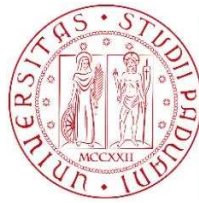


UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, LAW,  
AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

**Master's degree in  
Human Rights and Multi-level Governance**



GARDENING IN THE CONTEXT OF  
FORCED DISPLACEMENT

AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF SYRIAN FORCIBLY  
DISPLACED PEOPLE IN THE BEKAA, LEBANON

*Supervisor:* Prof. AMEDEO OSTI GUERRAZZI

*Candidate:* LUISA ELLESER

Matriculation No.: 2046777

A.Y. 2023/2024



## **Abstract**

In Lebanon, a country struggling with a multitude of intertwined crises, the arrival of more than 1.5 million forcibly displaced people has exacerbated an already complex situation. A significant number of these people are unregistered and currently face the threat of deportation to Syria. The plight of these refugees encompasses a web of legal, economic and social challenges, one of the most pressing being food and nutrition insecurity. Unfortunately, attempts to alleviate this problem by distributing cash or food aid have inadvertently fostered dependency among the refugee population. The aim of this paper is to examine gardening as a hands-on solution to address concrete challenges on the ground, using Lebanon as an example, and in particular the situation of Syrians in the Bekaa region.

An extensive literature review on the various challenges faced by the country's population and in particular the displaced Syrians is combined with empirical research on the ground through key informant interviews.

This paper argues that given the holistic health and food production benefits of gardening, and since many refugees are already engaged in or have experience in agriculture - albeit often based on economic exploitation due to a lack of legal regulations and protection -, integrating gardening activities into the provision of humanitarian assistance can be an effective and sustainable tool to help address various challenges such as food and nutrition insecurity, and to promote refugees' well-being and enhance their self-confidence and sense of dignity, while benefiting the wider natural and social environment.

**Table of Contents**

- Chapter I – Introduction.....7**
  
- Chapter II- Syrian Forcibly Displaced People in Lebanon.....10**
  - 1. Introduction.....10
  - 2. Framing the issue: Lebanon- a country facing diverse challenges.....12
    - 2.1. Introduction.....12
    - 2.2. Economic challenges.....12
    - 2.3. Political challenges.....14
    - 2.4. Other challenges.....15
    - 2.5. Societal challenges and consequences.....17
      - 2.5.1. Overview.....17
      - 2.5.2. Food and Nutrition Insecurity.....20
    - 2.6. Interim conclusion.....25
  - 3. Lebanon as a hosting country of Syrian displaced people.....27
    - 3.1. Overview.....27
    - 3.2. Legal situation of forcibly displaced people from Syria in Lebanon.....28
      - 3.2.1. Definition of terms.....28
      - 3.2.2. Laws and Regulations regarding Syrian displaced people in Lebanon.....30
      - 3.2.3. Challenges faced by Syrian displaced people in Lebanon.....31
        - 3.2.3.1. Introduction.....32
        - 3.2.3.2. Legal challenges.....33
        - 3.2.3.3. Economic and societal challenges.....36
        - 3.2.3.4. Food and nutrition insecurity.....48
    - 3.3. Interim conclusion.....50
  
- Chapter III: Gardening in the context of forced displacement.....52**
  - 1. Introduction.....52
  - 2. Gardening in the context of forced displacement.....52
    - 2.1. Definitions: Agriculture, Permaculture and Horticulture.....52
    - 2.2. Benefits of gardening.....56
      - 2.2.1. Introduction.....56
      - 2.2.2. Physical benefits.....57
      - 2.2.3. Nutritional benefits.....59
      - 2.2.4. Psychological/mental benefits.....64
      - 2.2.5. Community and societal benefits.....66

2.2.6. Environmental benefits.....	70
2.2.7. Further benefits.....	71
2.3. Interim conclusion.....	72
2.4. The relevance of gardening in the context of forced displacement.....	73

**Chapter IV Empirical analysis: Syrians involved in gardening in Bekaa, Lebanon.....90**

1. Introduction.....	90
2. Overview: the Bekaa Valley as the ‘breadbasket’ of Lebanon.....	91
3. Syrian refugees involved in agriculture in the Bekaa.....	97
4. Zooming-in to the local context: The initiatives <i>Greenhouse for all</i> and <i>Buzuruna Juzuruna</i> . .....	101
4.1. Introduction.....	101
4.2. Case example 1: The organization <i>Greenhouse for All</i> in Bar Elias, Beqaa.....	102
4.2.1. Local context of the project.....	102
4.2.2. Presentation of the project.....	103
4.3. Case example 2: The organization <i>Buzuruna Juzuruna</i> in Saadnayel, Beqaa.....	112
4.3.1. Local context of the project.....	112
4.3.2. Presentation of the project.....	112
5. Methodology.....	114
6. Results.....	119
6.1. Introduction.....	119
6.2. Benefits and potential of gardening.....	119
6.3. Identification of challenges and needs.....	133
6.4. Interim conclusion.....	140

**Chapter V Discussion and reflection: can gardening serve as a means to address the challenges displaced Syrians face in Bekaa and wider Lebanon?.....141**

1. Comparison of the empirically analysed benefits with the literature review and discussion.....	141
2. Discussion of the identified challenges and needs.....	147
3. Bekaa in a wider picture – reflections on the way forward.....	151

**Chapter VI Conclusion.....155**

Bibliography.....	159
Appendix.....	182

## Acronyms

BJ	Buzuruna Juzuruna
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IE	Incredible Edible
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPC	Integrated Food Security Classification
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IS	Informal Settlement
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SNHR	Syrian Network for Human Rights
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UN Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VASyR	Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon
WFP	World Food Programme

## **Chapter I - Introduction**

Choosing the theme of gardening in the context of displacement has its roots in my love of outdoor activities, including gardening, my passion for organic and nutrient-rich food, and my anger at the prevailing industrial and commercial farming practices that damage the environment and produce food full of chemicals that enter our bodies and affect our physical and mental well-being. My keen interest and passion for the rights of displaced people and the improvement of their living conditions around the world led me to reflect on the often-discussed ‘durable solutions’ to the refugee issue, and I wanted to explore the thesis of the incorporation of gardening in thinking about the latter academically and in depth by analysing the case of Syrians in Lebanon with a regional focus on the Bekaa region. I have a personal connection to this area, as I did an internship from April to July at one of the two organisations presented, namely Greenhouse for All, and therefore wanted to combine theoretical knowledge with practical experience and insights. Finally, out of criticism of a purely anthropocentric approach to human rights and the conviction that it is unsustainable in the long run, I will expand the focus to humans by including environmental aspects in several parts. At the end of my academic career, I wanted this work to combine my political science and human rights background, my passion for environmentalism/ green activism, and my enjoyment of ‘getting my hands dirty’.

With my research, I aimed to find a sustainable and pragmatic approach or proposed solution to the urgent and increasingly important question of how to help a growing number of forcibly displaced people. With well over 100 million people forcibly displaced worldwide this year, my aim in this work was to analyse a hands-on approach to dealing with this ever-growing number by combining my theoretical studies on human rights with practical experiences on the ground and an interdisciplinary and proactive thinking approach (cf. UNHCR 2022a). My aim is to provide food for thought on how to respond practically to the issue of integrating refugees into societies by analysing in more detail the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This is not meant to be an exhaustive analysis, but rather to contribute to the already existing but sparse literature on gardening as a means of integrating forcibly displaced communities into host societies and to the

movement of finding more sustainable and holistic practical approaches to the refugee issue.

The relevance of this work is explained by the large and annually increasing number of people who are forced to flee and who, in most cases, find themselves in a situation of great vulnerability and dependency. Not only do I have a personal connection to Lebanon as a country and the Bekaa region through completing my internship there, but the country with globally the highest number of refugees per capita is also a good example of the inability of governments and international organisations to respond adequately to this issue - despite the protracted nature of the civil war and situation of displacement (cf. UNHCR 2022c).

Methodology of this thesis is two-pronged: it combines a comprehensive literature review with an empirical analysis of the feasibility of the thesis on the ground by focusing on one region and conducting interviews with four key informants in the field who provide expertise and insights. Chapters one to three draw exclusively on information from the analysis of primary and secondary sources, while chapter four combines the literature review with self-conducted research on the ground. Chapter five contains critical reflections and personal discussions on the analysed findings.

The following chapters follow a solution-seeking approach in the face of a challenging situation by in Chapter Two first providing an introduction to the general economic, political and social situation of Lebanon and in a second step to the situation of the displaced Syrian communities in the country, focusing on the challenges they face.

Chapter Three presents a tool, so to speak, a possible solution to the challenges presented in the previous chapters, namely gardening or cultivation, and establishes the link between gardening and the context of forced migration, respectively situates it in the refugee context. After analysing the holistically considered health aspects for humans and their environment, the choice of this tool is justified by linking it to the life situation of refugees and relevant human rights.

Chapter Four focuses on the site-specific context of the Bekaa region, the regional focus of this thesis. Furthermore, two projects are presented in which gardening activities



are practically implemented in the refugee context and in which the selected key informants are active. Finally, the chosen methodology is explained and both experts and results of the conducted interviews are presented.

Chapter Five is dedicated to the discussion on the results of the previous chapter and compares them with the theoretically analysed benefits, challenges and needs analysed above. In addition, this chapter provides reflections on the thesis and ends with considerations of possible ways forward.

Chapter Six builds the final section with a conclusion.

## **Chapter II- Syrian Forcibly Displaced People in Lebanon**

If you think you understand Lebanon, it's because someone has not explained it to you properly.  
Pierre Jarawan

### **1. Introduction**

Lebanon is a small country on the eastern side of the Mediterranean, bordering Syria and Israel, which puts it in an already volatile region of our world. The country has a population of about 5.8 million, although this figure varies depending on the source because there has been no census since 1931. Of these people, around 3.8 million are of Lebanese nationality, while 1.5 million are Syrian people being forcibly displaced from their mother country nearby as well as more than 207.000 Palestinian refugees plus almost 15.000 refugees from other countries (cf. WFP Lebanon 2022).

As this dissertation focuses on forcibly displaced people from Syria and explores the potential of gardening as a practical solution to various challenges, the page limit does not allow for a deeper insight into the history of the country. Nevertheless, some historical facts are valuable to contextualise the topic.

Firstly, Lebanon became an official state through its declaration as such by France, under whose mandate the country was from 1918 to 1946. Previously, the country had belonged to the Ottoman Empire, but which had dissolved at the end of the First World War, giving rise to new states, such as Lebanon in 1920, so named after the mountain range traversing the country (cf. Fieldhouse 2008).

Additionally, and connected with the latter point of the state creation from outside by France, it is valuable to know that Lebanon, with its small size of 10,452 square kilometres, officially recognises 18 different religious groups, which not only gives an impression of the religious and consequently cultural diversity within the country, but also of the difficulty in satisfying and reconciling all these sects with their different worldviews and claims (cf. Henley 2016: 3ff.). As there is no current census, the distribution of religious communities can only be estimated. Almost 60 % of the population are Muslim (mainly Shiites and Sunnis, about 30 % each), about 20 % are Christian Maronites, almost 10 % belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, about 5 % are

Catholic, Protestant and Armenian Christians, and 5 % are Druze (cf. Haddad 2020: 3; cf. Minority rights Group International n.d.; cf. Wimmen 2016). That said, the large and prolonged presence of refugees is changing the reality of religious division in favour of the Sunni Muslim population (cf. Haddad 2020: 3).

The tensions between the religious groups of Christians and Muslims - or more precisely: the political interests of those -, led to a civil war that shook the country for 15 years, from 1975 to 1990, and not only claimed 100,000 lives, but also greatly deteriorated the country's economic status (cf. Gaub 2015). Lebanon plunged into an economic depression, the Lebanese pound depreciated extremely and many people consequently fell into poverty and/or left their country of origin in search of a better life (cf. Saidi 1986). In fact, the Lebanese diaspora, meaning Lebanese people living abroad, is huge: an estimated number of 8 to 14 million Lebanese live outside their country, of which solely between an estimated 7 and 10 million already in Brazil (cf. Jbeili 2020; cf. Bercito 2021). The diaspora is thus of utmost significance for the local economy, as an estimated 15 to 20 percent of the gross national product is attributable to remittances, and most Lebanese rely on remittances to cover healthcare or education expenses (cf. Jbeili 2020; cf. UNESCWA 2016: 12).

Yet to view Lebanon solely as a country with a history of civil war, religious, political and economic tensions, and an increased influx of refugees would not do justice to this beautiful, fascinating, and culturally rich land. Like the other Levantine states of Israel, Palestine, Syria and Jordan, the country lies at the heart of what is called the birthplace of civilisation, given the emergence of the first non-nomadic settlements. By 1500 BC, Phoenicia had emerged on the territory of present-day Lebanon, a people who, among other things, developed a script forming the basis of the Greek alphabet, and, indeed, Lebanon has been home to important cultures in general. Before the outbreak of the civil war, Lebanon on the global stage was considered a showcase of the open Arab world and a point of connection between the Occident and the Orient. In the years following the civil war, the country recovered from the economic depression and the economy flourished greatly, earning the country the nickname 'Switzerland of the Middle East', with the capital Beirut considered the 'Paris of the Middle East' due to its French architecture, liberal image and internationally renowned cuisine (cf. Totten 2013).

Today, however, Lebanon is in a state of crisis, or rather is facing many overlapping and interrelated challenges, which will be examined in more detail below. The challenges listed do not claim to be exhaustive, but rather serve to provide a context for this work.

## **2. Framing the issue: Lebanon- a country facing diverse challenges**

### **2.1.Introduction**

The reason why the following chapters talk about ‘challenges’ is that I deliberately wanted to reduce the use of terms with negative connotations such as ‘problems’ or ‘crises’ and replace the passive attitude or even resignation that terms like ‘crises’ evoke or can be associated with by adopting an approach of proactivity and optimism and, above all, by looking for practical solutions (cf. Mejia 2022).

The challenges described below are largely classified according to their social, political and economic nature and will be examined in more detail in the following. Furthermore, other issues are considered that put the country in a heightened state of vulnerability with a particular focus on food and nutrition insecurity.

### **2.2.Economic challenges**

Admittedly, speaking of ‘challenges’ instead of ‘crisis’ becomes a challenge itself when we look at Lebanon's financial and economic struggles. For nearly four years now, since October 2019, the country has been in a situation of great financial and economic difficulty, compounded by the explosion of the port in Beirut in 2020, the economic impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and resulting in the largest economic recession after the end of the civil war (cf. World Bank 2022; cf. WFP Lebanon 2022).

The economic crisis is most evident in the drastic decline in gross domestic product (GDP), which measures the monetary value of final products and services that a country generates annually (cf. Callen 2012: 14). The GDP in nominal terms has fallen from almost USD 51.7 billion in 2019 to an estimated US\$23.1 billion in 2021 (cf. World Bank 2022). In its March 2023 forecast, the Institute of International Finance, comprising

around 400 financial firms and banks globally, projects a further decline in GDP of around 7%, a higher rate than the 6.5% in the previous year. This would translate into a decline in nominal GDP from \$51.7 billion in 2019 to \$14.8 billion by the end of 2023 (cf. OLG & Economic Service 2023).

The prolonged economic contraction has led to a significant decline in disposable income. GDP per capita fell by 36.5% between 2019 and 2021 a phenomenon that is normally associated with situations of war or conflict (cf. World Bank 2022, cf. World Bank 2021: xiii). Therefore, Lebanon was downgraded from an upper middle-income country to a lower middle-income country by the World Bank in July 2022 (cf. World Bank 2022).

The country is also struggling with a strong devaluation of the national currency, the Lebanese Pound (LBP). Since the collapse of the financial markets, the LBP has lost 90% of its value (cf. Government of Lebanon and UN 2022: 7). As the country is highly dependent on imported goods, this has led to high inflation, meaning unprecedented price increases for food and other commodities (cf. *ibid.*; cf. WFP Lebanon 2022).

The World Bank also reports the further deterioration of the fiscal distress and the already unsustainable level of public indebtedness (cf. World Bank 2021: 7), large revenue losses (cf. *ibid.*: 10); the immediate halt of capital inflows and the deterioration of the current account (cf. World Bank 2021: 24).

The economic and financial crisis is considered one of the most drastic crises since the beginning of the 20th century and is ranked among the top ten, or even three, most serious crises worldwide since 1900 (cf. World Bank 2021). Therefore, adjustments are more protracted and laborious according to the World Bank, even if appropriate policy measures are taken (cf. *ibid.*: 25). It is hence vital that the protracted nature of the crisis recovery is taken into account when reflecting on appropriate responses and possible solutions which we will come back to in the course of this thesis paper. First, however, the political realm will be dealt with.

### 2.3. Political challenges

To understand the context of Lebanese politics today, it is worth taking a look at the past, at 1943, when Lebanon became a sovereign state with the National Pact (*al-Mithaq al-Watani*), an unwritten agreement that represented a compromise between the main religious groups and still determines Lebanon's political system to this day (cf. Khazen 1991). The confessional division of power stipulates that the president must always be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni and the speaker of parliament a Shia Muslim (cf. *ibid.*: 64). However, this so-called compromise has obvious shortcomings: Firstly, it deepens the already existing divisions between the confessions; secondly, it promotes clientelism; thirdly, the governing parties define themselves more by their religious affiliation than by their political content; and finally, the distribution of power no longer corresponds to the current social structure (cf. Khatib & Wallace 2021).

If one looks at the present political situation in Lebanon against this background, the most striking feature is the vacancy in the presidential office (cf. Keilberth 2023). For months, there has been a vacuum in the presidency, leading to a protracted political stalemate, with Lebanese politicians accused of wilfully prolonging this state of paralysis by ignoring, delaying or stopping any kind of reform (cf. Abi-Nassif 2021; cf. Slim 2021).

Linked to the sectarian government architecture is the feature of the influence of religion in general. It is not only the internal religious factions that cause confusion, but also the influence of external players who interfere in the power game in order to pursue their own interests in the region. For example, the Shiite Muslim group Hezbollah is supported by Iran, the Sunni Future Movement party by Saudi Arabia (cf. Khatib & Wallace 2021). But firstly, there are also alliances between the religious groups - again because of their political interests - such as the alliance between Sunni Muslims and Christian Maronite parties because of their common anti-Syrian agenda; secondly, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, with the exception of Qatar (which together with France are the main strategic forces), have withdrawn their investments and political ambitions in response to the financial and economic backdrop, shifting the power balance in the multifaith state in favour of the Shia Muslims (cf. *ibid.*; cf. Keilberth 2023). The Shiites are politically represented, among others, by Hezbollah (also: Hizballah; Arabic for 'Party of God'), an Islamist grouping divided into a political party and an armed militia,

standing for a revolutionary Shiite and anti-Western outlook, and originating as an activist response to the Israeli invasion in 1982 (cf. Funke n.d.; cf. Khatib & Wallace 2021). Nonetheless, the group is neither limited to the South nor to Shiite Muslims, but is supported by many Lebanese who see it as an effective counter-power to Israel (cf. Khatib & Wallace 2021).

Another commonly cited characteristic of the political landscape in Lebanon is corruption and impunity. For the political parties in power, state institutions are regarded as a source of revenue (cf. Khatib & Wallace 2021). It is asserted that the entire public and private sectors have been divided up by the country's political and economic elites, implying that profits can be drawn from any economic activity, resulting in extreme inequality (it is assumed that the one per cent earns about 25 % of the national income and the poorer 50 per cent receives less than 10 % of the national income) (cf. Assoud 2021:1). Exemplary for corruption are the current investigations in six European countries against Riad Salameh, the long-time head of the central bank for money laundering and corruption embezzlement of allegedly USD 325 billion (cf. Keilberth 2023).

Finally, the lack of trust in government and political institutions in general is worth mentioning. The Arab Barometer 2022, a network for public opinion polls in the MENA region, found that only five per cent of citizens were generally content with the performance of their government and only eight per cent with that of political institutions. These figures can be seen as directly related to the perceived existence of corruption (in fact, 96 % consider corruption to be rampant in the regime) (cf. Arab Barometer XII 2022: 10f.).

All these challenges obviously exacerbate the pervasive severe economic crisis as the current government is not responding adequately to the economic and financial distress and its social consequences.

## **2.4. Other challenges**

Naturally, the list of challenges is not meant to be exhaustive. There are other challenges in Lebanon and in the region, notably its location in a volatile part of the world and its involvement in cross-border tensions, which is why it is difficult to look at Lebanon

separately from its neighbouring countries. Relations with Syria in particular are complex, stemming from a long-shared history as one state, but also from Syrian occupation during the civil war. Today, Lebanese Hezbollah militarily supports Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, while Lebanon and Israel fire missiles at each other, aggravating an already tense relationship based primarily on the struggle for ‘Arab land’, which Hezbollah and other Arab actors see as Israel's basis for denying them the right to exist, and maritime struggles over oil and gas. As mentioned above, other actors such as Iran or the Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar, also play an important role in pursuing their own political and economic power interests and influence the balance of power in the country and in the region.

Another challenge concerns the electricity sector, which is weakening the Lebanese economy, and also associated with the intrinsic corruption of the state-owned electricity producer and distributor *Électricité du Liban* and local suppliers. Meanwhile, electricity access has become an issue of political discourse instead of it being a common good, and in almost all regions of Lebanon, the population suffers from not having electricity for several hours a day (cf. Brun et al. 2021).

Lastly, like almost all parts of the world, Lebanon, too, is confronted with the adverse consequences of climate change, which are likely to worsen in the future and are already evident in the dying of the cedar trees, the country's national symbol. In a region traditionally known as the Fertile Crescent because of its relative accessibility to water and where agriculture is said to have been invented, it is expected that droughts will increase and water resources will become scarcer - increasing the risk of social struggles over access to water<sup>1</sup> and leaving the country's vital agricultural sector vulnerable - and that rising sea levels will threaten the long coastal areas (cf. National Geographic n.d; cf. Brogard 2023; MoE/UNDP/GEF 2015).

---

<sup>1</sup> The example of the linkage between climate change induced environmental conditions and the outbreak and longevity of the Syrian civil shows how the deterioration of environmental conditions can have adverse impacts on the social climate as well. It is now commonly recognized that climate change and related droughts, respectively a major drought in the region from 2006-2010 have led to environmental conditions and rural to urban large-scale migration that exacerbated already dire socioeconomic conditions and contributed to the onset of the civil war in Lebanon's neighboring nation-state (cf. MedGlobal 2022; cf. Karak 2019).



## 2.5.Societal Challenges and Consequences

### 2.5.1. Overview

The Government of Lebanon, in cooperation with the United Nations, states in its Crisis Response Plan for 2022-2023 that 3.2 million people are currently in need. This figure includes 1.5 million displaced Syrians, 29,000 Palestine refugees from Syria, 180,000 Palestine refugees in Lebanon, and 1.5 million vulnerable Lebanese (out of a population of 3.8 million official Lebanese) (cf. Government of Lebanon & UN 2022: 13).

The dire economic situation is affecting the country's employment situation and income levels. Unemployment has worsened sharply since October 2019, and it is estimated that about one in five workers have lost their jobs (cf. World Bank 2021: 6). Figures from the end of 2022 put the current unemployment rate at over 30% (cf. WFP Lebanon 2022: 4). Even before 2019, the employment sector in Lebanon was massively impacted by the increase in the labour force due to the arrival of Syrian refugees, leading to an increase in youth unemployment of around 50% since 2011 (cf. Aljuni & Kawar 2015; cf. UNESCWA 2016: 10). Linked to this, there has been a decrease in income rates and consequently an increase in dependency on external financial support and remittances (cf. WFP Lebanon 2022: 10). In addition to high unemployment, many people, both Lebanese and refugees, are forced to work in poor conditions and informally, caused and exacerbated by the increased demand for low-skilled labour since the arrival of Syrian refugees, leading to a 'downward spiral' as more and more people compete in the labour market (cf. Aljuni & Kawar 2015: 3f.). The high level of informality in the Lebanese labour market, especially in agriculture, construction, transport, postal services, telecommunications and trade is de facto synonymous with the inadequate or non-existent social protection of workers and pensioners. Thus, there is no health insurance, no disability, old-age or death pensions, no unemployment insurance, nor support for the poor, et cetera (cf. *ibid.*: 26ff.).

Moreover, the status of already weak public services will be further weakened, especially electricity and water supply, sanitation and education (cf. World Bank 2021: 41ff.). Without going into detail on any of these sectors, I would like to focus on the consequences for public health. Corriero et al. (2022) speak of "healthcare disintegration"

in relation to the increasing restrictions on access to the public health system for large sections of society (Corriero et al. 2022; cf. WFP Lebanon 2022: 10). Due to supply rationalisation or the impossibility for health workers to reach hospitals due to unprecedented fuel prices, many health facilities are at risk of closing or operating under more difficult conditions. In addition, the government has cut subsidies for medicines, making it difficult for patients to pay for the drugs they need (cf. *ibid.*). The Lebanese healthcare system has already been fragile and fragmented before as healthcare is above all offered by the private sector (cf. Regional Health Systems Observatory - EMRO 2006; cf. Blanchet et al. 2016: 2). About 50% of the population is not covered by any health insurance and is merely eligible for hospital care supported by the Ministry of Public Health while non-urgent care is only offered by either NGOs or private clinics who charge individual payments. With the influx of Syrian refugees, moreover, the health system has been severely strained. (cf. World Bank 2017).

In the following chapter on food insecurity and nutrition, the relationship between food and health will be examined and how, in addition, individual and public health is determined not only by factors such as, *inter alia*, the rationalisation of medical subsidies and increased petrol prices, but also by functioning food systems and other factors related to the issue of food security.

The desolate economic situation, leading to negative coping mechanisms and reduced or no income, as well as the lack of adequate social policies, plunges many people into poverty. It is estimated that more than half of the population lives below the national poverty line and faces increasing difficulties in accessing basic needs due to the unprecedented inflation rate, with more than 60 % of the population using crisis coping mechanisms such as cutting spending on health and education (cf. World Bank 2021: xiii; cf. Government of Lebanon & UN 2022: 7).

Their vulnerable situation makes many people dependent on remittances sent by family friends or family abroad or on cash or in-kind assistance from international organisations such as the UNHCR, various NGOs or sectarian welfare associations – yet, the provision of social goods and services by the latter often goes hand in hand with political motives (cf. cf. WFP Lebanon 2022: 5; cf. Cammett 2014, 2015). The aid by social assistance programmes is crucial for the economic survival and coping of many, however, leads to an increased dependency of the recipients - a critical point to which we

will return in the further course of the work, especially in regard to social assistance provided to the Syrian communities.

As mentioned above, more Lebanese live outside their country of origin than within its borders, namely three times as many or more which presents both opportunities, especially in terms of financial support, and challenges (cf. Hourani 2007). The economic contribution of the diaspora has already been mentioned, which is particularly important given the country's current situation. But it was not only during the civil war that Lebanese left their country: today, too, many young people, especially the well-educated, emigrate, leading to a so-called 'brain drain', i.e. a depletion of human capital and a relative lack of skills (cf. World Bank 2020: 2; cf. *ibid.*: 46; cf. Dibeh et al. 2017). In fact, the current wave of outward migration as a result of the economic meltdown has reached unprecedented post-war levels since 2019 (cf. Mendelek 2022). Although there are no official figures on the profile, nor the precise number of emigrants, the impact in certain sectors is reported to be alarming, most notably in the healthcare sector, where around 40 % of qualified doctors and 30 % of nurses have already departed Lebanon. Additionally, high out-migration has led to a disparity between available jobs and skills, which is exacerbated by the influx of low-skilled foreign workers such as Syrians - of whom more than 50 % are considered low-skilled (cf. ETF 2021: 7).

