

INVESTIGATING GREY AREAS

Access to Basic Urban Services in
the Adjacent Areas of Palestinian
Refugee Camps in Lebanon

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The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-HABITAT, is the United Nations agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. UN-HABITAT's programmes are designed to help policy-makers and local communities get to grips with the human settlements and urban issues and find workable, lasting solutions.

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Foreword

This report is the result of a joint effort by UNDP and UN-HABITAT to gain a better understanding of the various dynamics governing access to basic urban services in the Adjacent Areas of Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon. In this sense, it is the first attempt to approach the Adjacent Areas of Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon as a distinct category of Palestinian gatherings, in order to better understand the various factors shaping access to basic urban services.

While Adjacent Areas have been discussed in the context of studies covering Palestinian gatherings in Lebanon, their adjacent geographic location to the camps have allowed for the development of alternative mechanisms for accessing basic urban services which are unique to them. This report thus aims at developing an understanding of access to basic urban services, which goes beyond the physical description of the state of services, and examines the governance mechanisms involved in the access and maintenance of these services.

It is our hope that, through the codification of local knowledge and practice, this initiative will contribute policy dialogue on these issues in Lebanon and will inform the development of more comprehensive approaches for addressing basic urban services in Adjacent Areas, through integrated strategies at the national and local levels.

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Beddawi Municipality
Bhannine Municipality
Darb el Sim Municipality
Mieh Mieh Municipality
Muhammara Municipality
Saida Municipality

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and the local communities in the 12 AAs

All maps and pictures are produced and taken by UN-HABITAT research team, unless otherwise stated



Executive Summary

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In July 2009, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Lebanon commissioned the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) to carry out a research on access to basic urban services (BUS) in the Adjacent Areas (AAs) of Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon. The research work program started in August 2009 and ended in April 2010.

1. Scope of the Research

For the purpose of this research, AAs are informal Palestinian gatherings that are located on the boundaries of official Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. The BUS covered are in the sectors of: 1) Water Provision; 2) Sewerage; 3) Solid Waste Management; 4) Electricity; and 5) Road Networks. The research looks at access to basic urban services from a governance perspective, focusing on dwellers' strategies and mechanisms; their web of relationships with other public and private stakeholders; and the role played by each stakeholder. It also presents a rapid assessment of the state of BUS in the AAs and investigates the connections of these services to those in the adjacent camps and the surrounding towns and villages.

2. Significance and Objectives

AAs remain an untapped field of study and the few previous studies that included AAs in their assessments did not differentiate them from other Palestinian gatherings. However, due to their specific location along the boundaries of Palestinian refugee camps and in proximity to residential areas in the surrounding villages and towns, AAs exhibit particular characteristics and governance structures of their own, especially in access to basic urban services. For any attempt that aims at improving access to BUS in the AAs, it becomes extremely important to understand these characteristics and governance structures and learn from them.

The research aims to serve as the basis for guiding future strategies and policies that would improve

access to BUS in the AAs as part of the wider context in which they are found. It aims at bringing the discussion to public and private attention and building on existing local practices, relationships and knowledge to suggest more integrated approaches for enhancing living conditions and access to BUS in the AAs. In this context, the research is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

- Identifying and defining Adjacent Areas of Palestinian Refugee Camps as a specific category of Palestinian gatherings in Lebanon and locating the AAs within their wider geographic context.
- Investigating the local governance structures of accessing and maintaining BUS in the AAs; and highlighting the relationships and networks that tie the local communities to other public and private stakeholders.
- Documenting alternative mechanisms and self-help initiatives undertaken by dwellers in the AAs to access and maintain BUS.
- Mapping the roles of different public and private stakeholders involved in the informal BUS provision in the AAs.
- Examining the relative technical methods applied for accessing and maintaining BUS and repairing infrastructure networks in the AAs.
- Undertaking a rapid assessment of the state of BUS in the AAs and investigating the main factors that impact upon this, in addition to identifying the problems and shortfalls in each BUS sector.
- Identifying the main needs, priorities and suggestions for improving access to BUS in the AAs from the perspective of local communities and other involved stakeholders.
- Investigating connections between BUS and infrastructure networks in the AAs and those in the adjacent camps and surrounding villages and towns and highlighting mutual impacts and common problems.

- Proposing a set of recommendations that aims at enhancing dwellers' access to adequate and sustainable BUS in the AAs, taking into consideration the wider geographic and policy context.

3. Main Findings

Definition and Identification of AAs

The research has developed a set of criteria for defining Adjacent Areas of Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon as a specific category of 'Palestinian gatherings', as per the latter's definition by Fafo (2003). These criteria are:

- Location: An AA is an area located in direct proximity or adjacency around the boundaries of official Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.
- Demography: An AA is inhabited by a majority of Palestinian refugees, with a sense of being a distinct group living in a geographically identifiable area.
- Tenure: An AA exhibits informal access to tenure and has no official UNRWA camp status.
- Access to Basic Urban Services: An AA witnesses no provision of basic urban services by the state (public agencies and municipalities), UNRWA or other institutions.

Twelve AAs were identified to be distributed around the two camps of Beddawi and Nahr el Bared in North Lebanon (2 AAs and 1 AA respectively) and the two camps of Mieh Mieh and Ain el Helwe in Saida area in South Lebanon (1 AA and 8 AAs respectively).

Access to Basic Urban Services in AAs

Access to basic urban services constitutes a major concern for dwellers in the AAs. Living in informal settlements distributed along the fringes of official

characterized by huge gaps and shortfalls. Methods that are feasible to AA dwellers for implementing and repairing BUS are generally elementary and inadequate; they occur without minimum consideration to environmental or engineering standards. In addition, infrastructure networks and BUS in the AAs are informally connected to those in the camps and surrounding residential areas in ad-hoc methods, drastically impacting and affecting each other.

Self-Help Initiatives

The self-help initiatives used by dwellers in the AAs to access and maintain basic urban services could be summarized as follows, highlighting the role of involved public and private stakeholders:

Direct Implementation of Basic Urban Services: In order to access and maintain BUS in the AAs, dwellers resort to the direct implementation and repair of BUS. These direct interventions undertaken by dwellers occur either individually or collectively within their limited financial and technical capacities.

Tapping into Surrounding Services and Infrastructure: In order to secure access to BUS, dwellers in the AAs also resort to tapping into surrounding BUS and infrastructure networks in the camps or the surrounding villages and towns. Connection to surrounding infrastructure networks is informally carried by dwellers, generally using ad-hoc and substandard methods.

Forming Local Committees Under the Camp PC Structures: In terms of the organizational structure, AAs are internally managed by local committees that are generally formed under the wider structure of the Popular Committees (PCs) in the camps they surround. These local committees carry the responsibility of organizing, operating and managing BUS, mainly in the

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