what extent committees were able to carry on after the project ended.

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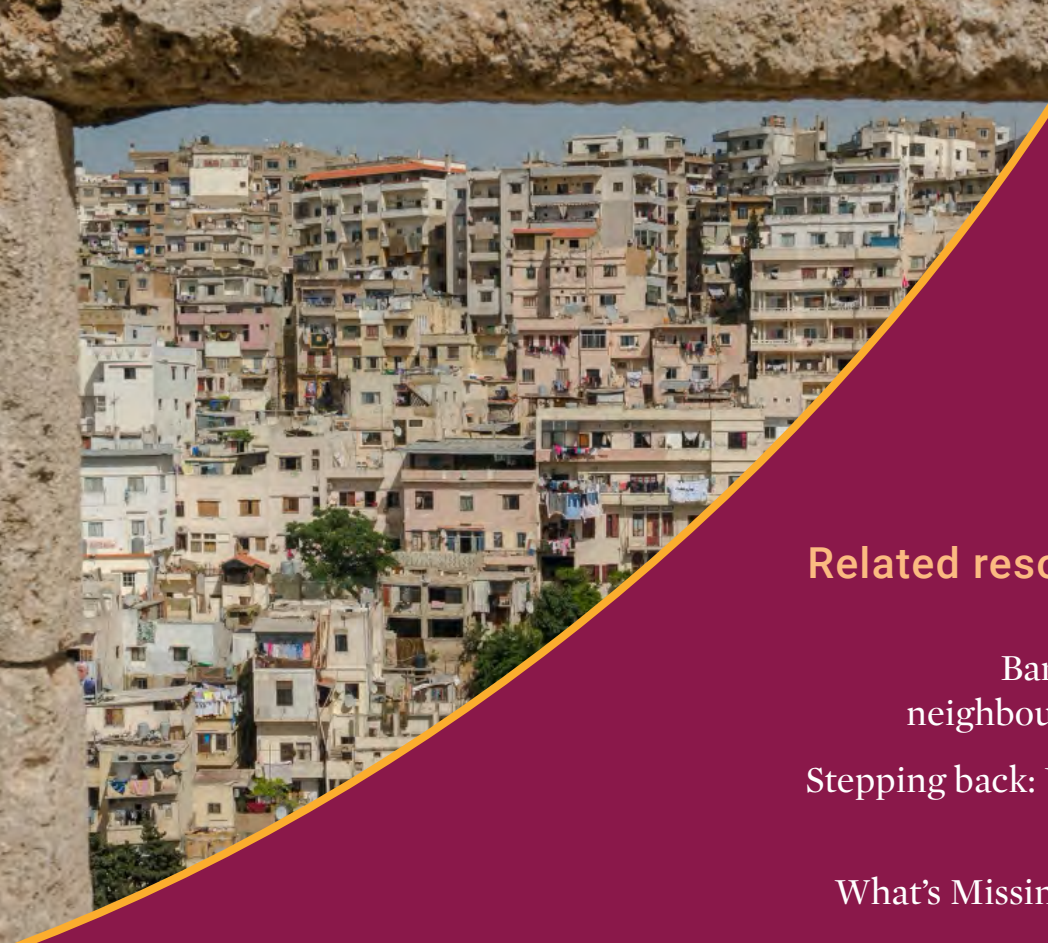
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