Other issues that pose social challenges can only be touched upon here, but they affect the general social climate and relate to fundamental human rights. One issue is the lack of independence and the vulnerability of the justice system to political influence, exemplified by the processing of the 2020 port explosion. To date, the government officials responsible, who were aware of the presence of the ammonium nitrate that led to the explosion as revealed by the investigation of official documentation, have not been held accountable, constituting a violation of the international right to life (Article 3 of the UDHR and Article 6 of the ICCPR). Still other problems are alleged abuses and torture by security personnel, which are studiously neglected by legal authorities, the suppression of activists and media workers for criticising the government and exposing evidence of corruption, the persistent gender discrimination - for instance, women are unable to confer citizenship on their children in case of marriage to a foreign man - , gender-based violence and femicides, and lastly, the systematic discriminatory treatment of LGBTQ+ persons

(cf. HRW 2022; cf. ICJ 2022; cf. Freedom House (n.d.); cf. Carrascal 2021: 13; cf. Carrascal 2021).

All the factors above have an impact on the social climate in general: Given that more than half of the population lives below the national poverty line, the social impact of the crisis could lead to a catastrophe at any moment, according to the World Bank (cf. World Bank 2021: xiii). The fact is that Lebanon is a country that already has a history of conflict and civil war behind it, in which there are 18 different religious sects and a diversified society, and which is also located in an already volatile region of the world (see, for example, the current [as of April 2023] cross-border violence between Lebanon and Israel (cf. Al Jazeera 2023, cf. World Bank 2021: xivf.). The economic crisis that Lebanon is facing threatens the country's already fragile social peace with an elevated risk of social and civil turmoil and an exacerbation of adverse relations between different communities, be it Lebanese with different religious and/or political affiliations or between Lebanese residents and refugees. Competition for low-skilled jobs or access to healthcare and electricity and the resulting tensions and polarisations are additionally fuelled and exacerbated by traditional and social media (cf. Government of Lebanon & UN 2022: 11f.).

As already indicated, the following section focuses on food and nutrition insecurity, a further implication of the financial and economic situation coupled with political mismanagement.

## **2.5.2. Food and Nutrition Insecurity**

### **Definition**

It is crucial that we first define the terms food (in)security and food safety and recognise that the concepts are not identical, even though the chapter covers both. Food security is defined as the availability of and access to food for all people, while nutritional security implies the consumption of a wide range of foods that provide the essential nutrients

needed (cf. Venugopal 1999). The reason why this thesis paper is concerned not only with food (in)security but also with nutrition (in)security is because of the interconnectedness of the two concepts, especially in terms of their link to basic human rights. FAO (2001) defines food security as the state “when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”, which is the common global definition of the term based on the 1996 World Food Summit. (cf. World Bank n.d.). However, food security in itself does not impose obligations on stakeholders, nor does it grant entitlements, as the concept has no legal character. It is related to the right to food, and the concept of food sovereignty should, however, be understood separately and rather as a precondition for the right to food, which is considered in more detail in Chapter IV (cf. OHCHR 2010: 4).

Although the FAO concept not only includes the satisfaction of nutritional needs, but also addresses the conditions of safety and nutritional value of the food consumed and makes the connection that nutritious and sufficient food is a prerequisite for a healthy, active life, not all definitions apply this holistic approach. The USAID (n.d.) definition, for example, does not include the term nutrition and therefore focuses more on the quantitative component.

In this paper, it will be referred to both food and nutrition (in)security, understanding food security from a holistic perspective, as in the definition agreed at the World Food Summit in 1996, but adding the term ‘nutrition’ to both avoid confusion and emphasise the importance of the latter.

### **Drivers of Food and Nutrition Insecurity in Lebanon**

Food and nutrition insecurity in Lebanon can be identified as one of the main consequences for society of the challenges summarised above. It is not possible to pinpoint a single problem or challenge that directly or exclusively leads to food and nutrition insecurity, rather it is the combination of several overlapping diverse difficulties, mostly of economic nature.

Among the many factors listed by the WFP Country Office (2022) that interact are, as mentioned above, hyperinflation, i.e. the increase in the price of food (and other

commodities) due to, among other things, the government's removal of subsidies for food, limited employment opportunities and the resulting unemployment of over 30% and the resulting loss of purchasing power, and the simultaneous devaluation of the Lebanese pound.

Due to the resulting precarious financial situation, households are adopting coping strategies in relation to their diet. By the end of 2021, over 90% of households reported using at least one form of food coping strategy: Almost 90% reported buying cheaper or less favoured foods, more than 60% indicated reducing the size of meals, 40% stated to have reduced the number of meals, and more than 60% of parents had foregone meals in order to feed their children. Overall, 57 % of households reported to have experienced serious difficulties in accessing food by the end of 2021 (cf. WFP Lebanon 2022: 19).

Another factor leading to an increased risk of food and nutrition insecurity in Lebanon is the country's generally high dependence on food imports. According to UNESCWA (2016), about 80 % of the annual food needs are imported from abroad, especially foods that the population consumes the most. This high dependence on food supplies from outside the country renders Lebanon susceptible to global crises and price shocks. In the current situation with the war in Ukraine, for example, the price of bread has skyrocketed as around 85% of the wheat is imported from Ukraine and Russia (cf. WFP Lebanon 2022: 4).

Lastly, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) of 2022, a multi-stakeholder analysis tool that determines the state of food insecurity and malnutrition in the world, notes that the value of aid from the third sector and international organisations does not match the identified needs, despite their large presence in the country (cf. IPC Global Partners 2021: 3.; cf. IPC Global Partners 2022).

## **State of Play**

At the time of writing [spring/summer 2023], the latest figures necessarily refer to the data from the end of last year, i.e. December 2022, and to the projections made at that time for the first quarters of this year 2023, which clearly show an unfortunately strongly rising trend in food insecurity (cf. IPC Global Partners 2022).

The IPC analysis illustrates these figures from the end of 2022 and the projection for the beginning of this year by dividing the food insecurity of the Lebanese population and Syrian refugees into five phases, ranging from phase 1 (people enjoying food security) to phase 5 (people in catastrophe/famine) (see Figure 1).

**Purpose:** to guide convergence of evidence by using generally accepted international standards and cut-offs. The classification is intended to guide decision-making aiming at short-term improvements in food security.

Phase name and description	Phase 1 None/Minimal	Phase 2 Stressed	Phase 3 Crisis	Phase 4 Emergency	Phase 5 Catastrophe/ Famine
	Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income.	Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.	Households either: • Have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; or • Are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies.	Households either: • Have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; or • Are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation.	Households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident.  (For Famine Classification, an area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality)
Priority response objectives	Action required to build resilience and for disaster risk reduction	Action required for disaster risk reduction and to protect livelihoods	<b>Urgent action required to:</b> Protect livelihoods and reduce food consumption gaps		
			Save lives and livelihoods	Revert/prevent widespread death and total collapse of livelihoods	

Figure 1 (*The IPC Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table*. IPC Global Partners 2022: 37).

Looking at the available figures from the end of 2022, we find that about 37% of the surveyed population (both Lebanese nationals and Syrian refugees) were categorised as being in Stage 3 (crisis) or Stage 4 (emergency). Converted, 31% or the equivalent of 1.68 million people are in a state of food crisis and as many as 306,000 people (6%) are in the next higher classification, namely food emergency (cf. IPC Global Partners 2022: 1).

Looking at the figures projected for 2023, there is a clear upward trend, as mentioned above. Nearly 2 million people (1.91 million to be precise) - both Lebanese and displaced Syrians - are expected to be in a food crisis, i.e. in an alarming state of acute food insecurity. The number of people in food insecurity is also expected to increase by another percentage point to 354,000 people. When the data is disaggregated and allocated by nationality, it is once again revealed that the vulnerability of Syrian refugees is even greater than that of Lebanese (53% of displaced Syrians are projected to be at stage 3 or higher compared to 38% of Lebanese residents (cf. IPC Global Partners 2022: 1)). The explanation for the increasing trend can be attributed to the persistence of the various crises, especially the economic downturn with the devaluation of the local currency in combination with soaring global prices (cf. *ibid.*: 1).

The rise in food insecurity coincides with a decline in dietary diversity. While Lebanese cuisine is traditionally rich in micronutrients, i.e. in vitamins and minerals,

households have less access to nutrient-rich foods and are replacing traditional diets with Western diets that contain more sugar, energy and saturated fats. Between June 2020 and December 2021, the number of households that were able to eat poultry, meat, fish or eggs at least once a week dropped from 82 to 65 per cent (cf. WFP Lebanon 2022: 3; cf. *ibid.*: 18).

There is major scientific evidence about the nexus between food, respectively nutrition, and health. The multi-partner International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) report (2017) for instance lists unhealthy dietary habits and the inaccessibility to adequate, sufficient and nutritious food as two channels through which (human) health is affected by food systems (cf. IPES-Food 2017: 2)<sup>2</sup>. An unhealthy eating pattern, together with excessive alcohol and tobacco consumption and lack of physical activity, is identified by the WHO (2002; 2004) as one of the most important behavioural risk factors for the development of so-called non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which include, *inter alia*, heart and circulatory diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory conditions and diabetes. In fact, the Global Nutrition Report (2022), a multi-partner initiative of nutrition specialists, has analysed that almost 40 % of adult women and about 30 % of adult men in Lebanon live with obesity due to an inadequate diet, a figure that is about triple the regional average. Furthermore, due to malnutrition, anaemia is widespread, especially among women of childbearing age (28 %), as is the prevalence of low-birth-weight children (9 %). The shortage of monetary resources due to the financial crisis has not only led to greater difficulties in eating adequately and healthily, but also to people, especially those without jobs, resorting to unhelpful coping mechanisms such as tobacco use, which further exacerbates people's health and increases their chance of contracting NCDs (cf. Zablith et al. 2021: 5). Obviously, this situation puts a further burden on the already weak health sector.

---

<sup>2</sup> The three other major ways through which human health is impacted by food systems include the contamination of air, soil or water, e.g. with nitrates; the consumption of unsafe and/or altered, novel foods; and lastly, the exposure to physical and mental health risks of agricultural workers (cf. IPES-Food 2017: 2).



## **2.6. Interim conclusion – the interconnectedness of diverse challenges and the result**

All these interlinked challenges place the country in a state of high vulnerability, which, as we have seen above, is due to various factors (cf. WFP Lebanon 2022). In order to analyse the situation of Syrian refugees and consider gardening as a solution-oriented approach to address the various challenges, it is crucial that we keep in mind the context of the country's current situation. Furthermore, it is important to be aware of the different vulnerabilities of different groups in society. The susceptibility of groups that had already been exposed before the crisis has now been exacerbated. These include women, whose unemployment is rising at a relatively higher rate than men's; the doubling of domestic violence since 2020; the rise in femicide; and the inability of many to access basic hygiene items as their prices have risen by 500% (cf. Slim 2021). In addition, women-headed households, persons with disabilities and large families are at greater risk of poverty and food insecurity (cf. WFP Lebanon 2022).

Another large group that is particularly affected by the manifold challenges are children (cf. UNICEF 2021a). Here, access to education is to be emphasised above all. Figures from 2022 state that more than 700,000 children (out of an estimated total of 1.3 million have dropped out of school (cf. Save the Children 2022; cf. Government of Lebanon and the UN 2022). Moreover, access to schooling is further jeopardised by the imminent removal of subsidies, and as a coping mechanism to deal with the economic situation, children are forced to either switch from private to public schools or even forgo education altogether as food expenses take priority (cf. World Vision Lebanon 2021: 5f.). This is associated with other impacts such as the increase in child labour and child marriage rates (cf. Abouzeid et al. 2021: 4). Children are also particularly vulnerable in terms of health aspects and vulnerability to food and nutrition insecurity (cf. *ibid.*). About one in three children do not receive the basic health care they need, and more than half of children grow up in households that have difficulty providing food for their children and 45% in households that do not have enough water (cf. UNICEF 2021: 5, cf. ACAPS 2022: 1) Finally, children's mental health is also at serious risk, as growing economic insecurity elevates the risk of mental health problems, exposing in particular girls to an increased risk of domestic violence (cf. UNICEF 2021b: 1; cf. Abouzeid et al. 2021: 5).

Likewise, the category of children can be broken down again according to the level of precariousness and it can be clearly discerned that especially children from families with a refugee background are affected (cf. UNICEF 2021). These families are specifically concerned by the overlapping challenges, whether it be households coming from Palestine or from Syria.

For personal reasons, the main focus of this work is on the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, which is why the following part deals with Lebanon as a host country for displaced Syrians, provides legal, political and social background information and, in particular, examines the challenges categorised above specifically for people from Syria.

### **3. Lebanon as a hosting country of Syrian displaced people**

#### **3.1. Overview**

As mentioned above, the Levant country has a population of approximately 5.8 million people, of which 3.8 million are Lebanese nationals, while the other 2 million are composed of refugees or displaced persons living in Lebanon. This number is not only high in absolute terms, but with this large proportion of displaced people in relation to the native population, the country ranks first in the world in terms of refugees per capita. In other words, more than one in four people originally come from a neighbouring country and had to flee due to a war situation and/or fear of persecution (cf. IPC Global Partners 2022: 2). Around 207,700 people originate from Palestine and have fled the protracted struggles for land rights of the Palestinian population on officially Israeli territory and the ongoing violence in the region. The phenomenon of the presence of refugees on Lebanese territory is thus an old one, with almost half of the total 450,000 registered Palestinian refugees in the Middle East living in Lebanon already after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 - referred to by the Palestinian people as the 'Nakba' (catastrophe). However, although the situation is clearly protracted, the Palestinians continue to live in the total of twelve camps or in informal accommodation under often inadequate conditions and without access to health and social services or the labour market, as they are not socially and legally integrated into society (cf. Andersen 2016: 8f.).

Further, there are about 14,800 refugees from other countries as well as an estimated 1.5 million forcibly displaced people coming from neighbouring Syria. (cf. IPC Global Partners 2022: 2; cf. UNHCR 2023). However, this figure must take into account that only slightly more than 800,000 of them are registered with UNHCR, meaning that almost half of them are not officially registered, which weakens their legal status and increases their vulnerability (cf. Government of Lebanon & UN 2022: 5).

This paper focuses on the latter people, who were displaced due to the civil war that began in 2011 when the predominantly Sunni population demanded the ouster of the Alawite (a subset of Shia Islam) President Bashar Al-Assad as part of the so-called Arab Spring. The protests were subsequently violently suppressed and the country descended into a brutal, multi-faceted civil war in which various domestic forces, supported by

diverse external actors, fight each other, resulting in the second deadliest war of the 21st century after the Second Congo War and displacing more than half the people (12 million) from their homes (cf. Cambridge University Press 2020).

### **3.2. Legal situation of forcibly displaced people from Syria in Lebanon**

#### **3.2.1. Definition of terms**

According to UNHCR estimates, more than 117 million people will be forcibly displaced or stateless in 2023, most of them (about 61 million) within their national borders (cf. UNHCR 2022a). Before addressing the legal situation of Syrian refugees specifically in Lebanon, we must first delineate the different categories.

#### **Forcibly displaced person**

Forcibly displaced persons or forced migrants is a widely defined term that refers to all people who have been involuntarily forced to leave their homeland. It is an umbrella term for various forms of forced migration or displacement and includes further subcategories such as refugees and asylum seekers, i.e. people who are seeking international protection from grave human rights breaches or persecution but whose asylum claims are still pending, internally displaced persons (IDPs), i.e. people who are displaced within the national borders of their home country, or other people in need of international protection (cf. Amnesty International n.d.; cf. UNHCR n.d.).

#### **Refugee**

Of the more than 100 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, most are considered internally displaced, nearly 5 million as asylum seekers and over 32 million as refugees, according to figures from mid-2022 (cf. UNHCR 2022b). The latter term refers specifically to those displaced persons who fall within the definition of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees ("1951 Geneva Convention") and its

amendment, the 1967 Protocol. Article 1 (A) (2) of the Convention stipulates the primary and universal definition and states that a refugee is a person who is

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

This legal declaration of a refugee, however, is to be understood as such: as a declaration, meaning that individuals are to be considered refugees until it is demonstrated that they do not fall within the definition of a refugee (Article 1C therefore contains grounds for cessation; Article 1D-F exclusion clauses), in all situations, with particular relevance to situations of emergency. Given that refugee status is legally constitutive, all persons who meet the above definition are legally considered refugees, regardless of whether they have been recognised by UNHCR or any other third party (cf. UNHCR 2019).

## **Migrant**

Lastly, a definition of a migrant shall be provided. Yet, while the term ‘refugee’ is clearly set out by the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the term migrant has no such legal definition. The majority of agencies and organisations apply the concept widely to encompass all people outside their country of origin who fall not under the definition of a refugee or asylum seekers. Motives for migration can range from voluntarily seeking a location for study or work to being compelled to find shelter outside the country of origin due to poverty or political unrest, climate change and natural disasters – coinciding again with the notion of forced migration/displacement (cf. Amnesty International n.d.).

### **3.2.2. Laws and Regulations regarding Syrian displaced people in Lebanon**

Since 2011, when civil unrest intensified and civil war broke out in neighbouring Syria, Lebanon has taken in large numbers of refugees, resulting in Lebanon hosting the most refugees per capita in the world. Yet, to date, Lebanon has not signed the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees ('1951 Geneva Convention') or its 1967 Protocol (cf. Trovato et al. 2020). An article by Janmyr (2017) analyses the reasons for Lebanon's decision not to ratify, citing, among others the government's view that ratification is tantamount to allowing refugees to settle permanently in the country, the benefits to the country of transferring responsibility to outside parties such as UNHCR, the reluctance to use the term 'refugee' due to the principle of 'good neighbourliness' among Arab countries, and finally the unnecessary of ratification due to its voluntary application of the terms set out in the Convention and the fact that the country is already bound by human rights law through having signed other international instruments.

Despite the protracted nature of the Syrian civil war, which has now been ongoing for twelve years, and the fact that Lebanon has taken in thousands of Palestinians, the government has consistently emphasised that it is a transit country and not a country of asylum, as spelled out in the 2003 agreement with UNHCR (cf. Fakroury 2017; cf. Lebanon Support 2020). This is also reflected in the terminology of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), in which the Lebanese government refers to "persons displaced from Syria" (which, depending on the context, can include both Palestine refugees from Syria and Syrian nationals registered and unregistered as refugees), "displaced Syrians", meaning Syrian nationals who include displaced parents from Syria born in Lebanon, and "persons registered as refugees by UNHCR" (Government of Lebanon and UN 2022: 2). The government clearly prefers the formulation 'displaced persons' instead of 'refugees' and legally does not distinguish between refugees and regular migrants and only provides minimal judicial authority to UNHCR's recognition of refugee status, especially since 2015.

Even though the country has not ratified the Convention, it is still bound by the basic notion of non-refoulement, as it is a signatory to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 2008 Convention Against Torture (CAT) and its Protocol (cf. Lebanon Support 2020). Therefore, the country must comply with the principle of non-refoulement, that is with the prohibition against returning displaced persons to a country where their life or freedom is in danger. In addition, Lebanon is a party to the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which contains certain principles and rights that also consider the presence of Syrians in the country as rights, including in terms of decent working conditions (cf. Essex-Lettieri 2017: 19). Other important international conventions ratified by the country contain principles that relate mainly to labour and employment, namely the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the country also acceded to the ILO in 1948 and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Forced and Compulsory Labour, the Employment Discrimination or Discrimination Convention and the two ILO conventions on child labour, the Minimum Age Convention and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (cf. LEADERS 2019: 10).

Apart from the principles enshrined in international treaties, there is no fixed national framework regulating the presence of displaced persons in the country, which is why its measures are defined by *ad hoc* policies. The country has a bilateral economic cooperation agreement with Syria, the Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination Agreement of 1991, which allows for freedom of movement between nationals of the two countries and provides for freedom of work, residence, employment and the pursuit of an economic activity with the aim of establishing a common market (cf. Syrian Lebanese Higher Council 1991). This was of particular importance as many seasonal agricultural workers commuted from neighbouring Syria during the harvest season, as we will see in more detail in Chapter IV, and the Lebanese labour force at the beginning of the millennium was estimated to consist of 20-40% Syrian nationals (cf. Lebanon Support 2016).

Domestic law concerning the presence of Syrians in the country applies to foreigners in general, who are covered by the 1962 Law Regulating the Entry and Residence of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Departure from the Country, Article 26 of which reflects the right to asylum, which is also established by the UDHR, when a person's life or freedom is threatened or when there are political reasons. Article 31 also reflects the principle of non-refoulement, which states that if a political refugee is removed from Lebanon, he or she will not be returned to a country where "his or her life or freedom is threatened". However, Article 17 provides for the possibility of repatriation if the foreigner is considered a threat to public security. Therefore, the law offers only limited protection, as deportation can be justified on the latter ground, especially if the persons lack the necessary documents (cf. Trovato 2020: 9).

Overall, the protection mechanism for displaced Syrians in the country is weak, mainly due to the lack of ratification of the 1951 Geneva Convention, the key document for refugee protection, and the resulting arbitrary policies that are driven by politics rather than law.

### **3.2.3. Challenges faced by Syrian displaced people in Lebanon**

#### **3.2.3.1. Introduction**

The review of literature on the challenges faced by displaced Syrians living in Lebanon draws on a variety of mainly secondary sources that analyse the situation of Syrians in the country. One important source of data is the current VASyr of 2022, published by the Lebanese government in cooperation with UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF, which has been assessing the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon for the past ten years through an analysis of 5,000 randomly selected refugee households in Lebanon. The data clearly shows that the living situation of refugees has deteriorated. 90 % of the households need support to meet their basic needs, resulting in a high dependency on external assistance. These people have been severely affected by the economic and financial crisis in Lebanon, resulting in exacerbated food insecurity. They are forced to live in inadequate shelter in dire conditions and often rely on coping mechanisms. Another important source



of data is the LEADERS 2019 report, an output of a consortium of various humanitarian partners, including Oxfam and Care, led by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and outlining the difficulties of accessing decent work for displaced communities (see LEADERS 2019: 5). The chapter further draws on numerous other sources to paint an overall picture of the situation of Syrian refugees in the country.

In the following, I will address different categories of challenges, which I will divide into legal issues, economic and social challenges, as well as the current state of humanitarian aid and finally food and nutrition insecurity.

### **3.2.3.2. Legal challenges**

As Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention and its Protocol, which form the cornerstone of international refugee law and set out the main protection principles and rights of recognised refugees, forcibly displaced people in this country face a variety of legal issues, which are addressed below.

#### **Legal and civil documentation**

In 2015, in response to the arrival of a major number of Syrians, Lebanon *de facto* closed its borders and introduced new requirements for acquiring residency in Lebanon, and in addition, stopped UNHCR from issuing further residency permits. Under the new policy, there are two primary channels for Syrians to be granted legal residency by the government: one is by way of a valid UNHCR registration certificate (obtained before 2015); the alternative means of residency is through sponsorship by a Lebanese citizen, for which payment must be made every six months and which represents an assumption of responsibility by the Lebanese citizen, who is then not only responsible for the legal status of the refugees, but can also decide on their work permits, access to health care, housing, and so on. This creates a strong power imbalance, as the sponsored refugee is dependent on his sponsor and often has to submit to exploitative conditions in order to maintain his sponsorship and thus his residence. In addition, the residence permit based

on a UNHCR certificate was conditional on a 'pledge not to work', a document certifying that one was not employed. As a result, many working refugees were forced to seek a residence permit by means of sponsorship, after which they were no longer eligible to seek residence based on a UNHCR certificate. Although the ban on work was abolished in mid-2016, many working Syrian refugees keep being denied residence on the basis of UNHCR documentation, turning sponsorship into the only way to obtain legal residence and therefore an entitlement to work (cf. Geha & Talhouk 2018: 2; cf. LEADERS 2019: 21 f.).

However, the refugees have difficulty finding a sponsor. In fact, currently more than 80% of refugees over the age of 15 do not have a valid residence permit, which has serious consequences, such as an elevated risk of being arrested, as well as deported to Syria. The VASyr (2022) speaks of a mere 17 % of Syrians having legal residence, which is the lowest figure recorded so far. In addition, the lack of a valid residence certificate severely restricts their freedom of movement, impedes their access to basic services such as primary health care and generally heightens their vulnerability to abuse and (labour) exploitation, against which they have virtually no legal recourse (cf. Brun & Fakhri 2022; cf. UNHCR 2017: 3; cf. Essex-Lettieri 2017: 7)

Regarding legal registration and documentation, there is another aspect of the lack of legal status that affects the next generation. As displacement now enters its 11th or 12th year for many, another generation is growing up as refugees, yet many of the children born in Lebanon are not fully registered and documented, in violation of the right to legal identity enshrined in the UDHR and ICCPR, as well as the CRC and CEDAW, all of which provide for the right to recognition before the law and the right to birth registration, respectively - all treaties that Lebanon has ratified. Barriers often lie in the cost of fees and transport, lack of knowledge about procedures or lack of support in carrying out registration processes (cf. NRC & UNHCR 2021: 6; cf. *ibid.*: 12 f.).

Lastly, the lack of a valid residence certificate severely restricts the refugees' freedom of movement. Whereas in the past, when Syrians immigrated to Lebanon to work in mostly informal sectors, they were still able to return to their home country, for example to seek medical assistance if needed, today almost all Syrians in Lebanon have become displaced persons, as most fear persecution by the al-Assad regime and thus have neither the possibility to commute between neighbouring countries nor, in the absence of

legal residence status, to travel within Lebanon (cf. LEADERS 2019: 1; cf. Essex-Lettieri et al. 2017: 7).

## **Labour Rights**

Directly related to the previous point, and already mentioned, is the area of labour and employment rights of Syrian refugees, since working without a valid residence permit constitutes a criminal offence which may be punished by detention (cf. LEADERS 2019: 1).

The economic activity of Syrian refugees is effectively under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour, which determines the areas of employment in which Syrian refugees are allowed to work (cf. LEADERS 2019: 1). Due to the residence regulations and the creation of dependency inherent in the sponsorship system, Syrian refugees, whether in the context of the sponsorship system or working without legal residence, are highly susceptible to occupational exploitation, an issue to which we will return in a later chapter (cf. *ibid.*: 22).

Furthermore, most of the economically active refugees (92%) are compelled to seek employment in the informal sector (cf. Essex-Lettieri 2017: 18 f.). Informal work is defined as occupation for which there is no social protection under the NSSF registration (meaning!)<sup>3</sup> and/or no labor law protection (cf. LEADERS 2019: 14 ff.)<sup>4</sup>. In fact, in Lebanon, 92% of work in agriculture and 81% of work in construction are considered informal, two key employment sectors for Syrian refugees. After 2011, the informality rate has risen from around 44 % of work to over 50 % - an increase that translates into lower wages along with poorer working conditions (cf. LEADERS 2019: 9; cf. Essex-Lettieri 2017: 18 f.)

---

<sup>3</sup> The NSSF (National Social Security Fund), Lebanon's public social security institution, covers cases of sickness, maternity leave, education allowances and work accidents, among others. However, about 50 % of the total Lebanese population is not registered under the social security service. It is said that many workers are excluded or unregistered - some willingly, as they refuse to pay the monthly contribution due to perceived mismanagement and corruption of the fund (cf. LEADERS 2019: 15 f.).

<sup>4</sup> The exclusion of agricultural employment, as well as other types of occupation, from protection under labour law is legally established by Article 7 of the Lebanese Labour Code, which applies to both Lebanese and non-Lebanese (cf. LEADERS 2019: 14).

### 3.2.3.3. Economic and societal challenges

#### Poverty

Lebanon's dire economic and financial situation obviously affects the already vulnerable populations, poor Lebanese as well as refugee communities, to a greater extent (cf. Brun et al. 2021: 13). More than 90% of Syrian refugees are reported to have been living below the poverty line in 2022 (cf. Brun & Fakhri 2022), and according to VASyR (2022), more than two-thirds of Syrian refugee households surveyed indicated their inability to afford basic necessities for survival due to a fourfold increase in total expenditure compared to the year before.

Almost all households interviewed as part of the VASyR (2022) reported having to go into debt, mainly to meet basic needs for food and other goods such as medicine and housing. However, refugees' creditworthiness is limited when it comes to borrowing money due to their legal status and the perception that refugees frequently change accommodation. Apart from borrowing, refugees rely on various coping strategies. To meet their food needs, many report reducing both the quantity and quality of food consumed (e.g. buying fewer fresh vegetables and fruits as well as less meat) and cutting back on medicines and education expenses. In the early years of refugee reception, when humanitarian aid was greater, many of the refugees sold their food vouchers, however, now the vouchers are only vended to cover the most urgent needs, as they often constitute the only source of income for food (cf. Kukrety 2016: 13 ff.; cf. VASyR 2022).

Moreover, as poverty is ubiquitous in Lebanese society and thus, so to speak, shared between refugee and host communities, its increase has the potential to foment societal discontent and create inter-community tensions. Poor Lebanese in particular seem to have the impression that Syrians are taking away their jobs, as competition for informal and semi-skilled jobs, which already existed before the arrival of refugees, has been drastically increasing since 2011 (cf. Kukrety 2016: 10).

## **Labour market challenges and access to work**

Even before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war and the resulting influx of refugees, many Syrians came to Lebanon in search of work. It is estimated that between 200,000 and 600,000 migrants from Syria found work in informal sectors without minimum labour standards, such as agriculture, construction or other services, many of them on a seasonal basis (cf. Aljuni & Kawar 2015: 33f.; cf. LEADERS 2019: 8). Currently, the country hosts about 200,000 migrant workers from Asia and Africa who work under the so-called 'kafala system', a sponsorship system outside of national legislation, where the employer has de facto full control over his or her worker, leading to conditions that have been criticised as 'slave-like' and encouraging 'abuse and trafficking' (cf. LEADERS 2019: 8; *ibid.*: 25). The influx of displaced people from Syria has further strained an already fragile labour market that lacks policies and regulations and is fraught with many challenges (cf. LEADERS 2019; cf. Alljuni & Kawar 2015).

Figures from the ILO estimate the Syrian labour force in Lebanon at about 384,000 in 2019, of which less than half (153,000) were employed. It should be noted that two-thirds of the latter work less than 15 days a month, which is one explanation for the inability to meet basic needs solely on salary. Although both the employment rate and the level of income have increased in the last year compared to the previous year, the proportion of refugees working is still only at 33% (cf. VASyR 2022: 71 f.). In terms of wages and working hours, it is reported that employers often have discriminatory policies regarding the implementation of written contracts<sup>5</sup> while systematically earning less - with a significant deterioration for female workers, especially in the agri-food industry, who earn both less than Lebanese and less than their male Syrian counterparts (cf. LEADERS 2019).

Because they do not have a valid legal residence status, forcibly displaced persons are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse in the workplace. If they are not

---

<sup>5</sup> In the 2019 LEADER survey, only 4% of Syrians interviewed reported having a written contract, in contrast to 30% of Lebanese. However, it should be noted that it is common in Lebanon to have contracts in both oral and written form. Vulnerability and insecurity is, nevertheless, obviously greater in the latter, and discriminatory attitudes are evident in the comparison of the two percentages, or in the pay of Syrian workers, as three quarters of respondents reported earning less than the minimum wage in 2019, and working longer hours compared to Lebanese workers (especially in agriculture, where respondents reported sometimes working more than 75 hours a week)

legally allowed to work, they are not only at risk of arrest and detention (and increasingly even expulsion) as unauthorised work amounts to a criminal offence, but they are also without any form of protection in their workplace. This is true not only for people without legal residency, but also for those working under a sponsorship stay, as the unequal power balance leaves the employer with all the power and puts the worker in a position where they have no means of redress for workplace violations, i.e. no access to justice, and are often forced to conform to arbitrarily set conditions in order to maintain their sponsorship (cf. Aljuni & Kawar 2015; cf. LEADERS 2019; cf. Essex-Lettieri 2017: 7). Poor and exploitative working conditions also include child labour, as more than half of the refugees arriving here are under 18 years old, of whom in turn more than half do not attend school and are thus at risk of being sent to work. In particular younger are in danger of going begging or sometimes even pursuing illegal activities such as prostitution (cf. Aljuni & Kawar 2015: 29; cf. VASyR 2022; cf. Brun et al. 2021: 15).

A final point to be mentioned here is the limited access of refugees to language and vocational training as well as to information concerning their employment rights by state actors or NGOs, which further impedes their chances to improve their professional status and exacerbates their status of vulnerability. (cf. Essex-Lettieri 2017: 7; cf. *ibid.*: 14).

### **Health and Access to Medical Services**

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the health needs of refugees and their difficulties in accessing appropriate medical care. In their systematic review, Arnaout et al. (2019) describe the challenge of determining and addressing the health needs of Syrian refugees and the lack of an assessment of their needs. Their work seeks to summarise the health needs of refugees and concludes that the most prevalent conditions concern mental health with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression or other disorders such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, and include non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and communicable diseases (CDs) such as cutaneous leishmaniasis. However, the greatest area of need is in women's health due to the high number of pregnancies and related complications (cf. Arnaout et al. 2019: 2; cf. *ibid.*: 6). As a consequence, the prevalence

of mental health needs means that interventions that take health aspects into account should focus on those, with a particular sensibility on women's needs - an insight that is relevant for the later practice- and solution-oriented part.

But displaced Syrians in Lebanon face obstacles in accessing healthcare services, which in Lebanon are provided by three main actors: the Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs), the Lebanese Ministry of Health (MOPH) and local NGOs. Obstacles to accessing healthcare are summarised by Fawaz (2018) in three categories: monetary, structural, and cognitive barriers. Regarding the first, refugees not only face high transport costs to health facilities, but also high costs for medicines and non-essential treatments, among which dental care is included. Even for refugees registered under UNHCR, health care can be burdensome financially, as the own share for health care provided by NGOs has increased to 25% (from 15%) as one of the consequences of UNHCR funding restrictions by international donors (cf. Blanchet et al. 2016: 2 f.; Kukrety 2016: 13). Structural barriers to health care include distance to facilities or long waiting times, among others, and represent opportunity costs that refugees are reluctant to incur, and cognitive barriers include lack of information on how to use the health system and its accessibility, cultural differences, or even prejudices of health care providers to treat refugees (cf. Arnaout et al. 2019: 7; cf. Blanchet et al. 2016; cf. Fawaz 2018: 4).

In summary, it is clear that health services represent a financial strain for Syrians who in their home country are accustomed to free medical services (cf. Kukrety 2016: 13) - a structural problem for which a de facto solution could be found if the government allowed temporary registration for the vast amount of Syrian health workers who are among the displaced, thereby reducing the stress on an already strained health system and benefiting displaced Syrians and Lebanese host communities alike (cf. Honein-Abou-Haidar et al. 2019).

## **Housing, Land and Property Rights**

UN-Habitat as well as a NRC and UNHCR report of 2022 report about wide Housing, Land and Property Rights (HLP) violations in Lebanon. HLP rights encompass "the right to adequate housing, encompassing the right to security of tenure and protection from

forced eviction; the right to access natural resources, such as land and water; the right to non-discrimination in accessing HLP rights, which entails special protection for the most vulnerable and marginalised persons” (NRC & UNHCR 2021: 7) and refers to article 25 of the UDHR and article 11.1 of the 1966 ICESCR (cf. OHCHR & UN HABITAT 2014).

Since the beginning of the refugees' arrival, the Lebanese government has pursued a ‘no camp policy’, i.e. arguing against the establishment of official refugee camps with the background of the militarisation of Palestinian camps, particularly during the civil war<sup>6</sup>. The consequences of this refusal by the government are that the approximately 1.5 million displaced Syrians are either compelled to stay in ISEs, often built on private and agricultural land in mostly rural areas, or they have to pay for privately provided accommodation in Beirut or other urban settings, where monthly rents have risen almost threefold in 2022 compared to the previous year and where the absence of legal contracts put the tenants in an increased state of insecurity and vulnerability (cf. Brun et al. 2021: 15; cf. Sanyal 2017; cf. VASyR 2022).

It is assessed that more than half of refugee households live in overcrowded shelters whose conditions are under humanitarian standards, in other words, in poor and harsh conditions, especially in winter when temperatures may drop drastically (such as for instance in the Beqaa Valley) (cf. VASyR 2022; UN-Habitat & UNHCR 2018). Furthermore, it is reported that shelters are often demolished, and refugees arbitrarily evicted. The risk of forced evictions and the difficulty of accessing adequate housing is obviously even greater for the large number of Syrians without legal residence status.

An exploratory study by Kikano et al. (2021) on Lebanon's reception policy towards Syrian refugees, based on two qualitative field studies, shows how the Lebanese government's attempt to avoid ghettos through its policy of non-inclusion ultimately led to ghettoisation of spaces, as the lack of state regulation, respectively the regulations of exclusion, resulted in local authority control, especially as refugee settlements are of long-lasting rather than temporary nature.

---

<sup>6</sup> Again, the religious character of the Lebanese political system and regulations is evident: as most Syrians are Sunnis, they were seen as a political threat in the fragile structure of religious power-sharing in the Lebanese political system. The policy of banning camps was not uniformly supported by all political parties. Some parties saw the camps as a solution to a "security threat", while others, such as the Shiite Hezbollah, viewed them as a source of hiding places for Sunni terrorist groups. (cf. Kikano et al. 2021: 430).



## Education

The VASyR figures for 2022 highlight that access to education, both formal and non-formal, remains a major challenge for Syrian forcibly displaced people in Lebanon. Only about half of the children surveyed (aged 3 to 17) reported attending school in the previous school year 2021/2022. The problem is particularly worrying among teenagers, as 70% of youth aged 16-17 reported not attending school. Furthermore, almost 60 % of young people aged 14-24 neither attend school nor receive training or are employed, and of these, 35 % reported never having attended school (cf. VASyR 2022).

Lebanon has ratified several international conventions that provide for mandatory schooling for all children under the age of 15, one of which is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). However, several policies limit this fundamental right to Lebanese citizens only. On the other hand, the country is credited with having undertaken efforts to enhance educational access in the past<sup>7</sup>. However, financial interests of the government (see footnote), inconsistent funding by international donors, a limited budget of Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), insufficient cooperation between public, private, non-governmental and international organisations and generally structural problems in key areas of education such as inadequate payment of teachers<sup>8</sup> all play together and prevent the pure inclusion of refugee children on such a large scale unless structural reforms are initiated (cf. Shuayb et al. 2014: 9 f.; cf. Adelman et al. 16 f.).

On the part of the children and adolescents, the main obstacles to their enrolment in school are mainly economic: costs for transport to school and for learning materials

---

<sup>7</sup> One example is the Reaching All Children in Education (RACE 1) initiative, which was launched in 2014 by the Lebanese government and the MEHE, with the latter leading its development in cooperation with UNICEF and other UN agencies. However, after its launch, MEHE excluded other (mostly non-formal) education programmes and banned NGOs from accessing school facilities, declaring itself the sole supplier of education. The initiative is also heavily criticised for having standardised the separation between Syrian and Lebanese students by introducing second shifts exclusively for non-Lebanese, for excluding arts and physical activities from the curriculum, for being short-term oriented, and for focusing on quantity rather than quality (especially due to the per capita funding received from the international community) (cf. Shuayb 2020: 24 f.).

<sup>8</sup> In fact, Lebanon has been struggling with a major public school teachers' strike that began in January this year [2023], with teachers demanding an increase in pay and an improvement in their working conditions. The strike affected almost one million children nationwide and ended with the teachers receiving a greater salary, but also refusing to hold afternoon classes for the Syrian refugee children as they are expected to do two shifts for the same salary (cf. Save the Children 2023; cf. Homsy 2023)

were mentioned, as was the need to work, the latter cited by 29% in 2022 (cf. UNHCR Lebanon n.d.a). An overview of the NRC report from 2020 states that almost half of the children enrolled in school had to work at some point, more than a third of them in agriculture (cf. NRC 2020: 4). Other barriers include the unwillingness of the educational establishment to register Syrians, gender-specific barriers, such as the fact that girls have to take care of their siblings, the difficulty for children to understand the Lebanese curriculum (mostly for language reasons, as most subjects in Lebanon are taught in English or French), or to feel welcome in class due to discrimination or bullying by teachers and peers (cf. UNHCR Lebanon n.d.a; cf. NRC 2020: 3; cf. Shuayb 2020: 25). Finally, as mentioned above, the freedom of movement of most refugees is severely restricted due to their lack of legal residence status, which is another obstacle to reaching educational institutions without running the risk of passing security checks and being detained (cf. Shuayb 2020: 24).

### **Increasing anti-refugee rhetoric and sentiments, arbitrary detentions, current deportations and irregular migration**

While Lebanon was initially praised for its generous reception of displaced Syrians after 2011/2012, the rhetoric of Lebanese politics and media began to change in 2015/2016 and even to a greater extent during the 2018 parliamentary elections, when refugees were used as scapegoats for increased unemployment and as alleged perpetrators of illness and social instability in an attempt to deflect attention from accusations of corruption and mismanagement by Lebanon's own government. Foreign Minister Gebran Bassi began to publicly campaign for the immediate return of refugees to their home country. While Prime Minister Saad Hariri reaffirmed Lebanon's commitment to the ongoing reception of Syrian refugees and appealed to the international community for financial support, Foreign Minister Bassil ordered a halt to the granting of residence permits by UNHCR staff and accused the refugee agency of preventing the repatriation of Syrians (cf. Geha & Talhouk 2018: 2; cf. Langlois 2022).

In particular, with the economic and financial crisis since 2019, exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, and accompanied by a depreciation of the Lebanese pound and political instability, the hostile atmosphere towards refugees has intensified with pro-Syrian

political parties but also Christian parties adopting a more refugee-adverse rhetoric and calling for increased returns (cf. International Crisis Group 2020). Since April 2022, Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) have started arbitrarily arresting Syrians and deporting them to the Syrian-Lebanese border. The government constantly declares that the deportations only affect those Syrians who are in the country 'illegally' (i.e. do not have a valid residence/work permit or are not registered as refugees with the UNHCR), and further argues that Syria would be a safe country to return to and that the war had ended. As for the first claim, it is contradictory, as Lebanon has not recognised refugee status at all, and as for the second claim that Syria has become a safe country, it is highly doubtful, as Syrian returnees are reportedly mistreated, as well as subjected to persecution, torture and arbitrary detention (cf. Nassar 2023; cf. Geha & Talhouk 2018: 4; cf. Brun & Fakh 2022).

When addressing the issue of refugee hostility and even deportation, one has to look at the political entanglements and the context of the presence of Syrian refugees in the country from a broader perspective. Syria plays an important role in Lebanese history and still does today. Under the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon was included in the same administrative unit, Greater Syria, with its current neighbouring state. Syria also played a leading role during the civil war, occupied the country from 1990 to 2005 and is accused of being responsible for the assassination of prominent politicians, which is why the image of Syria among Lebanese varies greatly between viewing the country as a brother state and sceptically rejecting it. The large number of Syrians in the country therefore strongly polarises society, especially against the background of the sectarian political structure and the omnipresence of religion in the country. Without going too much into international relations here for reasons of space, it should be noted that the government's plan last July to return 15,000 Syrians every month back to Syria must also be seen in this light. Lebanon's Interim Minister for Displaced Persons, Issam Sharafeddine, for example, has clearly been pursuing political interests by drawing up concrete plans with his Syrian colleagues to repatriate Syrians: He is allied with the March 8 Alliance, a political grouping that also includes the Hezbollah party and which clearly holds pro-Syrian stances, having even spoken out against the withdrawal of the Syrian army in 2005 (cf. Geha & Talhouk 2018: 3; cf. Langlois 2022; cf. Brun & Fakh 2022; cf. Diab 2023).

Against this political background, the arbitrary arrests and cases of torture reported by Amnesty International in 2021 should also be seen. The Lebanese General Security Agency is said to be politically allied with Hezbollah and thus to support the Shiite terror regime of Bashar al-Assad and consequently to act as an extended arm of the Syrian regime's interests in the country (cf. Nassar 2023). Hence, the reported cases of arbitrary arrests for alleged terrorism as well as inhumane treatment, denial of access to a fair trial and even torture can be seen as “reproduction of a security and terror regime targeting opponents including anti-Assad Syrian refugees” (Nassar 2023; cf. Amnesty International 2021a).

Currently [at the time of writing in May 2023], arbitrary arrests and deportations of people back to Syria appear to be on the rise. The Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR), a non-profit human rights organisation based in Beirut and Paris, has documented 542 cases of arbitrary arrests in at least 13 raids on refugee shelters in several parts of the country (including Zahlé district in the Bekaa) between the beginning of April and 28 April 2023 alone. In addition, 200 refugees, including women and children, were taken to the Syrian border and handed over to the authorities there. While the government, as mentioned above, asserts that the deportations are exclusively of refugees living illegally in Lebanon, cases of people whose legal papers have merely expired are also reported (cf. ACHR 2023; cf. Marks 2023). The result is the aforementioned restriction of freedom of movement, which is now being taken to extremes, as many refugees fear being arrested and deported at any moment, and people cannot even renew their papers for fear of controls and deportations (cf. Nassar 2023).

Finally, due to the lack of prospects for durable solutions and the fear of being expelled back to Syria, more and more people see no other alternatives than ‘illegal’ boat migration. Just as Lebanese leave the country by sea, UNHCR recorded an increasing number of boat departures from the Lebanese coast in 2022 (4,629 people), a number that almost tripled compared to the previous year. Both Lebanese and Syrians resort to this option, despite it being a dangerous undertaking that exposes people to human rights abuses and the risk of death and violence (cf. UNHCR Lebanon 2022; cf. EEAS 2023).

## **The current state of humanitarian assistance**

It is estimated that only one in three refugees is in employment, and even if a refugee household earns an income through the employment of one or more family members, according to VASyR 2022, the income can only cover about 20% of the minimum basket of expenses for survival. Therefore, humanitarian aid, especially cash-for-food aid from the World Food Programme (WFP), is still the main source of income for most refugees and crucial for their survival (cf. Brun et al. 2021: 15; cf. VASyR 2022).

Social assistance is provided by a variety of actors, led by UN agencies, in close coordination with the Lebanese government through the annual Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), but also by international organisations, NGOs from home and abroad, and faith-based organisations (cf. UNHCR 2022c). In addition, there are external government agencies, such as those of Saudi Arabia or other Gulf states, which also pursue strategic national interests with their aid, but which, as mentioned above, except for Qatar, have recently withdrawn their assistance in Lebanon (cf. Schmelter 2018; cf. Sons & Jalilvand 2021).

While WFP provides monthly cash and food assistance in the form of monthly rechargeable e-cards through a domestic government programme, UNHCR's assistance includes so-called multi-purpose cash assistance for refugees, helping them not only to meet their monthly food needs but also to meet other basic needs such as sanitation, shelter and health care. Increasingly, it is recognised that providing cash both promotes refugees' sense of autonomy and helps strengthen local markets, which is why it is often preferred to in-kind assistance (cf. UNHCR Lebanon n.d.; cf. Campbell 2014: 2; cf. *ibid.*: 5). In addition to the UN agencies, there are, as already mentioned, a number of other actors that provide assistance in various forms, mostly financial. The International Rescue Committee (IRC), for example, links its multi-sector cash programme to the condition of financial literacy training, as it has identified the need for financial training to manage household budgets and empower women as heads of households. It also targets its assistance to refugees and vulnerable populations in the host country alike to reduce the risk of increasing feelings of social injustice and friction between communities (cf. Campbell 2014: 4; cf. *ibid.*: 13).

The latter leads us to the first criticism I would like to raise here. The distribution of social assistance programmes exclusively to Syrian refugee communities could further fuel already existing inter-community tensions, as with the influx after 2011/12 many charities and UN agencies targeted their assistance exclusively to Syrians, ignoring the needs of vulnerable Lebanese communities who had previously benefited from such relief (cf. Kukrety 2016: 12; cf. Cambell 2014: 6).

In terms of funding from the United Nations, a significant shortfall is reported. UNHCR (2022) speaks of a funding gap of 44% of the USD 534.3 million needed for its field operations in 2022. As noted in the LCRP (2022), this gap is most visible at the community level, but also when looking at the share of total expenditure covered by UNHCR's multi-purpose aid together with WFP's food aid, which is only 20% (cf. LCRP 2022: 148 et seq.; cf. VASyR 2022).

Moreover, the way the UN operates is strongly criticised from various sides, especially by local and international civil society actors. First, UN agencies mainly work with the government, which, however, as we have seen above, is criticised for its inherent corruption, mismanagement and the influence of large political interests from other countries in the regions. This became very clear in 2021, when a Thomas Reuters Foundation investigation found that between a third and half of humanitarian financial aid to the country since the post-2019 economic outbreak, money that was actually meant to support displaced Syrians and poor Lebanese households was lost to banks selling local currency at extremely unfavourable rates (see Azhari 2021; see Langlois 2022). Second, several actors, such as the Lebanese NGO network Union of Relief and Development Associations (URDA), criticise the United Nations for not satisfactorily involving local stakeholders and thus for not being sufficiently informed about local needs. Third, and voiced by the same actors, the UN is faulted for its high administrative costs and lengthy bureaucratic procedures, which would render its response ineffective (cf. Schmelter 2017: 17).

The last point of criticism I would like to highlight is the dependency created by the current form of aid to Syrians in the country, especially given the obvious protracted nature of the Syrian crisis. As already mentioned in the context of social assistance to the Lebanese, humanitarian aid in the form of cash or in kind creates a strong relationship of dependency and undermines the refugees' sense of self-reliance and, by extension, their

sense of dignity. This is at odds with the goals of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), an international agreement signed in 2018 by all UN states except the US, which aims to resolve the global refugee crisis through equitable responsibility-sharing, especially as the current situation places a heavy burden on low- and middle-income countries, which host, according to UNHCR, three-quarter of the world's refugee population (cf. UNHCR 2018; Kinsky 2020: 5 ff.; cf. UNHCR 2022d). However, the document is not binding, creating no obligations for signatory states, and is thus dependent on the political will of states and the engagement of civil society actors. The GCR provides tools for this 'sharing of burdens and responsibilities among states', such as the effective funding and use of resources, and the involvement and cooperation with various multi-level stakeholders. It identifies four main objectives, namely “(i) ease pressures on host countries; (ii) enhance refugee self-reliance; (iii) expand access to third country solutions; and (iv) support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity“ (UNHCR 2018: 4).

On reflection, it is clear that the current refugee situation in Lebanon is not at all in line with the GCR's objectives. Not only is the country left alone with the burden of a one-to-four ratio of refugees to the local population, with actors such as the European Commission sending money as short-term humanitarian aid instead of pursuing long-term sustainable solutions such as third-country access in the form of resettlement, but instead of returning in "safety and dignity", people are forcibly displaced from the country and not adequately protected by UNHCR. In addition, the goal of strengthening refugees' self-reliance, in other words: empowering them, falls far short, considering their dependence on humanitarian aid and the fact that, despite their protracted situation as refugees, they have no legal status, no access to basic rights and services and no possibility to shape their own lives.

UNHCR states in its factsheet last year (2022c) that it takes a "whole of society" approach, in line with the GCR principles, and works to ensure that refugee self-reliance is strengthened, and refugee communities are empowered. However, on closer examination of the paragraph, it remains doubtful whether merely consulting affected populations in assessments or establishing Community and Social Development Centres (CDCs and SDCs) to provide psychosocial support and build networks, as well as training volunteers from refugee and host communities, really contribute to this goal to any great extent. In my opinion, UNHCR as well as other UN agencies and institutions are missing

the opportunity to work more effectively towards this goal: Strengthening refugee self-reliance.

#### **3.2.3.4. Food and nutrition insecurity**

As mentioned above, it is mainly displaced Syrians who are food insecure in Lebanon, as shown by the figures from the IPC's 2022 acute food insecurity analysis. Between September and December 2022, more than a third (37%) of the surveyed population, both Lebanese and Syrians, were classified as experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, a figure that was expected to rise to 42% in the first months of 2023. The distribution of the percentage showed that Syrian refugees are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity, as the figure is more than 10 percentage points higher than that of Lebanese residents: while one third, that is 33%, of Lebanese citizens are already affected by malnutrition, the percentage for Syrian refugees is 46%, equivalent to 700,000 people. By 2023, 800,000 Syrian people were expected to be food insecure, representing over 50% of the refugee population. Acute food insecurity was most prevalent in the seven governorates (Akkar, Baalbek, El Hermel, El Koura, Marjaayoun, Tripoli and West Bekaa), where the percentage of people in a state of food crisis (phase 2) or above was between 55 and 60 per cent, and between 5 and 15 per cent were even classified in phase 4 (emergency). Zahlé (the district to which both initiatives presented later in the empirical analysis belong) was the district with the highest number of people classified in phase 3 (crisis), with 110,000 people experiencing food insecurity, followed by Baalbek and Akkar districts.

An even more drastic picture is painted by the 2022 VASyR, which puts the rate of food insecurity among Syrian refugees at 67 per cent, with 61 per cent moderately food insecure and 6 per cent in a state of severe food insecurity. This figure is said to have increased extremely compared to the previous year, when the percentage was estimated at 49 per cent. In terms of districts, the assessment confirms the increased vulnerability of the above districts with the highest levels of food insecurity in Northern Lebanon (72%), Baalbek-El Hermel (62%), Bekaa (62%) and Akkar (59%). Dietary diversity has also decreased compared to the previous year, especially the consumption of protein- and



vitamin A-rich foods. Almost all Syrian refugees (97 %) reported having used coping strategies to meet their food needs, i.e. reducing the number or size of meals eaten daily or consuming less expensive or less preferred foods. 44 per cent of people reported that they had difficulty accessing food due to their economic situation.

The same report also shows how the nutritional status - and in consequence the health status - of Syrians in Lebanon has deteriorated in 2022. Children in particular do not receive the nutrition they need for them to grow. More than half (54%) of children between 6 and 8 months do not receive adequate and sufficient food. An estimated 70-90% of children lack access to nutrient-rich foods such as eggs, vegetables, fruits, etc., which adversely affects their proper development (cf. VaSyR 2022: 15). A 2016 United Nations ESCWA report examining food and nutrition security in Lebanon states that food and nutrition insecurity is associated with micronutrient deficiencies, with displaced Syrians and Palestinians being the most affected. Malnutrition is reflected in an increased incidence of nutrition-related health problems such as obesity and overweight, which tend to go hand in hand with diabetes and other chronic diseases (cf. Halabi & Ghanem 2016: 30).

With more than half of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon affected by food and nutrition insecurity, reliance on external assistance has increased. In-kind or mainly cash-based food aid is primarily provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) through its cash-for-food voucher programme, as written above (cf. UNESCWA 2016: 2). At the same time, however, aid funds have recently decreased, leaving many Syrians without sufficient support to meet their basic needs such as shelter, health, education and, above all, food. UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP therefore plead for more financial support from donors (cf. VaSyR 2022: 17). Apart from the support provided by humanitarian organisations and third sector supporters, it can be said that the overall dependency on external support has obviously increased, as more than three quarters of Syrian refugees in Lebanon live below the poverty line. While many Lebanese are supported by their families abroad, the majority of Syrian refugees are excluded from accessing financial services, which prevents them from managing their financial lives and accessing savings, loans or financial support in the form of remittances from family members or friends (see Altai Consulting 2019: 10).

Obviously, the food and nutrition insecurity, combined with the difficulty of accessing financial resources to cope with this situation, affects not only the general health of refugees, but also their psychological well-being in particular. The lack of financial resources to meet basic needs, particularly in terms of nutrition, can impact on the self-esteem and dignity of some people, especially those who are responsible for providing for their families. Nutrition and mental health have also been shown to be interlinked. Not only do studies show that eating disorders are often related to traumatic experiences in the past, but the relationship also goes the other way, as poor nutrition has a negative impact on mental health, and improving nutrition can help combat mental health issues such as depression and anxiety that many displaced people suffer from (cf. Breland et al. 2018; cf. Firth et al. 2019).

### **3.3. Interim conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to draw an overall picture of the living situation of displaced Syrians in Lebanon. By looking at different categories, I wanted to show the great vulnerability of these people who have had to flee a civil war and face persecution and mistreatment if they return. They are also now, twelve years after the outbreak of civil war in their home country, and perhaps now more than ever, in a state where the vast majority live in poverty and substandard living conditions, face food and nutrition insecurity, hostile rhetoric and social envy due to competition for low-paying jobs and other major livelihood challenges. Particularly vulnerable are youth, large numbers of whom have de facto no future prospects because they have neither employment nor any kind of education, and girls and women, who often rely on undignified, inhumane coping mechanisms. Their legal situation in particular is of concern from a human rights perspective, as the lack of a legal residence or work permit places them in an extremely precarious state where they do not have access to basic rights and are unable to build a life of dignity, but rather are vulnerable to labour exploitation as well as arbitrary detention and increased deportations to Syria.

To date, the international community's response to the Syrian crisis has been a humanitarian one that focuses on short-term aid, placing recipients in a state of victimhood and missing the opportunity to work with development actors to effectively work towards the goal of improving refugees' living standards and strengthening their self-reliance, which is hindered and challenged by Lebanon's unwillingness to integrate displaced Syrians on the ground. The dependence on external aid undermines not only refugees' self-reliance, but more importantly their sense of dignity, and stands in stark contrast to the sustainable solutions and goals envisioned by the Global Compact on Refugees 2018.

The presentation of the challenges in Lebanon in general and for the displaced Syrians in Lebanon in particular, supported by the conceptual choice to preferably use the term 'challenge' rather than exclusively 'crisis', is intended to serve as a starting point for thinking about solutions. The coming chapters of this thesis will explore how the currently prevailing short-term humanitarian response can be expanded to address the long-term nature of the situation of Syrians in the country. The analysis of the challenges faced by displaced Syrians based on the above literature review has shown that we need to think about durable solutions that go beyond humanitarian aid with its short-term vision. Long-term solutions need to be reflected on together with development actors to respond to the likewise long-term nature of the situation.

The inclusion of gardening as one possible option or approach will be explored in the following by first looking at gardening as an activity in general terms based on a further literature review and highlighting its potential for improved holistically considered well-being, then placing this in the context of forced migration, and finally examining two case studies of field efforts where organisations in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon include gardening activities in their work with displaced Syrians who have fled, using qualitative empirical data collection.

## **Chapter III: Gardening in the context of forced displacement**

### **1. Introduction**

As stated, the following chapters are dedicated to exploring and analysing gardening as a tool for integrating displaced people into the host society and as a means of combating the challenges analysed above. To this end, definitions of relevant terms are being provided, establishing a terminological framework. The remainder of the chapter analyses the benefits of gardening for individual, community and environmental health and well-being before finally placing it in the context of forced migration and linking it to international human rights and refugee law in particular.

### **2. Gardening in the context of forced displacement**

#### **2.1. Definitions: Agriculture, Permaculture and Horticulture**

In the following, definitions of the terms agriculture, horticulture and gardening are given with a descending order in terms of operational scope, starting with the term agriculture.

#### **Agriculture**

The term agriculture is derived from the Latin words *ager* (field) and *colo* (to cultivate) and hence refers to the cultivation of the land or field. It encompasses the practice, science or art of tilling the soil, farming and raising cattle, and to some extent also includes the preparation, delivery, sale and promotion of plant and animal produce (cf. Harris & Fuller 2014; cf. Merriam-Webster n.d.a; cf. National Geographic Society 2022).

Agriculture has a long tradition: as early as 11,5000 years ago, people began to grow their own cereals and root vegetables and settled down - their nomadic existence had thereby been rendered obsolete by the cultivation of their own food (cf. National Geographic Society 2022).

While farmers have been traditionally relying on natural fertilisers such as ash or manure, today they mostly apply chemical fertilisers with phosphates or nitrates to

increase crop yields since they were invented at the beginning of the 19th century. This emphasis towards yield increase led to the so-called ‘Green Revolution’, where plants were enhanced through genetic intervention. Today, these genetically modified seeds are sold together with pesticides and chemical fertilisers, leading to an unequal balance of power in favour of giant agribusinesses, creating dependency among farmers, and overall having controversial consequences for both people and the environment (cf. National Geographic 2022; cf. Nicolopoulou-Stamati et al. 2016; cf. Gillmann 2019; cf. Environmental Justice Foundaion 2023;). Accordingly, agriculture today is often further divided into industrial agriculture on the one hand, which is a highly intensive, industrialised way of farming and raising livestock, mostly using chemical products and even genetically modified seeds, and sustainable agriculture or agroecology as an ecological, sustainable way of farming on the other (cf. Fergusson & Lovell 2013). Other subcategories or integral parts of agriculture comprise, among others, arable farming, arboriculture, various forms of livestock farming, such as transhumance, and horticulture (cf. Harris & Fuller 2014).

## **Permaculture**

Permaculture as an approach to agroecology, i.e. as an alternative to modern industrial agriculture or as a more ‘natural’ and traditional way of farming, will be presented separately here. It is a movement and a system of design as well as a philosophical approach rather than a clearly defined term, and can encourage a more holistic and sustainable way of thinking in the search for solutions. Originally, the word is a combination of ‘permanent’ and ‘agriculture’, but was later adapted to encompass further the idea of ‘permanent culture’ to include aspects of human settlement and an approach to how humans can live harmoniously and sustainably with nature by adopting a holistic approach to design. The principles of creative holistic thinking formulated by David Holmgren, who together with Bill Mollison launched the movement in the late 1970s, are based on integration, small and slow solutions, valuing diversity, renewability and regeneration, and finding creative solutions to inevitable change, among others (cf. Fergusson & Lovell 2013; cf. Holmgren 2002).

## **Horticulture and Gardening**

As stated, horticulture is an integral part, a subcategory, of agriculture, deriving from the Latin terms *hortus* (garden) and *colere* (to cultivate). It concerns garden crops, namely vegetables and fruit, but also non-edible plants, such as decorative houseplants and flower or scenery plants. The term describes all types of garden cultivation, but is mostly used when referring to commercially driven plant production (cf. Synge et al. n.d.; cf. Merriam-Webster n.d.b). Thus, in simple words, horticulture simply describes the cultivation of gardens - gardening.

As indicated above, it is known today that the first gardens were established roughly 10,000 years ago (more or less - depending on the source and conceptualisation of the term) in the so-called 'Fertile Crescent'. This area, so named because of its crescent shape, includes present-day southern Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Egypt and parts of Turkey and Iran, and is also known as the 'cradle of civilisation' because of the settlement of the earliest civilisations. Crops such as peas, lentils, wheat and barley or their precursors originate from there (cf. Merriam-Webster 2023; cf. National Geographic Society 2022).

The term garden and its verb form gardening are often used synonymously to horticulture, but in other contexts, respectively with another connotation. A garden is defined as piece of ground close to or attached to one's house where one can grow vegetables, fruits or flowers (cf. Oxford Learner's Dictionaries 2023). Gardens are thus often conceived as private spaces part of one's property, also called 'home gardens'. Home gardens, or food, kitchen or household gardens, are small areas around the house dedicated to growing vegetables, fruit or herbs for domestic use. They are characterised by low capital input and simple technology and can be understood as a complementary system of food production (cf. Suri 2020: 13; Niñez 1984; Hoogerbrugge and Fresco 1993).

But in fact, gardens can also be open to the public, for example as being part of, inter alia, old peoples' homes, hospitals, prisons, or of third sector organisations. Gardens that are collectively cultivated and where social interaction and exchange are at the centre are also referred to as 'community gardens'.

In addition to planting flowers or food, gardens are used as places for meeting, relaxation, exercise, recreation, play and for greening urban spaces (e.g. in the form of rooftop gardens or vertical planting). Gardens thus have multiple functions, and their importance as a source of well-being, as a place to recover from illnesses of a mental and physical nature, for the organic cultivation of vegetables and fruit is increasingly being researched and is furthermore increasingly becoming part of urban planning and sustainability policies (cf. Stuart-Smith 2020).

### **Differentiation of terms**

In summary, the difference between the various terms lies mainly in the size of the farm and the activities covered by the definitions, although the line between the definitions is not drawn very clearly, which is why the various terms are often used interchangeably.

As explained above, agriculture mainly refers to the cultivation and management of fields and includes many different activities from irrigation to supervision and general maintenance to livestock. Therefore, its scope and the activities it encompasses are usually considered to be much larger than those of horticulture and gardening. Unlike farms, gardens tend to be smaller but feature a greater variety and diversity of crops, especially when industrial agriculture is compared to home or community gardens. Even with little capital and labour, gardens can be very productive throughout the entire year, climate permitting, and make an important contribution to the health and livelihoods of households and/or communities, as we will see in the following sections. Depending on the garden, not only food in the form of vegetables and fruit can be grown, but also medicinal herbs, flowers or plants of a spiritual function and, to a lesser extent, livestock, such as chickens. These products and the keeping of animals can not only be useful for personal use in the household or in a small community, but can be further transformed into economic value through the sale and trade of the products, and benefit larger communities likewise. Later on in this work, this economic potential will be further investigated (cf. Landon-Lane 2004).

The following sections and the rest of the thesis will analyse gardening in terms of semi-intensive, small-scale, diverse ecologically sustainable activity for cultivating flowers,

herbs and other plants, and especially fruits and vegetables. I am concerned with the overall health, social and ecological effects of coming into contact with the earth, raising plants, taking care of them and watching them grow, creating green spaces and growing one's own food, which I want to analyse in the refugee context of Syrians in Lebanon and explore its potential.

In the next chapter of the empirical analysis that is oriented towards the local context, I will again refer a lot to agriculture in order to shed light on the region and the grievances of the sector as an occupational area, but I will then distance myself slightly from the term in order to direct the focus away from the economic industrial type of agriculture and animal husbandry, which is oriented towards productivity and the highest possible yield, more towards individual activity and the cultivation of plants exclusively, looking at gardening in its holistic sense. In doing so, I also want to include ecological agriculture, which focuses on the sustainability of the environment, human activity and the ecological space. This will be discussed again in the corresponding chapter.

In this chapter, however, I would like to start by referring to the many advantages of gardening. In the following, these benefits of gardening will be divided into different categories - physiological, nutritional, mental, societal and environmental - before I explain why I consider gardening relevant in the context of displacement and finally link it to international human and refugee rights.

## **2.2. Benefits of gardening**

### **2.2.1. Introduction**

As said, this chapter will deal with the positive effects of gardening on health in its holistic perception, starting with the effects on the physical aspect of health. However, although it was decided to structure this chapter by dividing the benefits into five categories, the benefits are intertwined and difficult to separate and disentangle, which will become clear in several parts. For example, physical health is affected by the balance of nutritional intake, which in turn affects mental well-being, and so on. This is why I speak of 'holistic health', as all aspects of health, including that of the whole community, are interwoven.



The reason for including the environmental aspect is a similar approach: a holistic view of this world in which existences are intertwined and in which humans themselves cannot live healthy lives without taking care of the health of nature. Only today, and especially in the so-called Western modern world, we have distanced ourselves from nature, follow dualistic concepts by placing our existence above others and seem to forget in this frame of thinking of the so-called Anthropocene our dependence on the well-being of the environment. In an interview of 1950, Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist Carl Jung puts it with the following words: “human existence should be rooted in the earth” and says that “every man should have his own plot of land so that the instincts can come to life again” (cf. Purrington 2020).

Based on my personal experience with the positive effects of gardening on my own well-being, I have chosen to first identify theoretically the benefits of gardening as such based on a literature review, and in a later chapter try to put these aspects in the context of forced migration and apply especially to Syrian displaced persons in Lebanon.

In the following, however, the garden will first be considered not only as a place for growing food, but also as a place for relaxation, social encounters, play, recreation or volunteer work, and holistic health benefits will be elaborated.

### **2.2.2 Physical benefits**

The positive effects of gardening on physical health can be explained primarily by contact with green spaces in general. Various studies in several countries around the world demonstrate the benefits that green spaces have on the physical health of people exposed to them (cf. de Vries et al. 2003; cf. Villeneuve et al. 20212; cf. Takano 2020). For example, a study in the Netherlands (de Vries et al. 2003) has shown that increasing the time spent in green spaces by only ten per cent leads to an improvement in health equivalent to a five-year rejuvenation.

Gardening in particular is beneficial for physical health, not only because of the time spent in green space, but also due to the favourable combination of contact with nature, fresh air and sunlight, and the physical activity, which is often accompanied by social interaction, of course, depending on whether the gardening is done in a community or

alone. The sunlight, for example increases vitamin D production and lowers blood pressure (cf. Thompson 2018: 201 f.). Through physical activity, calories are burned and excess weight can be reduced, of course varying with the intensity of the gardening carried out. Further benefits have been demonstrated in a reduction of heart disease, cancer rates or musculoskeletal disorders, which is why gardening is often used to manage illness, as well as in the improvement of concentration and memory, which thus renders it a great activity for older people in particular (cf. Buck 2016: 6 f.; cf. Takano 2020).

When gardening and working with plants is used as a form of holistic therapy, it is referred to as 'green care', 'horticultural therapy' or 'therapeutic gardening'. The concept is by no means new, as the term 'horticultural therapy' was coined as early as 1945 by Richard Wright, who recognised the therapeutic potential of gardening, and in fact gardens have already been an integral part of hospitals for thousands of years (cf. Thompson 2018; cf. Cornille et al. 1987:2; cf. Smidl et al. 2017; cf. Bailey 2017). Not only affecting the body, but also the mind or mental health, which we will discuss later, therapeutic gardening is used in hospitals, prisons, hospices, homes for the elderly or for the disabled, or for the treatment of substance abuse, among other places (cf. Thompson 2018; cf. Cornille et al. 1987; cf. Stuart-Smith 2020).

A comprehensive systematic literature review by Howarth et al. (2020) of nearly 9000 documents, including 77 studies, demonstrates the benefits of gardening for human health and highlights the need for greater inclusion of therapeutic gardening in 'social prescribing', i.e. social non-medical medicine for people with long-term conditions, whether physical or mental. Another synthesis by Soga et al. (2017) of 22 quantitatively evaluated studies from different parts of the world comes to the same conclusion and recommends that, in view of the ever-increasing public health costs, the positive effects of gardening should be taken into account by policy makers who should increase the opportunities and motivation for people to engage in gardening activities.

These non-medical interventions, based on the proven link between spending time in green spaces and gardening and consequently increased physical activity and overall improved health, are also cited by Richard Thompson, former president of the Royal College of Physicians in the UK, as offering potential relief to public health systems. He urges health professionals to include green care as a form of therapy that looks at the whole person as well as health in a holistic way taking into account social, economic and

environmental factors and moving away from simply describing pharmaceutical drugs, which are often expensive and not always proven to be effective. The integration of gardening and the use of green spaces as alternative forms of therapy are therefore means of improving the health of a household or community that are less expensive and can be implemented almost everywhere (cf. Thompson 2018).

Finally, gardens can be used not only for growing food but also for growing plants for medicinal purposes, thus providing a natural and indigenous alternative to the pharmaceutical medicines that are frequently prescribed and used today. Especially in so-called 'developing countries', home remedies for the treatment of various types of diseases and for the overall enhancement of health are made from a variety of herbs that are often pejoratively seen as weeds in industrial agriculture and destroyed by aggressive chemical herbicides cf. Galhena et al. 2013: 3f.; cf. Rao et al. 2006). But likewise in so-called 'developed countries', as analysed by Santos et al. (2022), home gardens can serve to plant various crops out of which home remedies for certain illnesses can be created which decreases a household's dependency from the medical sector and market availability.

### **2.2.3. Nutritional benefits**

Directly related to physical health, but also to other aspects of health, are a person's diet and in general their lifestyle. In the previous subchapter it was already stated that gardening increases a gardener's physical activity, positively affecting their physical health, and that generally spending time in a natural environment also has a positive effect on, for example, vitamin D levels. This part is about the contribution of gardening to individual or community nourishment.

WHO links inadequate nutrition and access to food equally to underweight and obesity, as well as an increase in under-five mortality rates (cf. WHO 2021a). Other non-communicable diseases (NCDs), so-called 'lifestyle diseases', comprise, among others, stroke, diabetes, certain types of cancer, cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases and are preventable through sufficient physical activity, avoidance of substances and,

above all, an adequate and nutritious diet (cf. Tabish 2017). In poor communities in particular, low-income households show deficits in micronutrients, especially vitamin A, iodine, zinc, iron and calcium (cf. Beal et al. 2017; cf. Burchi et al. 2011). These deficiencies can even lead to death, with in particular vitamin A deficiency being a major risk for children under five and women of reproductive age. Estimates suggest that malnutrition accounts for more than half of the approximately 10 million child deaths worldwide each year (cf. Santos et al. 7 ff.; cf. Stevens et al. 2015; cf. Black et al. 2003). The connection between nutrition and health can also be viewed from the other side: An improved diet has a demonstrably positive effect on the state of health. Studies consistently demonstrate the link between increased vegetable and fruit consumption and improved health status, including milder cardiovascular disease, lower cancer risk, diabetes and obesity (cf. Adebawo et al. 2006; cf. Crowe et al. 2011; cf. Wang et al. 2014; cf. He et al. 2004). While animal foods are a rich source of micronutrients, fruits and vegetables are also not only rich in micronutrients, but are reliably available, especially for poor populations (cf. Mitchell & Hanstad 2004: 4; cf. Talukder et al. 2000, cf. Faber 2010).

Therefore, without further dwelling on the food-health nexus, we want to turn to gardening as a means to grow and harvest one's own food. The focus is hereby on the cultivation of vegetables, fruits and herbs for food production with the possibility of other plants for mere aesthetic reasons (and psychological, as we will see later). The emphasis on vegetarian nutrition is due to my own preferred diet and lifestyle, but is not meant to exclude the possibility of small animal husbandry such as goats for dairy products for example, especially because of the aforementioned richness of micronutrients in animal products, which are crucial for a balanced diet and health. So, when I refer to gardening, I want to apply a broad, holistic concept of gardening as an outdoor activity, either individually in the form of home or in community. The focus is not on the exact composition of the harvested plants and possibly kept animals in order to achieve the best possible nutritional outcome for the consumer of the products, but on gardening as a general means for holistic well-being and its specific potential in the refugee context.

As we have seen in Chapter II with the case study of Lebanon, economic hardship may force people to rely on coping mechanisms regarding their food intake that often translate into a reduction of the numbers of meals, respectively their size, or the choice of

cheaper food, often being of lower nutritional value. Producing their own food year-round may therefore fight food insecurity especially of poorer communities and provide essential nutrients. This has been the conclusion of a large number of mostly qualitative interview-based studies as well as quantitatively analysed syntheses of these (meta-studies), both when analysed at the individual or household level in home garden food production or at the broader community level in community gardening initiatives.

An FAO working paper by Mitchell & Hanstad (2004) explores the benefits of providing small plots of land for home gardens for poor communities to advance the goals of sustainable livelihoods, and in particular emphasises the importance of home gardens for food availability, which is important for household economic stability, especially in times of stress, such as in Uganda during the civil war, where urban agriculture contributed greatly to ensuring the country's food security (cf. *ibid.*: 6f.). Another FAO paper on the evaluation of a field project in Laos, which established over 200 home gardens and four community gardens, also concludes that food consumption and nutritional standards of low-income households in rural areas could be enhanced by the year-round supply of fresh, home-grown produce (cf. Bhattacharjee et al. 2006). Similarly, a literature review by Galhena et al. (2013) emphasises the importance of food production at the local level, especially in home gardens, for building resilience and ensuring food security even in times of stress and a strained food system. Home food production in gardens contributes directly to a household's food security by increasing the accessibility, availability and utilisation of food and by being easily accessible in both rural and urban areas and contributing to a family's continuous caloric supply, i.e. creating a certain independence of external conditions or shocks (obviously, only to a certain extent).

Apart from being seen as a means of ensuring adequate food intake in terms of caloric value, gardening also serves to address malnutrition in terms of the requirements of essential macro- and micronutrients. Suri (2020) therefore refers to 'nutrition gardens' as she finds in her research on gardening in rural India that community and kitchen gardens can serve as a strategy to not only improve food security but also ensure dietary diversity and combat malnutrition. Through the constant supply of vegetables and fruits and the resulting increased consumption, food gardens provide important nutrients that are a sustainable and sufficient way to meet household nutritional needs, especially in poor

households and in rural areas where families are often already engaged in agriculture for a living (cf. *ibid.*: 4).

In contrast, Santos et al. (2022) analyse the potential of home gardens and their contribution to sustainable development in urban areas, and the results are similar. Home gardens contribute to dietary diversity, especially in low-income households, which, as mentioned above, are often deficient in iron, iodine, vitamin A and other nutrients. Especially in remote areas and among low-income families, the use of land around the house for food production increases the consumption of fruits and vegetables, contributes to food security, reduces household dependence on market supply and provides fresh and nutritious produce throughout the year, providing important nutritional supplements (cf. Santos et al.: 7 ff.).

Research on community gardens confirms these findings. A systematic review of the literature on the impact of community gardens on psychosocial and physical health, health behaviours and community outcomes by Hume et al. (2022) found that gardeners consume more fruits and vegetables compared to non-gardeners, contributing positively to their nutritional health.

A variety of case studies from around the world illustrate and substantiate the results. A study from Zimbabwe, for example, demonstrates the effectiveness of food gardens in improving the livelihoods of vulnerable children and providing low-cost vegetables, thereby reducing costs and curbing diet-related diseases (cf. Nyasha et al. 2014). Another study in Central America explores the potential of home gardens to address food insecurity and malnutrition among poor and indigenous communities based on their ancestral heritage of home gardening techniques (cf. Montagnini 2006). Rybak et al. (2018) look at kitchen gardens in Tanzania and present them as a promising way to grow fruits and vegetables with high micronutrient content, especially green leafy vegetables, which are a plant-based source to combat iron and vitamin A deficiency and anemia, particularly common among women smallholder farmers in rural areas of the country (cf. Stuetz et al. 2019).

A Homestead Food Production (EFP) programme in Asia by the NGO Hellen Keller International, that combines encouraging households to plant home gardens with nutrition education, particularly targeting children and mothers due to their increased vulnerability, has also been shown to be effective in increasing the consumption of

vitamin-rich foods and improving dietary diversity (cf. Hellen Keller International n.d.; cf. Talukder et al. 2010). Within the programme, small animals such as chicken were also provided in order to ensure full coverage of vitamin and mineral needs. Therefore, garden initiatives should consider the provision of small animals as the programme's evaluation of results demonstrated a clear alleviation of vitamin A and iron deficiencies of women and children through the consumption of eggs and chicken livers (cf. Talukder et al. 2010).

Studies in India and Cambodia are particularly concerned with the impact on children, as the first years of life are crucial for the development of a person's organs, brain and immune system (cf. Relph 2016) and demonstrate the decrease in malnutrition among children and the improvement in their nutritional quality (cf. TERI 2014; cf. Olney et al. 2009). Not only can an improvement in children's nutritional situation be observed, but when they are involved in planting and harvesting themselves, children show a positive change in behaviour by preferring fruit and vegetables because they establish a connection with the plants, an observation that can be observed in particular when gardening is accompanied by lessons about plants and food (cf. Santos et al. 2022; cf. Buck 2016: 6). School gardens in particular, as a form of community gardening, have a positive impact on children's nutritional and health behaviour by also promoting physical activity (cf. Suri 2020: 5).

As the problem of the use of pesticides in industrial agriculture has already been mentioned above, I would like to raise another aspect. Depending on where they live and a variety of factors, individuals and communities are exposed to pesticide residues in food to a greater or lesser extent<sup>9</sup>. Pesticides not only kill weeds and other organisms, but have also been shown to gradually break down the soil by killing microorganisms in the soil, depleting it of important micronutrients. In addition, pesticide residues are found on food to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the type of food. Growing own food without

---

<sup>9</sup> WHO (2022) acknowledges that especially agricultural workers and/or people living near fields of industrial farming are at higher risk of contamination. In addition, depending on which country one lives in, the government of that country may or may not have signed the 2001 Stockholm Protocol. This is an international treaty that aims to eliminate the use and production of pesticides that do not degrade on food and therefore pose a major risk to human health and have been shown to be carcinogenic (although the adverse health effects of pesticides have also been shown to apply to those pesticides that are not exempted from the Protocol).

or with natural pesticides only therefore also allows for organic, non-chemically treated and nutrient-rich fruit and vegetables.

In summary, home or community gardens are a sustainable and cost-effective means of improving the food security and nutritional status of individuals and communities. Especially among low-income families in remote or rural areas, food security and overall health can be improved by increasing independence from external factors, diversifying and improving diets through increased consumption of fresh and organic foods, thus ensuring the intake of essential nutrients.

A limitation here, however, is the difficulty mentioned by Mitchell & Hanstad (2004), among others, in establishing a general positive link between home gardening and improved nutritional status. Of course, this depends on what is planted and consumed and what other products come from outside the garden. An optimal intervention would therefore be, as in the case of the Tanzanian project, to address specific deficiencies and grow adequate food, possibly in combination with keeping small livestock. This would need to be further analysed and adapted to the context.

In the following, it is turned to another aspect of health, namely psychological wellbeing, and how gardening may impact it.

#### **2.2.4. Psychological/mental benefits**

As far as the psychological effects of gardening are concerned, there is a subjective and an objective component, the former encompassing the perception of individual wellbeing, the latter objectively verifiable effects.

As in the previous chapter, a large body of literature demonstrates general improvements in mental health as a result of gardening (cf. Buck 2016; cf. Clatworthy et al. 2013; cf. Stuart-Smith 2020; cf. Bailey 2017; cf. Hume et al. 2022; cf. Thompson 2018). These improvements are shown in the analysis of various aspects of health in adults with different health conditions who are offered 'green care', i.e. a holistic form of therapy described above that includes community gardening. In a review of ten studies analysing the benefits of community gardening for adults with mental health problems,



Clatworthy et al. (2013) conclude that gardening interventions have been shown to reduce depression, anxiety and stress, which is confirmed by Buck (2016), and also increase alertness, improve perceived emotional well-being and improve overall mental well-being through the combination of outdoor exercise and engaging in a meaningful occupation together with others. They therefore urge health care providers to incorporate gardening into therapeutic interventions, a similar conclusion reached by Thompson (2018) and others. Buck (2016) also lists positive changes for dementia patients where agitation, aggression and other symptoms have been shown to be alleviated (cf. *ibid.*: 7). Likewise, in their systemic literature review, Hume et al. (2022) find that community gardening improves perceived happiness, mental health, quality of life and perceived stress levels.

In her book *The Well-Gardened Mind* (2020), psychiatrist and psychotherapist Stuart-Smith explores in an almost philosophical way how caring for plants is linked to caring for oneself. She speaks of "garden catharsis" (*ibid.*: 9) to refer to the combined feeling of exhaustion and simultaneous renewal and revitalisation after working in the garden, "as if you have worked on yourself in the process" (*ibid.* ), noting that through gardening one establishes a relationship with one's 'inner world' and likewise with the plants, the soil, the environment, and thereby helps to cultivate an attitude of care towards ourselves and the world and to (re)value life in general (cf. *ibid.*: 10; cf. *ibid.*: 31; cf. *ibid.*: 62 ). In her opinion, just as we cultivate a garden, the self or soul must also be gardened to ultimately enhance psychological wellbeing and raise self-esteem, referring to therapeutic gardening, hence the title of the book (cf. *ibid.*: 33 ff.; cf. *ibid.*: 40; cf. 45 ff.).

According to her research and experience, gardening offers an "*in-between* space" (*ibid.*: 16), a kind of protective space, between the real world and our inner world, which, due to its protective character, helps to increase mental space and calm the mind so that one can perceive and hear inner thoughts and feelings (cf. *ibid.*: 13). Furthermore, gardening includes a playful component and enables daydreaming as well as the possibility to be creative, all factors that contribute positively to mental health (cf. *ibid.*: 17 ff.).

What one sees when surrounded by green spaces and blossoming flowers also has a great influence on one's emotional well-being. Of course, it again depends heavily on the context, which can strengthen or weaken this effect, but gardening can offer an

abundance of beauty, in which some may even see a spiritual element (cf. *ibid.*: 84 ff.) and which calms and invigorates in equal measure (cf. *ibid.*: 135 ff.). Especially when growing flowers, people report that they feel gratitude and a sense of home. In addition to their aesthetics, flowers also have mood-influencing scents that trigger hormonal reactions in the body (cf. *ibid.*: 143)<sup>10</sup>.

### **2.2.5. Community and societal benefits**

Gardens, and especially community gardens, are places of encounter. When gardening, people not only take care of the plants, but also develop an attitude of caring for each other, as Stuart Smith describes (cf. Stuart-Smith 2020: 62). Social interactions take place in and around gardens, which can reinforce or create relationships and connect individuals in a community more closely. In this way, gardens can serve as a means of social integration, strengthening social cohesion and building social capital. Thus, by engaging in a meaningful activity together in a setting of green surroundings, people are not only engaging in an activity that is healthy for their own bodies, minds and spirits, but also for the health of the community as a whole. (cf. Galhena et al. 2013: 7; cf. Stuart-Smith 2020: 55 ff.; cf. *ibid.*: 247) This is also supported by a systematic review by Hume et al. (2022) of 53 studies on the effects of community gardens on personal and community health. The FAO project in Laos also shows how gardeners and farmers share knowledge through communal gardening, resulting in mutual learning and sharing of skills, which ultimately promotes and strengthens social bonds between neighbourhoods and within communities (cf. Bhattacharjee et al. 2006).

A beautiful example of community gardening, where the social transformation potential of communal gardening becomes very apparent and whose great dimension is documented by various scientists, is the social movement Incredible Edible (IE), which emerged in Todmorden in the North West of England in 2007. In response to the global challenges of climate change and food instability, and the observation of an increasing alienation of people from each other and from their environment, this project was

---

<sup>10</sup> Flower scents have been shown to influence our mood, e.g. lavender has a calming effect and increases serotonin; rosemary is energising and increases dopamine; lemon stimulates and frees serotonin and dopamine, and rose helps to reduce the stress hormone adrenaline (cf. Stuart-Smith 2020: 143).

launched by some committed citizens who, based on an approach of endogeneity, i.e. of collective grassroots activism (as opposed to exogenous aid and dependency), decided to shape the future of the city by growing food on all existing public land, freely available to all (cf. Morley et al. 2017: 7; cf. Clarke 2010: 70; cf. Morley et al. 2017: 9). The model

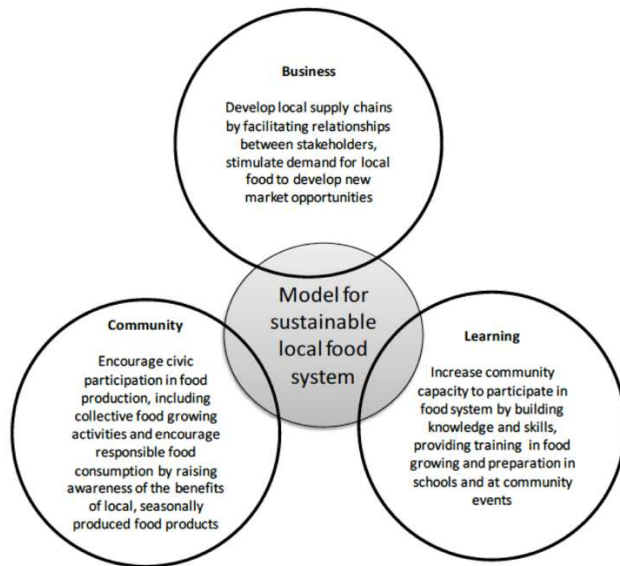


Figure 2 (cf. Farrier et al. 2019: 4).

is based on a whole-of-society approach with three key elements or stakeholder groups, namely the wider community, the business sector and the schools and educational institutions where knowledge transfer is stimulated (cf. Morley et al. 2017: 8; cf. Clarke 2010: 70 ff.) (see

Figure 2). This bottom-up approach, which ensures the involvement of the whole society, where people across the city voluntarily participate in the gardening activity and all can enjoy the harvest based on the idea of community, is very positively evaluated as it promotes eye-level interaction, collective belonging and cohesion (cf. Mizrahi 2021: 59; cf. Morley et al. 2017: 6; cf. Morley et al. 2017: 10). Furthermore, it has been shown to create a sense of place-based or local identity, as people have created their own solution to perceived global problems (cf. Mizrahi 2021: 58), and raise awareness of the value of buying local products and of local and global sustainability issues (cf. Morley et al. 2017: 25; cf. Farrier et al. 2019). The latter, aided by the involvement of local businesses, has led people to choose local produce when shopping, whether home-grown or from the community, thus supporting local and organic food producers (cf. Paul 2013: 339; cf. Morley et al. 2017: 25).

However, the impact of communal gardening on society has not yet been fully explored and requires further research (cf. Galhena et al. 2013: 7).

In addition, horticulture offers great economic potential that can help poor and/or low-income communities in particular to make a living, as shown for example in the FAO study by Mitchell & Hanstad (2004). Home gardens can improve the financial situation of households in several ways. For example, the household can sell the goods grown in the garden, animal products from livestock or other goods such as wood (cf. *ibid.*: 8; cf. Hoogerbrugge & Fresco 1993). Apart from selling the produce, growing it frees up the household budget for other purchases and expenses, and in fact it is more economical to grow food oneself than to buy it (cf. Mitchell & Hanstad 2004: 9; cf. Santos et al. 2022: 8), which is particularly striking when one considers the coping mechanisms that many low-income families rely on to meet their food needs. This is not only true for food consumption alone, but in combination with an adequate intake of macro- and micronutrients and the possibility to create homemade remedies may help to prevent expensive medical expenses (cf. Nguyen et al. 2016: 5). Several case studies re-emphasise the potential of gardening to improve the income and overall financial situation of households and ultimately to improve living conditions. For instance, Hellen Keller International's HFP programme, mentioned above, has been effective in improving household income through the sale of produce grown in the garden (cf. Talukder 2010).

Another point beyond this is that gardening has the cultural potential to preserve indigenous knowledge. Home and community gardens reflect indigenous cultivation methods and traditions, for example through farming practices and the choice of plants sown and grown. This knowledge about plants, their cultivation and their use, e.g. in traditional remedies, can not only be preserved but also passed on to future generations (cf. Soemarwoto 1987; cf. Trinh et al. 2003).

Different groups in society benefit from gardening in different ways: it has already been shown above that gardening initiatives are often particularly targeted at children, as the impact of nutrition in the first years of life is particularly important and gardening has been shown to have a positive impact on children's diet and nutritional needs, as well as on their behaviour in terms of food preferences. In the context of school or educational community gardens, gardening can be linked to a pedagogical goal: the teaching of knowledge about food and its origins, about nutrition, about plants and the environment, and about the cultivation of crops (cf. Buck 2016: 6). The learning component of gardening does not only apply to children, yet the increase in knowledge is particularly

visible among children, an observation that has also been made within the IE movement, where schools are actively involved in the project by offering training on growing and preparing food in schools (cf. Morley et al. 2017: 25 ff.; cf. Mizrahi 2021: 62 f.).

Moreover, the education aspect does not only concern children. Education and training opportunities can be offered to young people, the wider community and marginalised groups. This is done by IE, as learning is one of the three main pillars of the IE model for a sustainable food system. In addition to training in gardening, the organisations often offer training on nutrition to increase the impact of the interventions. A great potential of gardening lies in the opportunities it offers for professional development, as gardening is often linked to vocational training, which often includes training on financial skills and entrepreneurship. This particularly benefits young people in improving their job prospects, promotes local entrepreneurship and economic development in rural areas, and not only empowers people to broaden their job prospects, but also encourages them to start their own businesses (cf. Buck 2016).

Gender considerations are another aspect, as gardening initiatives have the potential to improve the status of women in society. The role of women in gardening and agriculture on a larger scale is of course culture-dependent. In terms of tending kitchen gardens, the activity is often carried out by women, and it has been shown that in this case, household nutrition can be improved (cf. Mitchell & Hanstad 2004; cf. Galhena et al. 2013; cf. Nguyen et al. 2016). Two Indian studies have shown that women can be empowered through kitchen garden programmes by strengthening their role as breadwinners and providers for the family, increasing their participation and empowering them economically (cf. ICAR-IIHR n.d.; Tandel et al. 2015). The upgrading of women's social status was also evidenced by the literature review by Galhena et al. (2013) and a study by Nguyen et al. (2016), which showed that women's responsibility for feeding the family ultimately upgrades their life portfolio and increases their self-confidence (cf. *ibid.*: 6).

As mentioned above, gardening is also, and especially, good for older people, in particular because of the positive effects on mental health and the proven prevention of dementia (cf. Buck 2016: 28). Studies show how valuable it is to be in nature and to engage in a shared meaningful activity with others and how this gives meaning to the lives of older people. Apart from the self-perceived mental health benefits, people also

report that they are motivated to garden by growing food, being surrounded by beauty, learning and connecting with each other, and taking responsibility (cf. Wright & Wadsworth 2014; cf. Wang & Glicksman 2013).

A final aspect concerns gardening in the context of war. There are therapeutic gardening initiatives, especially for former prisoners of war and war veterans, as well as gardens in war zones. The psychological impact of gardening makes this activity particularly useful for traumatised people who have been involved in war or are still living in large conflict zones. Stuart-Smith (2020) talks about war and gardening being at odds with each other. Both are about territory, but whereas war is about defending and attacking each other with the aim of murder and destruction, gardening is about cultivation and nurturing and contrasts to war's purpose of death, with its aim of creating life and joy. It turns out that green care helps these people to feel pleasure and regain some of their former joy (cf. *ibid.*: 182 ff.).

#### **2.2.6. Environmental benefits**

Moving away from a purely anthropocentric perspective that focuses exclusively on the well-being of the human individual and community, we also want to turn to the environment and consider its health impacts in order to incorporate the ecological perspective into our holistic approach.

As Stuart-Smith (2020) stated, and also shown in the evaluative studies of the IE movement, gardening also cultivates an attitude of care towards the wider environment, or builds a relationship with plants and nature in general (cf. Stuart-Smith 2020: 10; cf. *ibid.*: 31).

Gardening also helps to maintain or increase local biodiversity by growing a wide variety of local crops (cf. Galhena et al. 2013: 4; cf. Mitchell & Hanstad 2004: 12).

The abundance of plant species additionally provides a haven for insects, which are known to be at increased risk of extinction. Therefore, the choice of native, indigenous plants is also considered essential, according to Goulson (2019), who explains in his book *The Garden Jungle: or Gardening to Save the Planet* how the choice of plants affects which insects settle on them and how non-native, exotic plants are highly dangerous from

an ecological point of view, as these species become invasive and harmful to the surrounding native vegetation (cf. *ibid.*: 8; cf. *ibid.*: 12).

With regard to the conservation or promotion of local biodiversity, an ecological way of horticulture or agriculture, i.e. not using or reducing the use of pesticides or using purely organic pesticides, has a positive effect on biodiversity, as chemical pesticides have been shown not only to harm human health, but also be responsible for the global loss of biodiversity (cf. Environmental Justice Foundation 2023).

Finally, mention should be made of soil conservation, recycling water and waste nutrients, reducing flood risk and mitigating or combating climate change and pollution. This paper will not focus on these aspects, but it is evident that plants, especially trees, combat air pollution by removing large amounts of toxins from the air (cf. Mitchell & Hanstad 2004: 13; cf. Thompson 2018: 203).

### **2.2.7. Further benefits**

My final comment concerns a political-sociological component of gardening. After reviewing the existing literature, it became clear to me that there is a power component to gardening. This was evident in the literature that points to the empowerment potential of gardening for women by facilitating their status in the family and ultimately improving their economic and social status.

At the level of the community as a whole, there is the potential for gardening to help empower the community by growing its own food, thereby enhancing its food security and sovereignty, increasing its resilience to external shocks and crises and its independence, and ultimately improving its livelihood. The example of IE shows the inherent activism, also because the movement started, among other things, with guerrilla gardening, meaning the gardeners had no legal right to plant in certain areas (cf. Clarke 2010; cf. Mizrahi 2021).

Besides increasing independence from external factors such as economic and food crises, growing one's own produce increases autonomy from modern industrial agriculture and allows for unmodified, organic food.

### 2.3. Interim conclusion

A comprehensive review of a wide range of studies, including meta-studies, on the effects of gardening in a natural environment has enabled a multitude of benefits to be analysed that address the intertwined aspects of health, including those of the social and ecological environment. Gardens, whether in the form of individual household/kitchen gardens or cultivated as a larger community, offer a variety of activities and opportunities that go far beyond organic food provision to include therapeutic effects, relaxation and spiritual practices, the promotion of social cohesion and the possibility of inclusion in education and training, the perpetuation of indigenous knowledge and practices, the creation of ties to the land, to nature in general and to other beings, the possibility of economic profit and earning a living, and the empowerment of individuals and communities, and many others of the above.

It should be mentioned, however, that the literature review also revealed limitations. One important point is that location plays a role, which is also mentioned by Santos et al. (2018). Not only does the geographical location of a garden or farm affect the quality of the soil, air and other environmental conditions, which are either beneficial or detrimental to the implementation of cultivation, which can affect the quantity and quality of produce or the success rate, which in turn affects the benefits filtered out. When it comes to growing food, location also plays a role in the garden's location and exposure to pollutants such as pesticides or antibiotics, as well as heavy metals, if the cultivation area is close to fields with industrial agriculture or in areas with high traffic and/or industrial plants that pose health risks to the produce through residues in the air and soil (cf. *ibid.*: 14). Therefore, an analysis of the benefits and risks of cultivation in the respective context is crucial to determine whether gardening can truly be classified as beneficial or whether it may have negative effects on health.

Another point concerns cultivation with the aim of food production. Signer et al. (2018) question whether a clear causal link can be established between gardening and addressing food insecurity, noting that the cost of creating a garden, whether for individual or community purposes, and the efficiency of such efforts need to be taken into account due to the high maintenance and labour involved. To this end, more randomised



and long-term studies should be conducted to demonstrate the link between cause and effect of garden activities.

This section is limited overall by a generalisation of gardening. As stated in the definitions section, the term 'gardening' was chosen to consider it holistically and comprehensively, and to explore it as a tool or way to address the multiple and numerous challenges identified for Syrians in the context of an already fragile country. However, further research would be needed taking into account the exact geographical, but also the social, political, legal and economic conditions of a specific context, as well as a detailed analysis considering the costs, resources, etc. of a specific gardening project. Generalisation is blurring the value of gardening as an activity and that of mere green space surroundings, which is why a better differentiation would be needed.

Finally, proving cause and effect in this area is generally difficult, as most studies rely on the individual's subjective perception of well-being, which can be due to a variety of factors. Most are short-term studies, and long-term studies examining the benefits over a longer period of time are rare. In particular, in the context of forced displacement, there is limited literature and especially few scientific studies examining the long-term effects on holistic well-being and the impact on food supply and security, which is why more research and on-the-ground analysis is needed.

#### **2.4. The relevance of gardening in the context of forced displacement**

Inspired by permaculture as an approach to thinking that seeks sustainable solutions through the application of a creative and holistic approach, I would like to present below, based on further literature review and using examples of existing initiatives and organisations, the relevance of gardening in the context of forced displacement and argue for its consideration in developing solutions to an ever-growing concern of this century. This chapter aims to relate the benefits of gardening outlined above to the situation of many displaced people and the challenges many face.

The first reason for the need to look for sustainable solutions to what is often called the 'refugee crisis', which I argue gardening initiatives to be, is the protracted nature of the

refugee situation and camps, whether in the form of formal or informal settlements. Most camps are used for an average of 17 years, and the average number of years refugees spend in displacement is reported to be around 20 years. The protracted nature of crises and the resulting displacement of many people is being recognised by aid agencies and NGOs, who are beginning to understand the necessity of a strengthened collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, as can also be seen with the *New Way of Working*, a 2017 agreed approach on the World Humanitarian Summit which affirms the need for a joint approach (cf. Millican 2018; cf. OCHA 2017). However, refugee camps are designed and set up as a short-term humanitarian response to a crisis or emergency, rather than as a sustainable, long-term solution, and durable solutions are too often hampered by a lack of political will. Instead of an interim solution, camps become long-term settlements for many people and evolve into 'accidental cities' where new generations grow up, where people build businesses, and which become homes for millions of people worldwide. Tomkins, co-founder of Lemon Tree Trust, et al. (2019) argue that urban agriculture should therefore be integrated as a key response to the design of these settlements to prevent them from turning into unsustainable, slum-like cities (cf. Millican et al. 2018; cf. ECHO 2023; Tomkins et al. 2019).

The integration of gardening initiatives into the overall scheme of thinking about sustainable solutions to the protracted situation of millions of refugees worldwide is evidenced by the benefits of gardening listed above, which are of increased value or significance, particularly for forcibly displaced people. In line with the categories listed above, I would like to list the various benefits following the same order and consider their importance in the context of displacement, starting with the physical and nutritional benefits, moving on to the psychological benefits and ending with the social and environmental benefits. The most valuable and relevant studies for my work on the beneficial effects of gardening activities in refugee contexts and the incorporation of urban agriculture into camps and humanitarian organisations' work relate to the work of the Lemon Tree Trust, a UK and US-based non-profit organisation that has been providing seeds to internally displaced people and refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq since 2015. Lemon Tree Trust supports these forcibly displaced persons to establish community and kitchen gardens with four main purposes: (1) enhancing mental wellbeing

and health; (2) building community and empowering women; (3) bettering the local environment; and (4) facilitating and building autonomy in accessing fresh and healthy food. In addition to establishing small individual or community gardens, the organisation supports the formation of small businesses and women-led gardening and agriculture initiatives (cf. Lemon Tree Trust n.d.; cf. Adam-Bradford et al. 2016: 28 ff.).

When I speak of physical and nutritional benefits, I would like to start by addressing the problem of food insecurity, which, as mentioned earlier, is a major challenge for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Of course, this is not only true for Syrians in Lebanon, but for displaced people in general. In the chapter on food insecurity among the Lebanese population and the particular vulnerability of displaced communities, it was shown that more than two-thirds of displaced Syrians do not receive adequate food and are classified as food insecure by VASyR (2022). This figure is not specific to Lebanon alone, but food insecurity among refugees is a sad reality around the world. In their literature review Nisbet et al. (2022) speak of an estimated 80% of refugees being food insecure. Independent access to fresh and nutritious food is often non-existent and hindered by restrictive measures such as the aforementioned limitations on freedom of movement or the general legal status in countries (such as Lebanon) that deny people access to regular employment and hinder their ability to earn a decent living. Whole generations grow up in camps, and some even spend their entire lives in such settlements, where people are completely dependent on external help, including for food - provided they do receive assistance. Gardening therefore provides independent access to fresh, organic and nutrient-rich food, if it is allowed and the conditions are in place.

Apart from the potential of cultivation to counter food and nutrition insecurity, there are also psychological and societal benefits. The psychological impact of gardening is particularly relevant in the context of displacement, as refugees are in a heightened state of vulnerability and are more susceptible to mental health problems, as previously demonstrated by the prevalence of mental health problems in the medical needs assessment of displaced Syrians in Lebanon. However, the mental health impacts of gardening are broader than just treating mental health problems, but also include ideas of empowerment, increased self-confidence and dignity.

It has been shown above that greening or therapeutic gardening can positively contribute to improving people's mental health status by reducing levels of anxiety, stress and depression, and increasing overall emotional well-being through engaging in meaningful activity and the act of taking care. It has been shown that gardening can help to strengthen people's self-esteem and re-value life. Tending flowers, in particular, contributes positively to people's psychological well-being through their beauty and the sense of home they can evoke. In the article by Millican et al. (2018), interviewees in camps in northern Iraq where Lemon Tree Trust implements gardening projects, confirm these findings and support their relevance in the refugee context. People stated that gardening and the general greening of the compound helped to create a sense of community, as they were involved in the cultivation activities together, helping to create a greener and more beautiful home. They also explained that they would feel a sense of home which was related to their tradition of gardening as part of their culture. For Syrians in particular, gardening is said to be of great importance, as Syrians historically have a deep attachment to the cultivation of gardens, as gardens were used as metaphors for paradise at the time of the 'birth of Islam' in the seventh century AD and play an important role in readings of the Qur'an. In this respect, gardening has a special cultural value for Syrians (cf. Millican et al. 2018: 3 f.). Generally speaking, a cultural value can be identified, as the act of gardening can preserve indigenous knowledge about plants and cultivation and social memories for people who do not know when they will be able to return to their homeland (cf. Tomkins et al. 2019). The feeling of home is also created through a sense of belonging to the new land as well as the wider community, whether among forcibly displaced people or when gardening activities are shared by both the host and refugee communities as a tool for integration into the local host community (Tomkins et al. 2019; Millican et al. 2018; Coelho 2016). Consequently, social inclusion as well as overall societal cohesion can be promoted when refugees, IDPs and host communities are jointly involved in the activities, which is particularly significant considering the potential for social tensions between host and refugee communities (cf. Adam-Bradford et al. 2017: 7).

Another theme that emerged was that of occupation: whether for employment or just for their own pleasure, (community) gardening emphasises the importance of activity. Many displaced people are in a state of limbo where they are forced into inactivity as they

are often not allowed to work or work is not accessible due to legal or practical barriers; refugees are hindered in their freedom of movement and are trapped in a situation where they have to wait for change. However, a garden requires activity in the form of care and attention to the plants, which has a positive effect on mental well-being.

Another article by Coelho (2016) also emphasises the importance of gardens as places of activity and brings in another aspect related to mental health: Gardens are places where the gardener can exercise a form of control, which is particularly important for people whose lives and destinies seem beyond their control. Coelho makes an interesting connection between the situation of refugees in camps and the situation of concentration camp inmates by showing the potential of gardening as a form of coping with violence and as a form of remembering what it means to be human. Gardening, in his opinion, also serves as a form of resistance. During the Nazi era, for example, Korbinian Aigner, a German Catholic priest who opposed the Nazis, tended an apple orchard in the Dachau camp despite the harsh conditions - the same place where today refugees are housed, thereby tying the past crimes of the German state to the current perceived responsibility. The garden so becomes a place of opposition, of resistance, and a symbolic place where people who are turned into imprisoned, dehumanised objects can engage in an activity that restores some sense of humanity, of home and beauty (cf. Coelho 2016; cf. Hardach 2015).

The image of imprisonment is also drawn by Michael Agier, anthropologist and author of the book *Managing the Undesirables: Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Government* (2011) claims that camps nowadays serve as a mechanism “for keeping away the undesirables and foreigners of all kinds- refugees, displaced, ‘rejected’” (Agier 2011: 3f.). Agiers, who had been working in the field of humanitarian aid for several years, is thought-provoking and highly critical of the current humanitarian response to the situation of a growing number of victims of forced displacement who are separated, imprisoned and controlled in an almost totalitarian system and classified as "undesirables". At the time of publication, Agiers speaks of some 50 million refugees worldwide. His critique and urgent appeal to rethink the way the refugee crisis is dealt with in humanitarian terms is even more relevant today as we have reached the number of more than 100 million people forcibly displaced from their homes (cf. UNHCR 2022e). Camps, according to Agiers, are perceived as "heterotopic" (ibid.: 180), as "outsides"

(ibid.) shaped by enclosure and a certain "extraterritoriality", i.e. places where people are excluded both from their home and from the local community space, thereby reminiscent of prisons and where people who are categorised from the outside as "illegals", "detainees", "refugees", etc. are kept separate from society (ibid: 180 ff.). Algiers encourages reflection on the future of humanitarian work and asks the following questions, which also guide this work:

What future are 'emergency' interventions and the spaces they create moving towards? Can other utopias be opposed to that which, paradoxically, is in the process of stifling international solidarity after having wanted to reinvent it? Beyond the end of the camps, will we be able to create the conditions for a reinvention of asylum and refuge, a reinvention of the city and of solidarity? (Algier 2011: 8).

Camps are managed from the top down by humanitarian agencies and camp management, with refugees not being adequately involved in decision-making and shaping their living space. It is therefore crucial to adopt a more inclusive, participatory approach where refugees and the local community can decide on their own living conditions and have power over the space they inhabit (cf. De Leeuw 2021; cf. Jahre et al. 2018; cf. Adjajossou 2015). Through gardening, refugees can reclaim their power and contribute to shaping and co-creating their space through a bottom-up approach in a collective effort. This is what Coelho (2016) means by the idea of gardens as places of control and place-making (ibid.: 261) and Betts et al. (2015) also generally emphasise the importance of bottom-up problem-solving as an opportunity to rethink humanitarian engagement, showing examples of bottom-up refugee innovation in different regions of the world, i.e. a creative way in which refugees deal with challenges and respond in innovative ways. The aspect of power is also interesting in terms of gender issues, as it is mostly women who take the lead in gardening. This was observed in a micro-gardening initiative in the northern part and Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, where FAO implemented a garden wall initiative in 2015 to improve the nutrition of Syrian refugees and host communities, with the result being a perceived improvement in their lives and empowerment of women rather than a mere improvement in their nutrition.

In terms of agency and empowerment, growing food enables a sense of autonomy and independence from food systems and enhances refugees' sense of self-reliance and

dignity. As mentioned earlier, forcibly displaced communities often rely on external assistance, sometimes over a period of several years and even decades. It is therefore of utmost importance to look for sustainable, long-term solutions rather than focusing only on acute assistance.

A report by Adam-Bradford et al. (2016), published by the Lemon Tree Trust on urban agriculture and the greening of refugee shelters, states that their work in Domiz camp in northern Iraq with 40,000 Syrian refugees showed that cultivation goes beyond combating food insecurity through the growing of local, organic food. Rather, flowers or ornamental plants are given the same value as vegetables and fruit, which can be explained by the aforementioned psychological effects of flowers and their beauty on psychological well-being, especially for people with often traumatic backgrounds (cf. Adam-Bradford et al. 2016: 25).

Finally, participants in the gardening activities mentioned a sense of dignity that can be explained by engaging in a meaningful occupation from which even economic benefits can be derived, as well as by the fostered self-esteem and self-confidence that comes with gardening in general (cf. Tomkins et al. 2019: 116 f.)

Lastly, environmental benefits will be considered, referring mainly to an article by Adam-Bradford (2016), a humanitarian geographer, who shows that agroforestry, i.e. planting trees, in and around refugee camps can provide multiple benefits that not only help ease the difficult lives of refugees, but are also of great benefit to the environment, which in turn positively affects people's lives. Trees can transform refugee camps into productive landscapes where the climate can be positively balanced in both cold and hot, dry areas, and soil degradation and erosion can be reversed. In a project in *Nyamure* refugee camp in Rwanda, tree planting was used as a means of reversing environmental degradation due to fuel deforestation, where crop residues were used to meet energy needs, removing organic matter from the soil and making it less fertile. In neighbouring Uganda, where the government's policy on refugees is that refugees own a piece of land on which they can build their own house and garden, the planting of trees was also used to provide fuelwood as an energy source as well as to combat increasing soil erosion due to rain-fed agriculture. In summary, according to the author, agroforestry has the potential to contribute positively to environmental rehabilitation and protection, e.g. in low-lying

areas prone to flooding, it can be used to meet energy needs and to build shelters, and finally, depending on the tree species, it can contribute to food security in the case of fruit trees.

In addition to the planting of trees and the consequent improved microclimate, more generally the volume of wastewater discharged can be reduced, as well as the quantity of waste, since organic residues can be converted into compost, the risk of flooding can be reduced by preserving areas for water infiltration, and territories are better protected from flooding through the creation of buffers in low-lying areas. Other environmental benefits include protection from fires through the cultivation of fire-resistant vegetation and CO<sub>2</sub> reduction through local food production (cf. Milican et al. 2018: 357; cf. Tomkins 2019).

Overall, the greening of official or unofficial refugee settlements and the provision of seeds, seedlings, materials and, if necessary, the necessary know-how offers a sustainable and environmentally friendly, holistic solution that goes beyond a purely humanistic, anthropocentric approach often found in human rights-based approaches (cf. Milican et al. 2018: 2).

### **Economic and Vocational benefits**

Apart from the categories of analysis above, I would like to add another section in order to address the potential of gardening for vocational development and the establishment of a microbusiness.

Gardening has the potential to make refugees less dependent on external aid if they can grow their own food. Given the aforementioned dependency of refugees on in-kind or cash assistance from various agencies or remittances in many countries, and especially given the recent decline in aid provided by the UN, this opportunity offered by gardening is crucial. As mentioned earlier, many refugees rely on coping strategies to meet their basic needs, often affecting children's education, health costs or the quality and quantity of their nutrition. Growing their own organic and healthy crops could reduce overall food expenditure and allow the remaining budget to be spent on education, health



and complementary nutrient-rich foods, contributing to an adequate and balanced diet and reducing the risk of developing diet-related diseases.

A next step towards greater self-reliance and less dependence on external assistance is to link horticulture initiatives with training. Horticulture initiatives in refugee contexts can offer potential for professional development and open up the possibility of economic activity. Training can take different forms, whether it is purely training in growing plants and transforming seeds into an edible crop, or training in financial literacy and entrepreneurship, opening up opportunities to transform private or community gardening into a business where the plants can be sold and/or the harvest processed into other products. The possibilities are abundant - if government policies allow it.

Uganda is often cited as a positive example of public policies that enable refugees to set up small businesses, as the government creates a permissive legal environment that grants refugees both the right to work and the freedom of movement that allows them to engage in entrepreneurship and not only contribute to local markets and a vibrant local economy, but also to have the chance to engage more fully in local society for example by employing personnel from host communities (cf. Betts et al. 2015: 7 ff.). Refugees not only integrate into the local and eventually the international market, but also contribute to the economy of the host country, for example by buying and selling seeds and by providing human capital when refugees train Ugandan nationals, thus fostering an important exchange of goods and skills (cf. Betts et al. 2014: 17 ff.).

The opportunity to turn gardening into an economic asset not only contributes to a higher budget and expanded opportunities for spending on other necessities and goods, but on a personal level can contribute to increased self-esteem and dignity and strengthen communities. If access to land and the possibility of entrepreneurial activity are given, as well as access to technical and financial know-how and the necessary inputs, people can effectively make a living from growing food and develop their own agribusinesses. These small commercial enterprises can again take different formats: within refugee settlements or communities, where produce and/or processed products are sold, or integrated into local host community markets - again, if the policy allows.

One example is Lemon Tree Trust's partner organisation, *Bondeko* Refugee Livelihoods Centre near Kampala in Uganda, where they help refugee women set up small agricultural enterprises. The organisation is refugee-led and serves as an emergency

shelter for refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Rwanda as well as provides coaching in gardening and mushroom cultivation to refugee women in addition to baking and tailoring. It is also worthwhile to mention the linking of the activities with microfinance: through micro-savings and micro-credits, the women can finance and expand their small businesses (cf. Adam-Bradford et al. 2016: 28 ff.). Microfinance is an interesting tool that, when appropriately combined, can help communities that are usually excluded from access to regular financial systems, including refugees, to build entrepreneurial activities and expand their businesses. There are several examples of successful efforts in this regard, and the activities of the *Bondeko* Refugee Livelihoods Centre are just one example.

Bottom-up innovation and innovative entrepreneurship can be seen all over the world, according to Betts et al. (2015), and creative approaches and adaptations to challenges are part of human nature, yet need to be encouraged and enabled by governments and humanitarian actors: Uganda demonstrates the need for an enabling legal environment with the right to work and freedom of movement. For gardening relevant elements, the authors list access to education and skills development, as well as access to banking and finance.

Apart from an increase in self-confidence and self-worth and a contribution to a more dignified life, the training on agricultural skills, eventually combined with entrepreneurial and financial skills, may not only be vital for the current economic situation and improve current economic and mental well-being, but inherits the potential of enabling a future to many that may have lost hope in their future.

### **Connection to international human rights law and the current inclusion in humanitarian interventions**

When we place gardening in the context of displacement into the international human rights framework, we must first look at the core document of international human rights: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948. At the heart of this document are the principles of the inherent dignity of all human beings and the equality of rights or non-discrimination, both stipulated by article 1 and 2. In addition, other

fundamental human rights such as the right to freedom of movement (Art. 13), the right to asylum (Art. 14) and the right to property (Art. 17), the right to work (Art. 23) and the right to an adequate standard of living (Art. 25) are particularly relevant to this work.

Given the non-binding nature of the rights enshrined in the UDHR, they have subsequently been translated into international treaties that transform them into binding obligations for signatory states. The right to freedom of movement, for example, is enshrined in Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, yet with the reservation that it only applies to persons "lawfully within the territory of a state", i.e. not to persons without a residence permit. In its counterpart, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the rights set out in the UDHR are also translated into binding state obligations. Article 6 includes the right to work (Art. 6.1.) and the obligation of signatory states to provide technical and vocational counselling and training programmes (Art. 6.2.), as well as the right to decent conditions of work under Article 7, including fair pay, decent living conditions, healthy and safe working conditions and periods of rest. Article 11 includes the right to an adequate standard of living, which includes "adequate food, clothing and housing and the continuous improvement of living conditions" (Art. 11.1). It also includes the right to be free from hunger (Art. 11.2) and requires states for the implementation of appropriate policies and programmes with the aim to

(a) To improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources;

(b) Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.

(Art. 11.2 a-b)

The subsequent Article 12 is also relevant to this work, as it encompasses the "right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health", including the obligation of States to take measures to ensure the healthy development of the child (12.2.a).

In what follows, I will focus on the right to adequate food, drawing on OHCHR Fact Sheet No. 34, and contextualise gardening as a means of realising this right by growing one's own food. The document reaffirms the enshrinement of the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate food, in the 1948 UDHR, the 1966 ICESCR and the principle of non-discrimination that applies to all people in the right to adequate food and the right to be free from hunger (cf. OHCHR 2010: 1). The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has defined the right to food as follows:

The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.

The right comprises three main elements: (1) availability, in the form of availability of natural resources through food production in the form of cultivation, livestock, etc., or through fishing or other means of obtaining food, as well as availability for sale; (2) accessibility, which requires economic and physical access to food and thus includes eventually a link to social security and wage enabling people to economically be in the situation to access food; (3) adequacy, which means that food must meet nutritional needs. Thus, the right does not only encompass the idea of being free from hunger or the "right to be fed" (OHCHR 2010: 3), but also refers to nutritional requirements, which are discussed several times in this paper. The fact sheet clearly points out that nutrient-poor diets can lead to obesity and the development of health problems. Adequacy includes another sub-element relevant to the topic of this paper: safety with regard to consumption, implying that food must be free from harmful pesticides, hormones and other pollutants from agricultural or industrial processes (cf. *ibid.*: 2 f.).

The dividing line between the concepts of food security and food sovereignty is also drawn, while acknowledging the overlap of the concepts. Food security, already discussed, is seen as a prerequisite for the fulfilment of the right to adequate food. Moreover, the right to adequate food is an international right that imposes obligations on signatory states and that people can claim, while the former is a non-legal concept that imposes neither obligations nor entitlements.

Another related concept is food sovereignty, which envisages that people themselves can decide how food is produced and consumed, including the extent to which they are self-sufficient, and thus decide autonomously on trade policies and customs. The

concept provides for alternatives to industrial agriculture and related policies, but like food security, does not constitute an internationally recognised legal right (cf. *ibid.*: 4). The document also refers to specific population groups facing particular challenges to the realisation of available, accessible and adequate food intake, namely rural and poor urban populations, indigenous peoples, women and children and, with regard to the latter, specifically mentions displaced and refugee children who are particularly at risk of not enjoying the right to food, which affects their physical and psychosocial development. In addition to state obligations, which are primarily obliged to protect and promote human rights, intergovernmental organisations in particular are mentioned as having a responsibility to ensure the realisation of the right. This mandate is held by the FAO; however, in the context of humanitarian assistance and displacement, it is also the UNHCR, which is mandated to support the FAO's mission and assist signatory states (cf. *ibid.* 10 ff.).

Finally, last year's (2022) General Assembly resolution should be mentioned, which advocates for everyone's right to a healthy environment in the face of advancing climate change and deteriorating environmental conditions. Even though the resolution is not legally binding, it is worth mentioning because it goes beyond a purely anthropocentric view of human rights and includes the natural environment in a broader sense. Although it is a right for human beings, it recognises the link between human beings and their environment, and in particular between human rights and ecological health, as well as the link between deteriorating environmental conditions, including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and others, with forced displacement as well as the disproportionate impact on different peoples (cf. OCHR, UNEP & UNDP 2022: 5). The right encompasses the "right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment" (cf. *ibid.*), which includes the essential elements of safe climate, pure air, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, clean and sufficient water, a nontoxic environment, and ultimately sustainable and healthy food (cf. *ibid.*: 9).

Gardening in the context of displacement therefore touches on various international human rights such as the right to decent work. Of particular importance is the right to an adequate standard of living and in particular the right to adequate food with the elements

of availability, accessibility and above all adequacy through the cultivation of organic, healthy food with the potential for self-sufficiency and autonomy and the chance to even draw economic profit from it. Displaced communities can in this way become food secure and sovereign, deciding for themselves on their food production and consumption without depending not only on humanitarian aid but also on the food system in general, where modern industrial means are often used to grow food, including the use of pesticides and other chemicals that can damage the body and lead to related diseases, which in turn contributes to an overall better and stronger state of health.

As far as the rights of refugees in particular are concerned, it is first and foremost the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (hereinafter referred to as the 1951 Geneva Convention) and its 1967 Protocol that lay down certain basic principles that are relevant to signatory states in any intervention and treatment of refugees. Article 1 of the Convention defines the term ‘refugee’, a definition given earlier in this thesis. Thus, the Convention only applies to persons granted asylum, but as mentioned above, the recognition of refugee status is declaratory, i.e. a refugee is anyone who meets the criteria contained therein. Core principles are non-discrimination (Art. 3), non-punishment (Art. 31) and non-refoulement (Art. 33). The latter is a principle that applies not only to recognised refugees, but is a general principle of international human rights law, customary law and international humanitarian law and applies to all migrants regardless of their status (cf. OCHR 2018). Relevant rights in relation to gardening in the refugee context touch on the Convention in relation to decent employment and include the right to gainful employment (Art. 17) and the right to self-employment: “the right to engage in his own account in agriculture, industry, handicrafts and commerce and to establish commercial and industrial companies” (Art. 18).

UNHCR, with its mandate to provide humanitarian assistance, international protection and durable solutions for refugees, promotes three main durable solutions, namely (1) voluntary repatriation to the refugees' country of origin, (2) local integration in the host country and (3) resettlement in a third country. As seen above, gardening initiatives and activities can serve as a means for the second solution: local integration. Taking Uganda as an example, we see how forcibly displaced people can, if government policies allow, live a dignified and peaceful life in the host country and integrate into its

local economy by contributing through their products and goods, knowledge and skills. Apart from economic integration, this can contribute to the strengthening of community and social cohesion, not only among displaced people, but also, if done in a joint enterprise with members of the host society, to an overall improved social climate by promoting the exchange of culture and skills as well as getting to know each other and engaging in meaningful activity together in the natural environment.

More recently, three documents are worth mentioning that deal with gardening in the context of displacement and its link to refugee law. In 2016, the ILO established guiding principles for refugees' and other displaced persons' access to the labour market. Although the principles are not binding, they recognise the contribution of displaced persons to the national labour market and economy and provide for strategies to assist refugees in acquiring skills and vocational training, and to strengthen programmes, institutions and policies that support and strengthen the local integration of displaced persons and promote equal treatment and opportunities in employment.

Similarly non-binding is the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which reiterates the commitment of Member States to protect displaced persons and enhance international solidarity and cooperation to better assist people on the move. The New York Declaration was followed by the Global Compact for Refugees, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018 to address the root causes of displacement and focus on the protection of people, with the core principle of non-refoulement. Again, this pact is not legally binding, so it lacks enforcement mechanisms and obligations for member states. Nevertheless, it provides a template for governments and stakeholders and sets four clear main objectives<sup>(1)</sup> alleviate pressure on receiving countries; (2) enhance refugees' self-reliance; (3) broaden access to solutions in third countries; (4) promote conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. The focus on fostering refugee self-reliance and economic empowerment has been criticised for risking their commodification and economic exploitation (cf. Hathaway 2018: 603). Nevertheless, the emphasis on empowerment is, in my view, vital and should be precisely the goal of any humanitarian intervention in a situation like that of many displaced people, which goes beyond the timeframe of ordinary humanitarian action and requires long-term thinking and durable and sustainable approaches.

The major problem, however, is that our case country, Lebanon, has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention and does not want to recognise Syrian refugees as such, which was discussed in an earlier chapter. Even though the country is bound by customary international law and core principles such as non-refoulement and non-discrimination through the ratification of other international instruments, as mentioned earlier, this situation is the cause of the multiple legal obstacles and their consequences for the creation of livelihoods and a dignified standard of living.

### **The current inclusion of gardening into humanitarian action**

UNHCR's current Camp Site Planning Minimum Standards (2023) emphasise the temporary nature of refugee camps, which are designed as reception and transit shelters and include principles for settling refugees as an emergency solution. The standards include an indicator for the minimum average floor space per person, which should "enable refugee communities to live with security and dignity in a healthy environment which improves their quality of life" (UNHCR 2023). The minimum area of 45 m<sup>2</sup> per capita includes 15 m<sup>2</sup> set aside for the establishment of a home garden attached to the family plot, although it is clearly stated that the total area does not include space for "significant agricultural activities or livestock" (ibid.).

Tomkins et. al. (2019) note that despite UNHCR guidelines for camp planning, actual implementation in practice is inconsistent and often not implemented or in place. One reason for this is the lack of spatial data on refugee settlements and, more importantly, the lack of recognition of the importance of gardening as a holistically beneficial activity and means of addressing food insecurity on the part of camp management and the governments and local authorities on whose cooperation UNHCR depends (cf. ibid.: 110). Another reason could be the supposed temporary nature of the settlements, ignoring, as mentioned, the fact that most of the settlements exist for many years and are more likely to evolve into 'accidental cities' rather than just temporary shelters in emergency situations. Adam-Bradford (2016) counters this argument of local authorities and governments with the fact that not only the lives of refugees are improved through greening measures and afforestation, but also host communities benefit from increased vegetation also in the aftermath of refugee presence (cf. ibid.: 48). Moreover,



as mentioned above, the camps are managed from the top down without the people living there having a proper say in decision-making and the creation of spaces. Lastly, greening efforts can be hampered by government agencies or UN organisations when they conflict with water or land use policies (cf. Adam-Bradford et al. 2016: 5).

Even though UNHCR did or does have some noteworthy projects that include gardening in the refugee context, the co-founders of the Lemon Tree Trust claim in their 2016 report that the integration of greening and urban agriculture/gardening is not adequately supported by UN bodies and is instead left to the work of individuals and smaller initiatives – one of such is The Lemon Tree Trust.

This engagement of such smaller organisations and their significant work will also become evident in the following Chapter IV: looking at a specific region in Lebanon, namely the Bekaa Valley and in particular the area of Bar Elias in the Zahlé district on the border with neighbouring Syria, and presenting the work of two initiatives that illustrate the potential of mainstreaming gardening in the refugee context: *Greenhouse for All* and *Buzuruna Juzuruna*.

## **Chapter IV Empirical analysis: Syrians involved in gardening in Bekaa, Lebanon**

### **1. Introduction**

Lebanon's cuisine is known all over the world. Fattoush, baba ghanoush, hummus, falalef, manaqish or makdous are just some of the traditional Lebanese dishes enjoyed by both locals and people all over the world - and of course the Lebanese diaspora also plays its part in exporting the art of Lebanese cooking to the world. Being in the country, one quickly notices the high value placed on good food here, which is also evident in the large and joyful meals eaten with family, friends or generously invited guests. The enjoyment of eating is deeply rooted in Lebanese culture and society, and on closer inspection, one soon learns that many of the Lebanese dishes are very similar or identical to those of the Syrian diet, as for instance Fatch, an exquisite chickpea tahini dish served with nuts, olive oil and grenadine syrup.

Given the value of eating and food in general, the country's alimentary sector, and especially the cultivation of food, is of great importance. In fact, Lebanon enjoys an exceptional location between Africa, Asia and Europe and boasts a unique morphological constitution that makes it a centre of botanical diversity (cf. Zurayk et al. 2008: XVIII). In fact, today's Lebanon, as stated earlier, lies in the region often referred to as the 'fertile crescent' and the 'cradle of civilisation', as it is in this region that the first civilisations and thus the first city foundations with surplus agriculture are said to have been established (cf. Lee 2022).

The following section takes a look at the region under study, the Bekaa Valley, and provides an introduction to the agricultural and social context before presenting two local initiatives in a next step.

## 2. Overview: the Bekaa Valley as the ‘breadbasket’ of Lebanon

### Introduction: the Bekaa Valley

Lebanon is organised into eight governorates, which in turn are subdivided into 26 districts (cf. WFP Lebanon 2022). Two governorates, namely the Bekaa and the Baalbeck-Hermel governorates, together form the so-called Bekaa Valley (also: Beqaa, Beqa or Biqua) which comprise five districts (cf. Jalkh et al. 2020: 5; cf. Zurayk et al. 2008: 45; cf. UNHCR Lebanon 2023). A natural inland plateau, the Bekaa Valley lies between Lebanon's two mountain chains, Mount Lebanon to the west and the Anti-Lebanon to the east (which constitutes the natural border with Syria) (cf. Jalkh et al. 2020: 5) (see Figure 3). The region encompasses an area of about 4,000 km<sup>2</sup> and occupies between 30 and 40 percent of the national territory and a Lebanese population of about 1 million people<sup>11</sup> (cf. Bou-Antoun 2014; cf. UNHCR Lebanon 2023). Characteristic of the valley is its wide range of geo-climatic conditions, resulting from the varied topography; in addition, the long mountain range towards the Mediterranean Sea limits the amount of

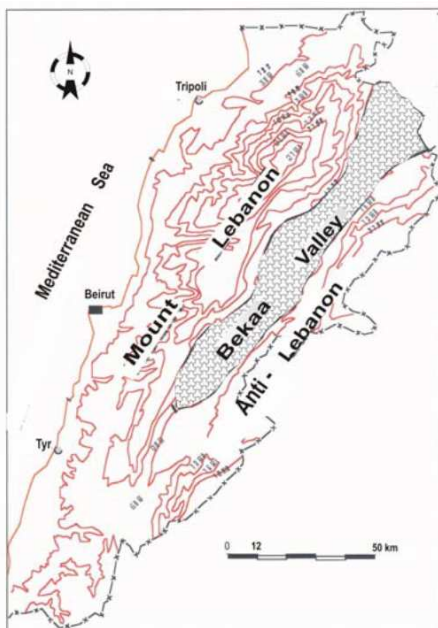


Fig. 1: Location map of the Bekaa Valley

Figure 3 (Lateef 2007: 392).

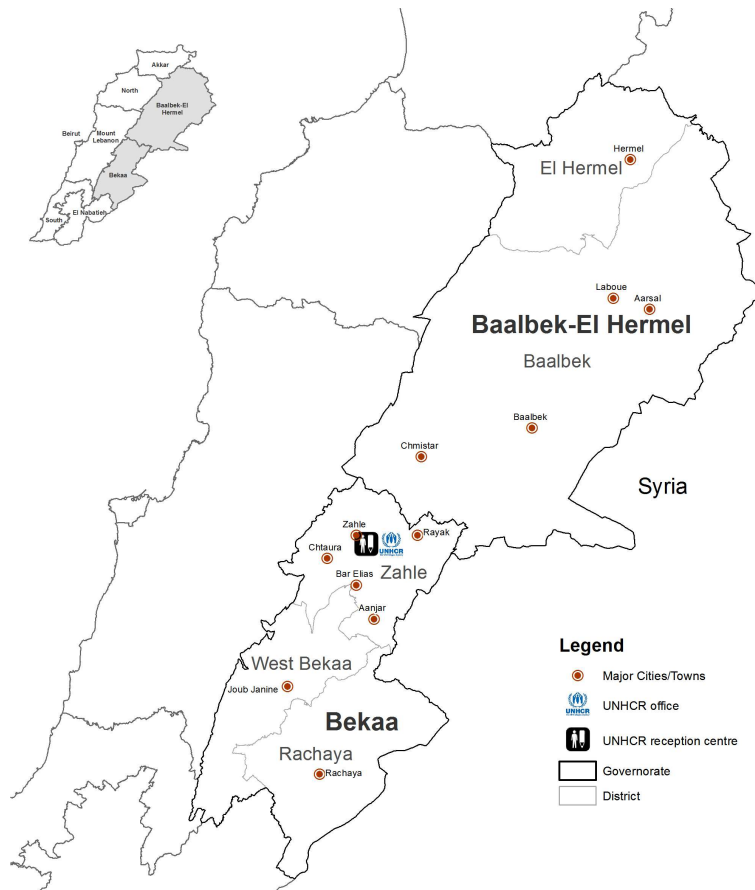
precipitation and moisture. Such a closed geographical position, in conjunction with the diversity of the microclimate and additional, exceptionally fertile soils, make the area ideal for cultivation. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Bekaa Valley is the most important agricultural area in Lebanon (cf. Lateef 2007; cf. Darwish 2013).

### The Bekaa as a refugee hosting region

Through the country's busiest border crossing, the Masnaa border crossing, the region has received many displaced Syrians from the other side of the

<sup>11</sup> Bou-Antoun (2014) speaks of 4,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a percentage of the total area of 28 per cent, while UNHCR speaks of a higher percentage: 4,400 km<sup>2</sup> would correspond to 40 per cent of the national territory.

anti-Lebanon mountain range. As can be seen in Figure 3, the Bekaa forms an elongated valley that runs parallel to neighbouring Syria, separated only by the mountains. Since 2012, many people have fled to the region, making the Bekaa a host country with the highest concentration of refugees due to its close proximity to Syria. While the presence of displaced Syrians already places an additional burden on a fragile economic and social system, this is particularly true for this region (cf. Jalkh et al. 2020: 5). The UNHCR responded to the influx of refugees by opening a sub-office in the capital of the region, Zahlé, which covers the entire Bekaa Valley, thus, as mentioned, the two governorates of Baalbek El Hermel and Bekaa (see Figure 4). At the beginning of 2023, the number of registered refugees from Syria in the Bekaa Valley was 318,713, representing 39% of the total of approximately 800,000 registered refugees. This makes the Bekaa region the region with the highest number of people with recognised refugee status (cf. UNHCR



Lebanon 2023). In addition, there are of course many displaced Syrians in the area who are not registered. As we have already seen, according to the United Nations, only about half of the displaced are registered with the UNHCR. Therefore, we can assume that the number of displaced people in the area is at much higher than official data.

Figure 4 (UNHCR Lebanon 2023).

## Agriculture

As mentioned earlier, the region forms the agricultural heart of the country, being at the forefront of Lebanese agriculture in terms of both cultivated land and production volume. The valley has the main cultivated area for cereals and legumes with over fifty per cent, as well as for vegetables, fruit trees with a share of about one third of the total production, livestock, especially sheep with almost 40 %, goats and cattle with almost 30 % and almost half of the country's milk production (see UNESCWA 2016: 11; cf. Jalkh et al. 2020). Traditionally, as said, the region benefits from its very fertile soils and arable land and is widely known as the country's "breadbasket" (UNESCWA 2016: 11). Indeed, there is a saying that goes: "like the valley is the land" (ibid.) expressing that one can get an overview of Lebanon's agricultural status by looking at the Bekaa region as a representative of the overall situation.

Agricultural activity in the country thus takes place mainly in the Bekaa Valley, but also in the northern part of Lebanon, in Akkar, which is also home to a large number of Syrians due to its proximity to Syria. The agricultural sector ranks fourth in terms of employment, according to EMMA Lebanon (2013), hosting up to ten percent of the Lebanese labour force, in addition to a large number of traditionally Syrian migrant workers who are traditionally employed by family farms that rely on the latter as cheap labour during the season (cf. ibid.: 4). UNESCWA (2016) speaks of a higher share of employment, namely 25 percent of total employment on national average and up to 80 percent in rural areas, i.e. also in the Bekaa Valley (cf. ibid.: 11).

Yet, although the agricultural sector is crucial for the country's employment and food supply, the country's fertility is not fully exploited and a large potential is not used to counter the import dependency (as already mentioned, 80% of the annual food demand is imported from abroad) and the resulting vulnerability (e.g. to price fluctuations due to crises such as the current Ukraine crisis), as well as to combat the high level of food insecurity (cf. UNESCWA 2016: 11).

One of the reasons for this is that farmland is being "eaten away" by "haphazard" construction (ibid.) - indeed, many half-finished concrete skeletons can be seen everywhere in the region. Another reason is the phenomenon of rural-urban migration that can be observed in many countries: since the mid-20th century, former farmers have

been looking for a new livelihood in the city or joining the many people migrating abroad (cf. UNESCWA 2016). Especially in the last fifty years, i.e. since the beginning of the civil war, Lebanon has experienced a decline in small-scale agriculture, while at the same time wealthy traders from the diaspora or urban areas have appropriated land in the Bekaa, Akkar or the south of the country, for whom the acquisition of large-scale landholdings has been an attractive investment, resulting in the proliferation of large-scale capitalist agribusinesses. The consequence has been higher land prices and even more rural-urban migration of Lebanese, forcing them to pursue work outside agriculture - also because agricultural workers are the poorest of all sectors, accounting for around 40 %, especially Syrian migrant, and now refugee, workers (cf. Sajadian 2020; cf. UNESCWA 2016). Whereas in the past it was family-run small-scale farms that met the country's agricultural needs, today it is large enterprises owned by a handful of privileged people who count on cheap labour such as from Syrian migrants (now refugees), who work on call in a very unregulated sector where not only food prices can change from hour to hour, but also working hours and wage rates.

As in the country as a whole, the region also struggles with poverty and related food insecurity. According to the WFP Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (2022), which examines the extent of poverty in 2021, the percentage of deprived households is particularly high in Tripoli and in the regions bordering Syria in the north and east of the country. The map is based on WFP's Household Deprivation Score (HDS) indicator, an index that estimates household deprivation using non-monetary criteria composed of nutrition, health, education, shelter and livelihoods, with a sample based on the evaluation of 300 households of the Lebanese population per district, which includes the 1.5 million refugees as residents. Baalbek is identified as one of the regions with high levels of household deprivation, including food insecurity. The results for West Bekaa and Rachaya, two districts in the region we studied, the Bekaa Valley, however, are not considered statistically relevant. But Zahlé and Hasbaya also show high levels of over 60 per cent (cf. WFP 2022. 13).

The same report shows the percentage of food insecurity, again broken down by governorate, where we can see that there is an increasing trend of moderate and severe

food insecurity in both Bekaa and Baalbek-El Hermel (see Figure 5). In Baalbek-El Hermel, we also see an increasing trend in severe food insecurity, which increased from two per cent of sampled households at the beginning of 2021 to eight per cent at the end of the year. Bekaa Governorate recorded a change from three per cent at the beginning of the year to a constant five per cent as of August (cf. WFP 2022: 16). In the absence of a more recent report on the same food insecurity assessment, we do not know the percentage for last year or for this year 2023. However, given the increasing trend of moderate and severe food insecurity in both governorates, we have to assume that the percentage has continued to increase or at least remained high.

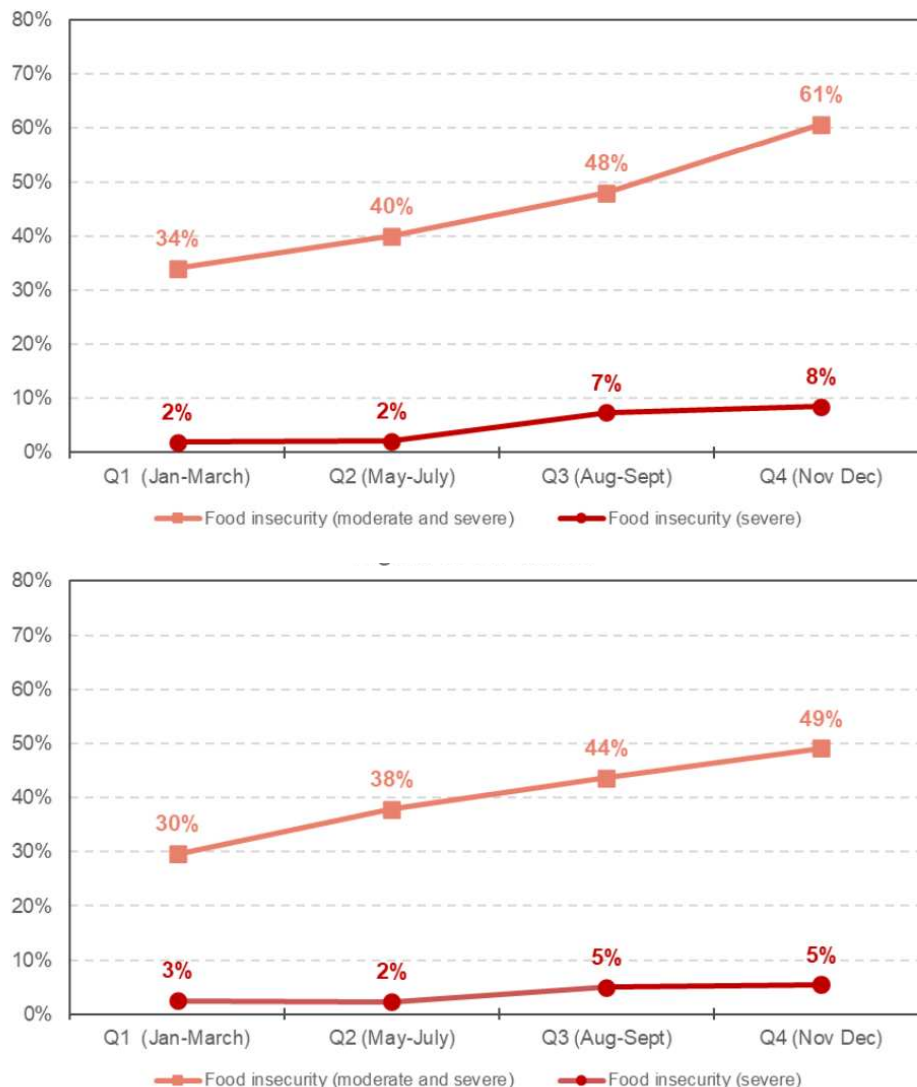


Figure 5 (WFP 2022: 16).

In addition, the report assesses food consumption and dietary diversity, which deteriorated overall in the second half of 2021. Inadequate nutrition was particularly high in the governorates of the region surveyed. In Baalbek-El Hermel, almost 50 per cent of surveyed households have inadequate diets, and in Bekaa, almost 60 per cent have inadequate diets (cf. *ibid.*: 18 f.).

Similarly, Baalbek-El Hermel and Bekaa are among the governorates where most of the surveyed households rely on food coping mechanisms, namely 74 per cent in Baalbek-El Hermel at the end of 2021 and around 60 per cent (cf. *ibid.*: 19).

However, when looking at the data, it is important to bear in mind that the report assesses the deprivation and food insecurity of Lebanon's resident population, including recognized refugees, but excluding the many unregistered displaced persons, whose vulnerability to food insecurity, dependence on food coping mechanisms, etc., can be considered even higher.

UNESCWA (2016) further confirms the hidden potential of the sector. In the 1990s, the sector was estimated to account for 23 % of the country's GDP, whereas today it accounts for only 4 %. Nevertheless, the report also speaks of the potential of the agricultural sector, as 37% of the national territory could be cultivated. According to the report, only about 231. 000 hectares are currently under cultivation, representing only about 22 per cent, of which only half is irrigated, meaning that while only about one tenth of the entire country is under cultivation, the potential for agricultural use is more than three times higher and could increase the country's autonomy in food production and help address food insecurity. Another point is the very limited variety in seeds. Finally, smallholder farmers are not adequately funded and do not receive technical support and advice due to significant financial constraints of the Ministry of Agriculture (cf. *ibid.*: 11).

In summary, Lebanon and especially its agricultural centre, the Bekaa Valley, have favourable conditions for agriculture due to its geographical, fertile and climatic conditions, but these are not fully exploited, so that people, especially the weaker groups such as the many displaced persons, suffer from poverty, insufficient food and food insecurity - a condition that could be positively changed if the prerequisites were better harnessed.



### **3. Syrian refugees involved in agriculture in the Bekaa**

Traditionally, it was Syrians who, along with other migrant groups, formed the mainstay of Lebanon's low-wage labour force, the main of which is the agricultural sector. Many of today's refugees were seasonal migrant agricultural workers for decades, as the borders were open, and Lebanon accepted labour from the neighbouring country and commuting between the two countries was easy. Lebanon hence shows a long tradition of Syrians working in the agricultural sector, especially in the Bekaa and Akkar (cf. EMMA Lebanon 2013: 4; cf. *ibid.*: 20).

Syrian migrant workers engaged in agriculture include people directly involved in agricultural production, from sowing to harvesting, but also in post-harvest and food processing operations. Their number in 2012 was estimated at somewhere between 200,000 and 1,000,000. The region it is focused on, the Bekaa, not surprisingly as the agricultural centre of Lebanon along with Akkar in the north, employs the most seasonal workers. In early 2011, an estimated 12,000 migrant workers from Syria were working per day in the Bekaa, typically for 5 to 9 hours per day and up to seven days per week, to financially support their families back home. Wages were set at 450,000 LBP for men per month, with a gender breakdown, with less than 400,000 LBP for women - as the currency has lost much of its value, it is difficult to put this in context, but today this would mean only a little over 4 USD per month, though the currency has lost value at a devastating rate (cf. *ibid.*: 13 ff.). Already in the 2013 report, it was noted that this income could not cover the household expenses to meet the family's basic needs, which has most likely worsened since then as the economic situation has drastically deteriorated. At that time, not even one third of the total monthly expenses could be covered by the income from agricultural activities alone, which led to a great dependence on external assistance from international and local as well as faith-based organisations. At the same time, the situation of today's refugees is much tougher compared to the former migrants, because in the past people could rely on the social system as a social safety net and were confronted with much lower living costs as they usually only needed a tent for the summer months of the agricultural high season, whereas now they have to cope with the high cost of living in Lebanon for the whole year (and especially in the Bekaa it can get very cold and harsh in winter due to the high altitude and related climatic conditions) (cf. *ibid.*: 26).

Due to the civil war and the resulting exodus, many of these migrant workers have become refugees respectively forcibly displaced persons who cannot return to their country of origin for fear of persecution and/or the destruction of their homeland. As a result, the former agricultural workers are now competing with each other for work, as they are now forced to stay in Lebanon for the whole year and are highly dependent on their income to make a living and support their families. As we saw in Chapter II, the economic situation in Lebanon is desolate, and while in the past it was mainly people from outside Lebanon who competed for low wage jobs, the demand for jobs has in general increased among all population groups, and Syrians, about half of whom are not registered, find themselves in a situation of dependency and risk economic exploitation.

Exemplary of this is the so-called '*Shawish*' (also '*Shaweesh*') system, based on a hierarchic structure of dependency in which the *Shawish* is the headman or community leader under whose supervision the seasonal migrant workers live and work. Migrant workers stay in communities adjacent to farming sites and live in tents rented by the *Shawish*, who serves as an intermediary between workers and farmers (cf. *ibid.*: 14; cf. Sajadian 2020). This system also exists in the current situation: the camps are managed by the *Shawish*, a Syrian, and creating a high degree of dependency among the newly arriving Syrian refugee workers, as they get into debt with their overseer upon arrival for the cost of accommodation, annual rent and consumption needs, and in return are promised a job by the latter. However, it is him, the *Shawish*, who negotiates payment and working hours and collects a commission equivalent to one hour's work in the Bekaa, regardless of the total number of hours worked per day. These so-called '*Shawish* camps' or locally called '*Warshat*' provide local farmers with a highly flexible and cheap labour supply (cf. EMMA Lebanon 2013: 14 ff; cf. Sajadjan 2020).

Both female and male Syrians are either actively engaged in agriculture or available as labour in Lebanon. In response to forced migration and the large number of people who are now permanently dependent on labour without the possibility of returning to their country, the number of available workers in agriculture has doubled, while the available labour and the amount of agricultural land and production have not changed - lost potential, as seen above. As a result, not only has it become more difficult to find a job in agriculture unless one can rely on relatives engaged in agriculture or one's social connections, but also working hours have decreased from eight hours per day to four

hours to allow for labour rotation, as well as the number of working days per week, resulting in a refugee working a maximum of one or two days per week. This, of course, affects the income of the individual and thus the households, putting them in an extremely weak financial situation where dependency on the Shawish increases respectively remains, as the debts on which the system is based cannot be repaid (cf. EMMA Lebanon 2013: 20).

In addition, the strong competition for jobs in general and in agriculture in particular leads to resentment and accusations of Syrians 'stealing' jobs from the Lebanese, which leads to further social tensions between the population groups and weakens the cohesion of the whole society (cf. Sajadian 2020).

A final point to mention in this sector is the widespread child and youth labour. A 2019 report in collaboration with UNICEF based on data collection from more than 12,000 refugees in the Bekaa region shows, firstly, that more than two-thirds of the population surveyed have not yet reached the age of 18, and thus consist of young people overall, and secondly, that three-quarters of these children are already working, mainly in farming, with half of them not enjoying schooling and citing 'work' as the main reason for non-attendance at school (cf. Habib 2019).

The cultural value of gardening and farming has already been mentioned in Chapter III, when it was noted that Syria is a country with a culture where gardens carry spiritual significance and where many people are used to owning their own piece of land on which they grow food. Not only at the individual or household level, but also professionally, gardening and agriculture is an important sector in the country. The EMMA Lebanon report of 2013 shows that every fifth job in agriculture is held by a Syrian (cf. *ibid.*: 4), which is not surprising since, firstly, apart from construction, it is the only sector in which informal work is possible at all, and secondly, many Syrians have worked in agriculture before, namely about ten percent according to UNHCR (2023a), given that agriculture is a major economic sector in Syria.

The fact that 10% of Syrian refugees already have experience with agriculture, the untapped potential of agricultural use of the land, the need to address food insecurity among vulnerable populations and the need to better integrate displaced communities into

society combine to offer great potential for combining food farming and humanitarian purposes.

In this last section, I wanted to give an overview of the agricultural situation in the Bekaa region, which exemplifies the situation of agriculture in the country, and to give an overview of the situation of Syrians in the field, who used to work as seasonal workers for many years and formed the backbone of the sector, but have now become displaced persons with a severely weakened status and living situation. Against this backdrop, I would like to present, in contrast, gardening initiatives that oppose exploitation in agriculture and instead explore the potential of gardening and agriculture as a means and instrument to address food insecurity and high dependence on external aid, and to combat the other challenges presented throughout the paper. The choice of the term 'gardening' is based on the consideration that although horticulture is a sub-category of agriculture, gardening as a notion, as explained in the last chapter, has a more holistic connotation and is associated with well-being and various health aspects as well as social interaction. Gardening is therefore used as a broader concept to think beyond agricultural activity for mere income-earning, but to provide conceptual inspiration and create spaces of ideas on how to practically address the challenges faced by Syrian refugees in the country through the means of cultivation in a broader sense.

#### 4. Zooming-in to the local context: The initiatives *Greenhouse for all* and *Buzuruna Juzuruna*

##### 4.1. Introduction

While the first part of this thesis was based on a literature review on the topic, the following part will gain its insights from the practical experiences of people on the ground who are actively involved in the field and have valuable experience and knowledge on the topic under study. Since most of the literature I have drawn on has been written by foreign, non-Syrian, researchers, who therefore approach the topic from an external point of view, I have tried to get in touch with people on the ground as much as possible, including displaced Syrians talking about their own experiences. The choice to interview key informants was made for the collection of qualitative data in order to obtain in-depth information about the specific local context of the area of Bar Elias in the Bekaa, the situation of the Syrians there, and in order to explore the potential of gardening in that specific context. It must be taken into account, however, that the situation is time-dependent and can change, especially with regard to the economic situation of the country as a whole or the current challenges faced by Syrians.

The literature often documents the work of UN agencies or larger non-governmental organisations, which have more funds and thus financial resources that are used differently than smaller organisations and projects. In this part, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce two smaller organisations that, in my view, are doing inspiring and impactful work. Two such organisations, namely *Greenhouse for All* and *Buzuruna Juzuruna*, and their work are presented here and people who work in these, respectively whose activities are related to them, are chosen as key informants. The knowledge of the organisations emanated from the internship I did with *Greenhouse for All* for a three-month period from April to July 2023, thanks to which I was able to get to know the activities of the organisation in more detail and get involved myself. In this context, I was able to experience the local environment and make many acquaintances with many people in the field, as well as get to know the organisation *Buzuruna Juzuruna*.

A variety of sources are used to introduce the two organisations, which also form the background for the key informant interviews. Both organisations are the initiative of

motivated, committed individuals and are small in nature, which is why no research paper or similar scientific source of information is available as in the case of Lemon Tree Trust, whose activities have already been analysed in several articles. For this reason, it was necessary to draw on a variety of sources, a combination of online articles, YouTube and especially Instagram posts.

## **4.2. Case example 1: The organization *Greenhouse for All* in Bar Elias, Beqaa**

### **4.2.1. Local context of the project**

#### **Bar Elias**

Bar Elias, a town in the north-east of the country, is located only a few kilometres from the Syrian border and the main border crossing Al Masna'a. This border crossing connects the capitals of the two countries, Beirut and Damascus. The area is located in the Bekaa Valley, more precisely in the Zahlé district in the Bekaa governorate and has a total population of about 520,000. While the district's capital is predominantly inhabited by Christians, Bar Elias consists mainly of Sunni Muslims. Among the district's three main economic sectors - tourism, agriculture and industry - agriculture takes precedence and shapes not only the district's economy, but that of the entire governorate. Of the more than 300 industrial enterprises in the Bekaa, more than 40 % are active in the agricultural and food sector (cf. Ayoubi 2019: 9 f.; cf. *ibid.*: 15).

Due to its proximity to Syria, the region hosts a large number of refugees. Around 30,000 refugees are officially registered in Bar Elias, and a similar number in the district capital. However, the mayor of the city assumes a higher number, about 45,00 (cf. *ibid.*: 11 ff.). It should be noted that this figure only takes into account registered refugees with official documents. Therefore, a significant number of unregistered Syrian persons in the region should also be taken into account. Consequently, Bar Elias turns out to be one of the largest host communities for Syrian refugees in Bekaa Governorate (cf. *ibid.*: 28).

According to the Housing Monitor, a platform advocating for housing rights in Lebanon, the municipality of Bar Elias officially recognizes around 85 camps, though the

actual number of unregistered camps remains uncertain. The monitor also cites refugees residing in residential units and a number of approximately 70,000 registered Syrian refugees, a count nearly twice the figure mentioned in the UNDP 2019 report (cf. Housing Monitor n.d.).

The strong presence of refugees brings both challenges and prospects for the community. One obstacle described in the UNDP Lebanon Report (2019) is the religious discrimination faced by the predominantly Sunni Muslim refugees in the predominantly Christian environment of Zahlé. This has led to several cases of displacement, resulting in many of the displaced seeking refuge in Bar Elias. But even there they encounter difficulties, including forced evictions because of the inability to pay for the risen rents. Cases of deportation to Syria by the Lebanese military, especially in the past year, as mentioned earlier, further exacerbate their plight. Unfortunately, data regarding the economic impact of Syrian refugees on the area, both negative and positive, remains unavailable (cf. *ibid.*: 22).

Yet, there are initiatives that promote social cohesion through interactions between communities. Neighbourhood committees have been established, composed of members of the host and refugee communities, representing different faiths and political perspectives. Joint activities, such as cultural exchanges with folk music and culinary events, further aim to promote intra-communal exchange and understanding. The presence of Syrian refugees also has a positive side: it leads to an influx of funding and aid. Although this aid is significantly underfunded, it benefits not only refugee households but also non-refugees (cf. 17 f.).

#### **4.2.2. Presentation of the project**

Greenhouse for All is based on the grassroots initiative of Yoshito Nishino, a Japanese national who launched the project at the end of 2020 together with Kamil Smeda, a Polish psychology student, and two other dedicated volunteers who saw the need for support in Deir Zenoun, a sub-area of the town of Bar Elias in the Beqaa Valley. The project consists of two main components to help the local community and Syrian refugee children in particular: an education component and a garden component.

The education component was born out of the observation that many children in the community do not attend school and the conviction that every child deserves a good education. For this reason, together with four local teachers of Lebanese and Syrian nationality, a school was opened that accepts students of both Lebanese and Syrian origin, although the majority of the approximately 60 students are of Syrian origin, many of whom were born in the tents nearby where families live in dire situations. The school currently follows a formal and non-formal education path which, in addition to the basic subjects taught every day, such as mathematics or Arabic, also includes lessons in the environment, arts and crafts, including theatre or puppet theatre, as well as outdoor excursions, mainly provided by the many volunteers from abroad who support the project. The aim of the school is to create a safe space and a welcoming, inclusive learning environment for children, which is particularly important given the fear of Syrians being deported back to the border that is currently taking place.

Although the current focus is on running the school and organising and managing related activities, the gardening or agricultural component of the project has been at the heart of the whole initiative from the beginning, and the whole project is based on the initiative of Yoshito Nishino and other volunteers to distribute vegetable seedlings to families in the region. The distribution of seedlings - including tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers and strawberries - to refugee households in the camps was done with the aim of supporting families in need by helping them to start their own small gardens, and motivated by seeing them consequently "smile and being happy" (Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023).

“What is our agriculture project?” part1/2

The crisis in Lebanon has been complexly entangled, with an economic, political, financial, social, fuel, corona, lockdown, population condensed, over the capacity of infrastructure, and so on since 2020.

Our agriculture project focuses on these complex crises. Making vegetable gardens and our distribution of seedlings will support people in vulnerable situations by their own works, efforts, and creativity. At the same time, it relieves them from the stressful life at tents in camps by touching soils.

Last summer, we provided around 8500 vegetable and flower seedlings for free that we've organically grown in our greenhouses since February, last year. For elders, single moms, and for families that have no income, the unemployed, and those with disabilities who don't have any support, and who need manual help, we visit and together make vegetable gardens. We find innovative spaces to plant, sometimes rooftops, bathtubs, kitchen gardens, and neglected land.



Our aim is to support people to support themselves. Helping communities to grow their own food, not only helps to mitigate the effects of food insecurity, but adds dignity, as people take agency in providing for themselves. Collective endeavours brings communities together. We continue to secure space to grow vegetables for the vulnerable.

(Greenhouse For All [[@greenhouseforall](#)]. 15 May 2022).

The contribution of 15 May 2022 summarizes the main rationale behind the “agriculture project”. It indicates that the aim of the garden project is "to support people to support themselves", i.e. to help them to be self-reliant and independent in the production and consumption of food. It also mentions the psychological effect of giving people back their dignity by helping them regain their agency as well as the mentally beneficial impact of “touching soils”, while contributing to community cohesion as "collective endeavours bring[s] communities together". Other benefits will be analysed later, but Greenhouse for All's contributions show that the project's purpose is clearly on food cultivation to address food insecurity while empowering vulnerable communities and improving their sense of dignity and self-reliance.

While most of the beneficiaries of the project are Syrians, this is not because of a particular focus of the initiative, but because there are many refugees from that country living in Deir Zenoun and the surrounding area of Bar Elias. However, several contributions indicate that the distribution of seedlings benefited refugee households from Syria and Palestine as well as families from the host community, without distinguishing between nationalities. An Instagram post from 25 September 2022 (see Figure 6) justifies the expansion of the beneficiary population to include Palestinian and Lebanese households on the basis of the increasing need of the whole community for assistance due to the economic insecurity of the country, reflecting the increasing feeling of the Lebanese of being neglected by the humanitarian response, which was addressed in the literature review. The post also outlines how gardening together can help reduce tensions between communities and improve relations.



Figure 6 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall]. 25 September 2022).

Figure 7 to Figure 10 show the distribution of seedlings to the residents of the camp and the children of the school. In the summer of 2021, Greenhouse for All distributed a total of about 8500 fruit and vegetable seedlings to households in need (see Figure 11), all seedlings grown in an organic, i.e. not chemically treated way, from seeds either donated or obtained from fruits and vegetables themselves, or seedlings given in exchange for cooperation with local organic strawberry farmer Khajak, an Armenian-Lebanese living in Anjar, a neighbouring town of Bar Elias that directly borders Syria. The non-monetary exchange, based on friendship and mutual aid, which will be discussed later, consists of helping him cultivate his strawberry field and in his greenhouse, where he grows a variety of fruits and vegetables for sale, and in return receiving seedlings to give to the needy communities (see Figure 12 and 13).

The land that is cultivated is diverse. As the refugee communities do not have the right to own land themselves, "innovative spaces to plant" are needed (see Figure 11), which offer the possibility to grow food, especially in the winter months when food and nutrition security is even more at risk, as expenses have to cover more needs, including heating costs (see Figure 14).



Figure 7 and Figure 8 (Greenhouse For All [[@greenhouseforall](#)]. 25 September 2022).



Figure 9 and Figure 10 (Greenhouse For All [[@greenhouseforall](#)]. 25 September 2022).



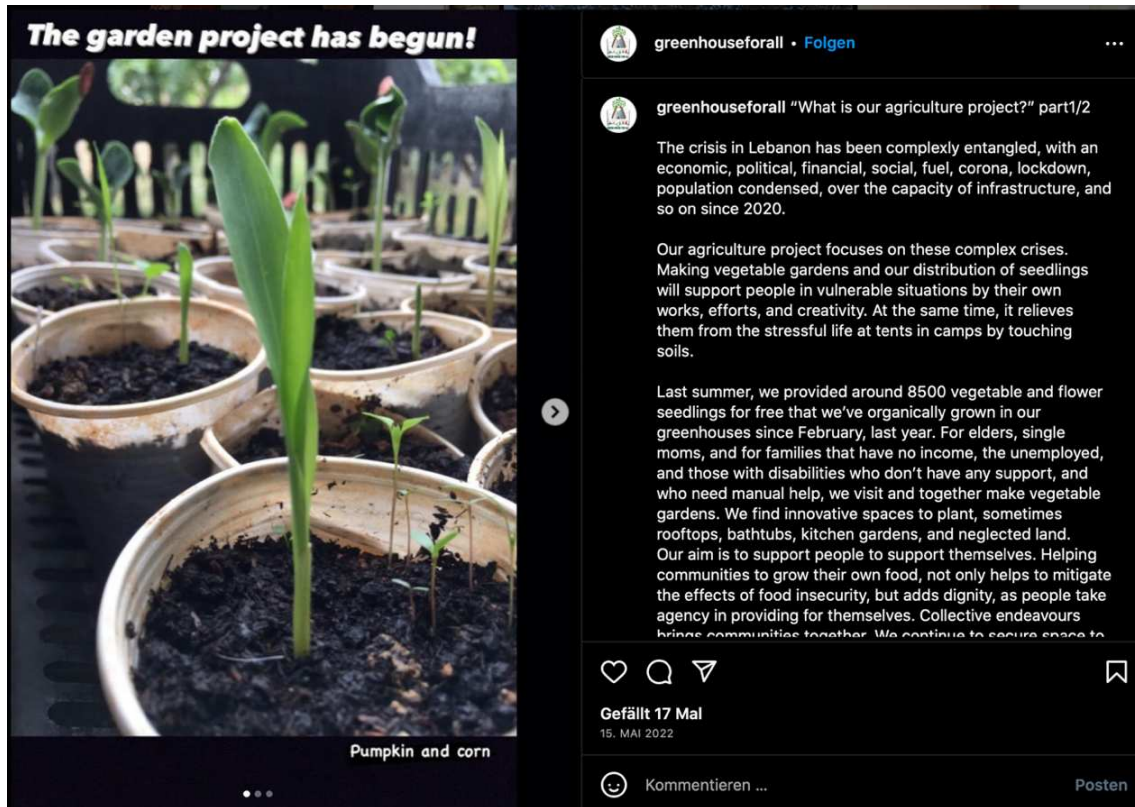


Figure 11 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall]. 15 May 2022).

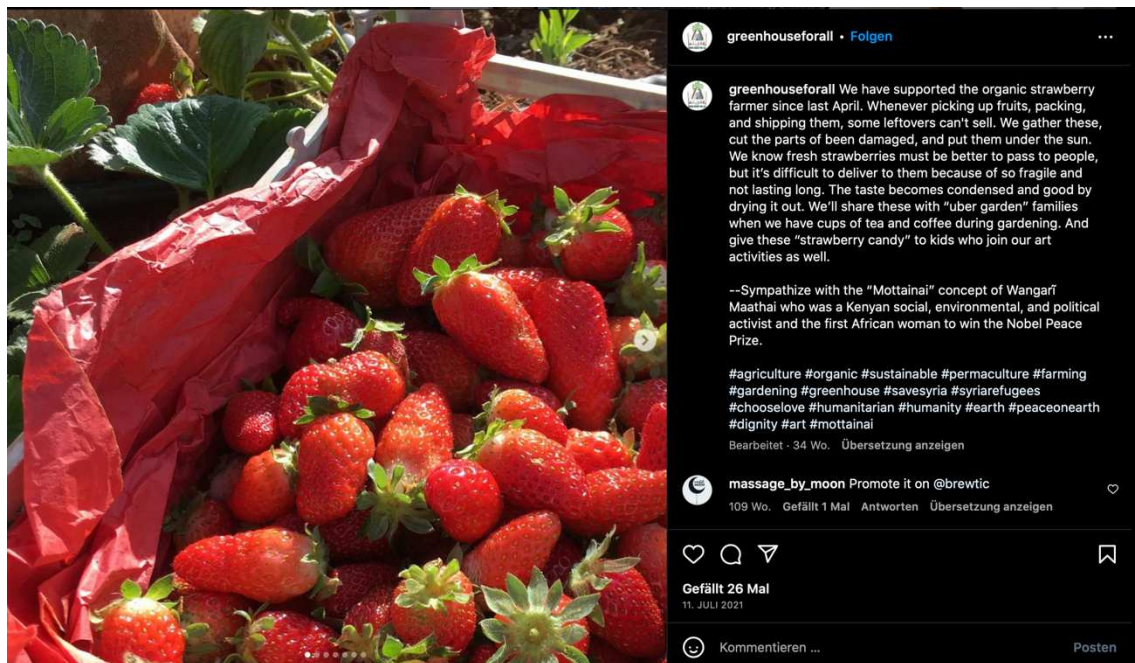


Figure 12 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall]. 11 July 2021).

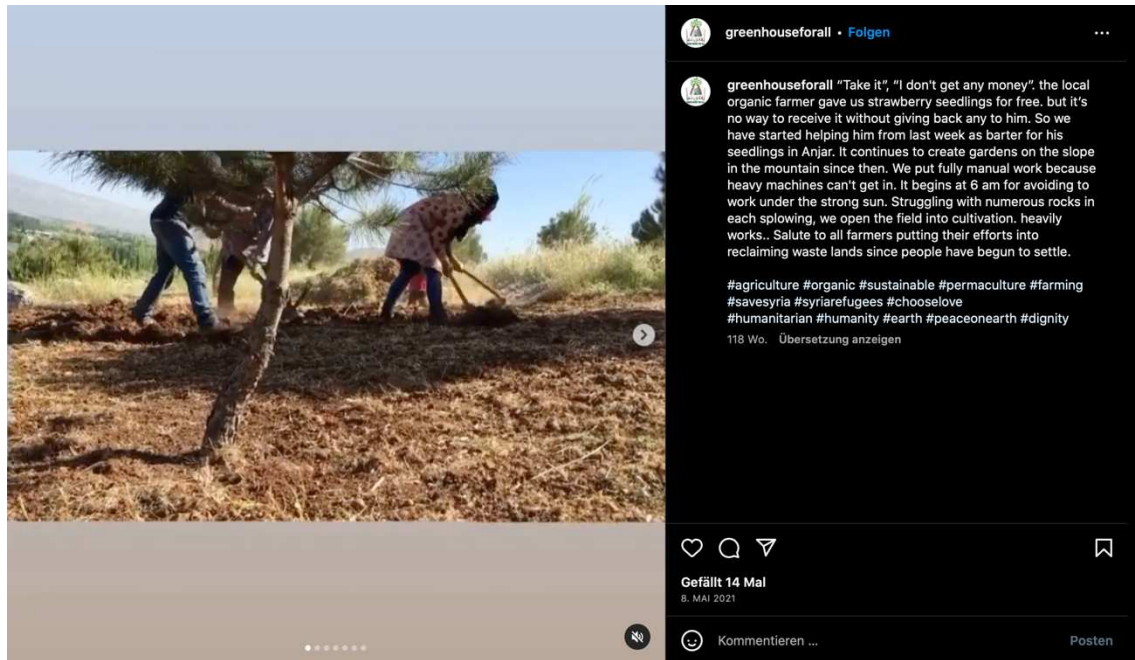


Figure 13 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall], 8 May 2021).

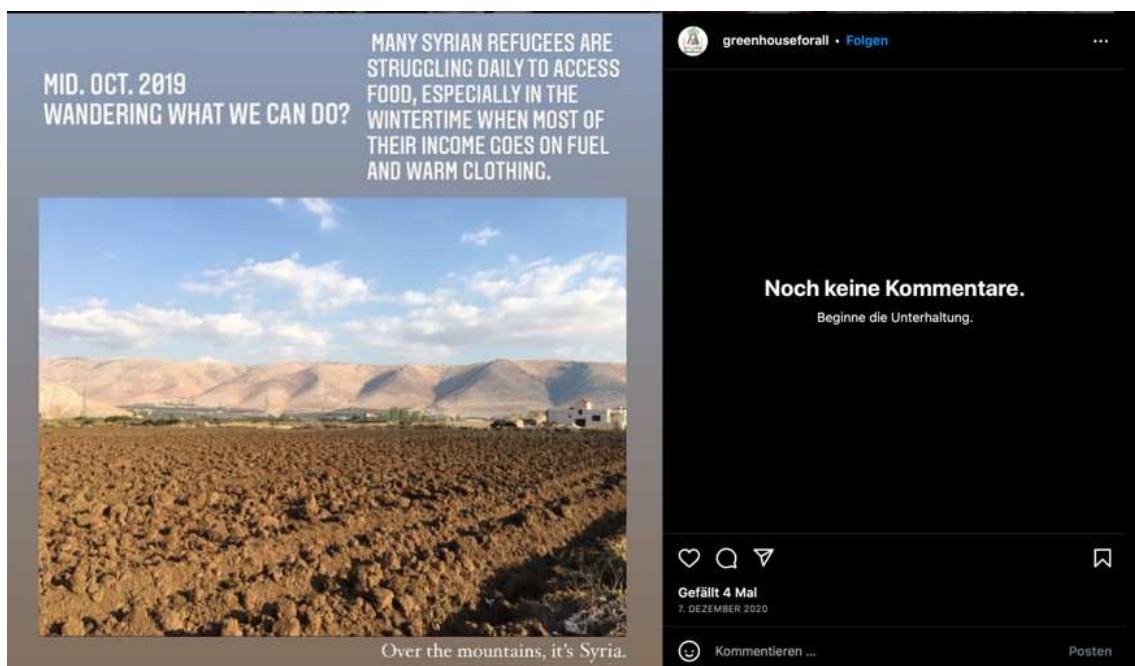


Figure 14 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall], 7 December 2020).

The garden project also has an educational aspect or is linked to the school. The school has a rooftop garden, which was created by one volunteer from Scotland, who initiated making vegetable beds out of wooden pallets and hanging tomatoes in cut-up plastic bottles (see Figure 15). As a general rule, recycling is both taught and practised in



the school - also for financial reasons, but mainly for environmental reasons - which is why all the beds, pots, etc. on the roof are also made of recycled material, aiming to helping to combat the waste problem prevalent in the area. Various edible vegetables, fruits and herbs are grown on the roof, but also sunflowers and cosmos for aesthetic reasons, yet also, as described in the previous chapter, with additional positive effects on psychological well-being. Tomatoes, courgettes, carrots, rocket and camomile, among others, are grown. The rooftop garden is primarily used for educational purposes, as the harvest is too small to share with the community. The space on the roof of the school has been named the "Peace Garden" to transform it into a peaceful area where the children can find a quiet space, where art and meditation classes are sometimes held and where the children are encouraged to be calm and serene up there, which is particularly important in the context of often traumatised family backgrounds and children who come from situations in life that are not easy. In addition, the rooftop garden serves as a demonstration area where children are shown how to plant and grow vegetables and are introduced to the value of healthy eating - a response to the observation that many children eat an unhealthy diet. Through contact with the growing of food, the soil, the seedlings and the final harvest, the children will be sensitised and inspired to one day grow their own food (see Figure 16 and 17; see Appendix 8).

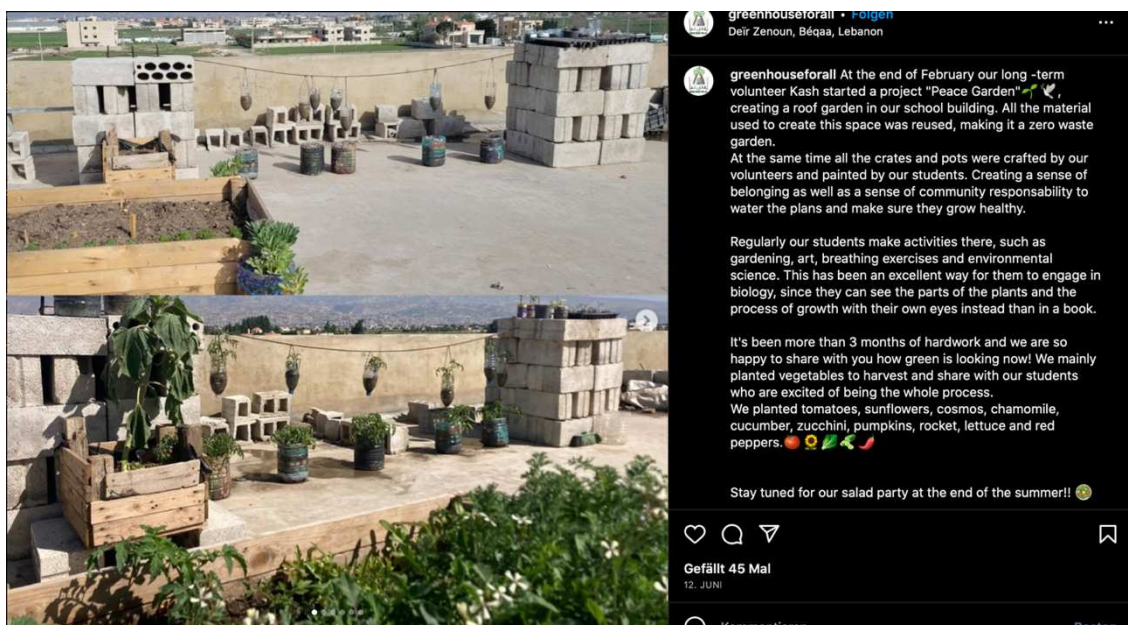


Figure 15 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall]. 12 June 2023).

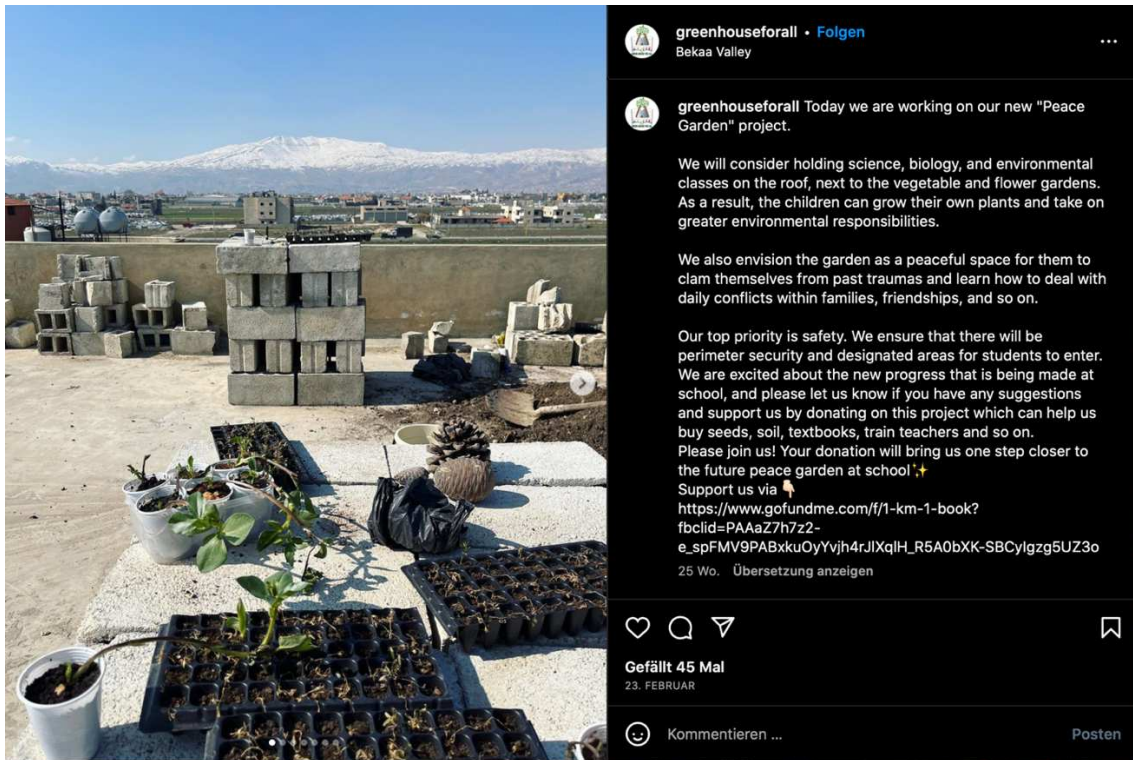


Figure 16 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall]. 23 February 2023).

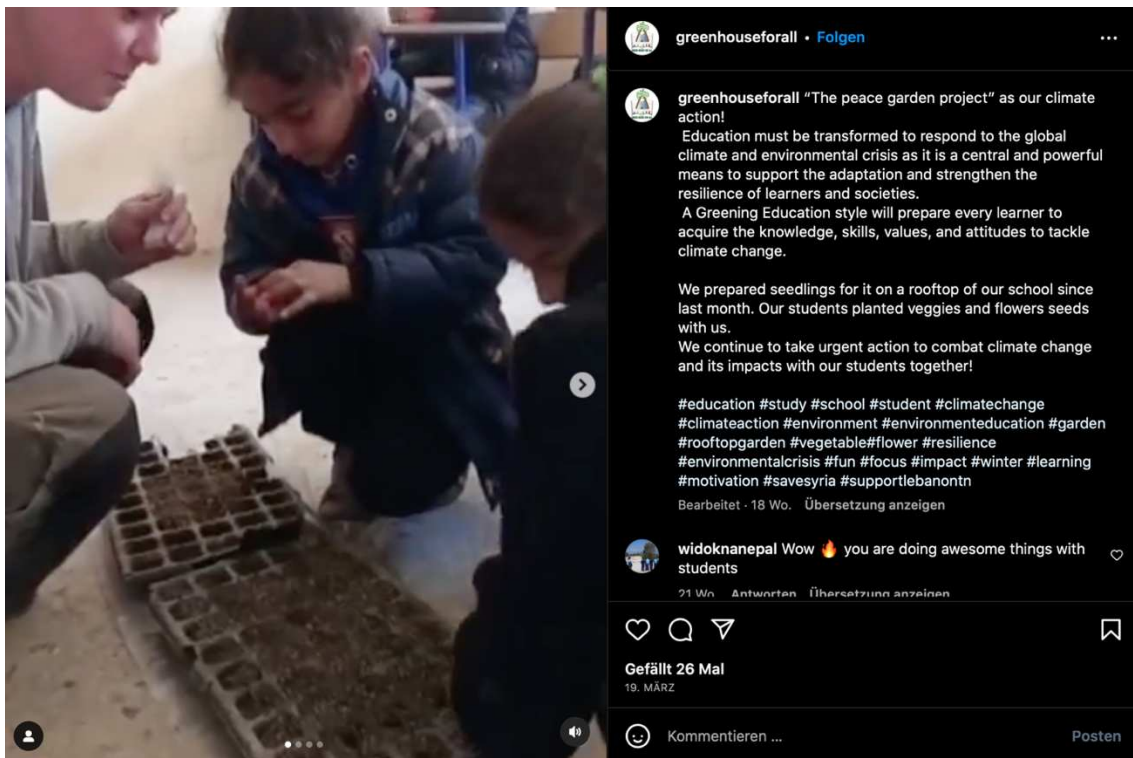


Figure 17 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall]. 19 March 2023).

### **4.3. Case example 2: The organization *Buzuruna Juzuruna* in Saadnayel, Beqaa**

#### **4.3.1. Local context of the project**

*Buzuruna Juzuruna* is located in Saadnayel, a neighbouring town of Bar Elias in the Zahlé district of the Bekaa. The town is home to around 50,000 Lebanese and many displaced Syrians. The IOM (n.d.) reports that the town is seriously affected by the country's economic closure, which has deteriorated the state of infrastructure and hampered access to drinking water. The coping mechanisms that people have to resort to as a result of economic hardship have contributed to a deterioration in relations between displaced communities and the host population.

#### **4.3.2. Presentation of the project**

*Buzuruna Juzuruna* (BJ), literally ‘*nos grains sont nos racines*’ or ‘our seeds are our roots’ is a Lebanese association that has been active since 2015 and was officially registered in 2018. It was founded by a network of Lebanese, Syrian and French farmers, agricultural engineers and activists or members of civil society. Its main objective is to promote sustainable agriculture in Lebanon through the transfer of knowledge and means of production. Since 2015, the BJ network has been developing various agricultural projects with the aim of promoting the techniques and know-how of sustainable agriculture in Lebanon through short or long training sessions on school farms, awareness-raising events, exchange of practices, amongst others. These include, inter alia, a seed bank where heirloom seeds from various countries are offered for sale, a school farm providing education to children on sustainable gardening and sensitising them to organic farming, urban gardens in the Beirut region as well as vegetable gardens in refugee camps (Buzuruna Juzuruna 2023).

Over the years, the association has built up an extensive collection of peasant seeds from the Middle East, comprising over 1000 varieties of vegetables, flowers and cereals. Since 2016, the BJ school farm, located in Saadnayel on a two-hectare plot, has



had the task of multiplying these peasant seeds, selecting them, adapting them to the local climate and testing their hardiness and quality. The farm serves as an agricultural laboratory to experiment with and disseminate both local varieties and more sustainable techniques and skills. The team then disseminates the seeds so that they can be grown and repossessed by those who need them most - Lebanese farmers, family gardens in refugee camps, urban gardens, etc. - to be grown and repossessed. Further, BJ shares its expertise to support farmers, collectives and beginners in the transition to agroecology by providing technical support, adapted training and agricultural inputs from its own production (seeds, seedlings, natural preparations) (cf. Buzuruna Juzuruna 2023; cf. Donnellan 2023; cf. Amel 2019).

In addition, the association organises trainings on various topics related to sustainable agriculture for different target groups. These trainings are conducted with numerous partners, including various Lebanese and French NGOs from Lebanon and France and national ministries such as the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), as well as the WFP or the Chamber of Agriculture of Zahlé, among others. As part of these trainings, the association also aims to create, harmonise, translate and then distribute accessible and pedagogical curricula on integrated agriculture techniques to as many people as possible. To this end, for example, the organisation produced 13 textbooks in Arabic in 2018, and made them freely available via open source (cf. *ibid.*).

Finally, in addition to these activities, the association produces organic farm seeds, seedlings, vegetables, fruit, flowers, herbs, processed food products and agricultural inputs, such as biopesticides or biofertilisers, for distribution, exchange or sale (cf. Buzuruna Juzuruna 2023) (see Appendix 8).

## 5. Methodology

Half of the four interviews were conducted in person, while the other two were conducted via video call using the Zoom platform. The interviews were recorded with a smartphone, saved as an audio file and then transcribed using the intelligent verbatim transcription method to improve readability (see transcripts in Appendix 4 to 7). Prior to the interview, the interviewee was asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 2) giving them the option to remain anonymous and informing them about data protection. All four interviewees chose to be quoted by their actual names, including the two translators who assisted with the two interviews, which were conducted in Arabic and required translation. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each. As each interviewee holds a different position in the organisation where they work (see Appendix 1), or has experience and knowledge in different areas of the dissertation topic, it was decided to make the individual interviews as flexible as possible and leave room for spontaneity. Fully structured interviews were considered too rigid and were replaced by semi-structured interviews due to their inability to adapt to the particular situation of the person and the organisation. A series of questions were prepared in advance. The table (see Appendix 3) shows the prepared questions, which were divided into different parts. However, the chosen semi-structured interview style left room to react spontaneously to statements, which is why the list of questions was created more for orientation during the interview than to follow it rigidly.

When conducting the data collection in the field in the form of face-to-face interviews, the biggest challenge was the language barrier in conducting the interviews in both Arabic and English. In the first case, an interpreter was needed to help translate both the questions and the answers from English to Arabic and vice versa. It must be considered that the translator is a human being who could be biased, as might have been the case with the Syrian translator, who could emphasise certain aspects based on her own perceptions and experiences. The translation process carries the risk that points and details that could be significant are omitted, summarised or points are added or interpreted depending on the translator's standpoint. In addition, the language barrier posed a challenge when conducting one of the online interviews, as English was the *lingua franca* for both the interviewer and the interviewee, i.e. a common language used for

communication between speakers with different mother tongues. Certain points may not have been expressed or understood as desired.

Another major challenge was significant problems with the internet connection in the case of an interview. The interviewee lives in Lebanon, which initially caused problems in preparing for the meeting, as there was no electricity in the area at the time of the appointment, as happens several times a day. Conducting the interview proved to be extremely difficult as the connectivity in the area was very poor, so unfortunately many points were lost as they were incomprehensible.

Both the language challenges and the connectivity problems eventually led to difficulties in transcription, which was done by manually listening to the audio files. Some points could not be understood, and due to the risks of interpreting wrongly, these parts had to be left out. Finally, it must be taken into account that the recording of conversations, especially the two interviews conducted via Zoom and in one of the cases without a camera due to the connection problems mentioned above, completely omits the aspect of non-verbal communication. Even though the widespread assumption that over 90% of our communication is non-verbal is apparently a misinterpretation of findings by the psychologist Albert Mehrabian, which has led to a widespread myth, it is nevertheless considered true that a large part of our communication is non-verbal via body language, hand gestures, tone of voice or facial expressions etc. (cf. Lapakko 2007: 8; cf. *ibid.*: 10).

### **Note on the translations**

The two interviews with the Syrian refugees were conducted thanks to the help of translators, to whom I am very grateful for their help. The interview with Salem Al Azouaq was assisted by Sydney Rubin, an anthropology student from the United States of America who was volunteering at Greenhouse For All at the same time as me and kindly offered her help in translating as she is almost fluent in both languages. She also added an interesting thought that I would like to add here when I told her about the difficulties of transcribing an interview that was less formal than I had expected in advance. Salem, the rose farmer, interrupted the conversation several times to offer us drinks, especially cold water with pink rose tea, a refreshing drink in the summer heat of July; other times rose tea and rose jam were offered, delicious little and more than

welcome interruptions. The entire interview was more of a conversation than a formal research survey. When I shared with her my thoughts and reflections on how I could transform a non-formal conversation into a much more formal research interview transcript, she suggested that I write down this very observation, as this is also part of the research: to observe how the modalities of researching in the field and conducting interviews can differ depending on the cultural context. Looking back at all four interviews, I perceive a difference between the two interviews with the two Syrian interviewees and the other two interviewees, although of course I have to take into account that the latter two were conducted online, which is already a different context for communication. Nevertheless, both interviews with Faiqa and Salem were very informal, with interruptions from all sides - interviewer, interviewee, translator -, felt more lively and definitely followed less the predefined framework of guidelines (see Appendix 3) I had prepared in advance, which is why I was glad to have chosen a semi-structured style instead of a fully structured one.

The conversation with Faiqa Mohammed Al Jasem was facilitated by Amira Kassim Kozeav, to whom I am equally deeply grateful for accompanying me to the place of Saadnayel and who made the conversation in English-Arabic possible in the first place. Amira is one of the four local teachers at the Greenhouse For All School in Deir Zenoun/Bar Elias. Although she was born in this Lebanese village in the Beqaa, her nationality is Syrian, as her mother is Lebanese but her father is Syrian, which under Lebanese citizenship law means that she is also Syrian, as citizenship can only be granted by male Lebanese. This results in her having a much weaker legal status in the country than other Lebanese and she might understand Faiqa's observations and perceptions on a personal level, which is why she sometimes adds her thoughts. Lastly, it should be taken into account that it is likely that Amira's translation was not completely unbiased, as she may not have an objective point of view on the situation.

## Presentation of interviewees

### Faiqa Mohammed Al Jasem

Faiqa Al Jasem comes from a traditional farming family from the Aleppo area in neighbouring Syria. Before she had to flee, she worked as a children's teacher. In 2019, she came to Lebanon and has been working in the Bekaa Valley at *Buzuruna Juzuruna* since 2020. She holds a legal status as a recognised refugee. In the BJ collective, people call her '*Malikat el buzur*' (the 'Seed Queen') (Buzuruna Juzuruna 2023), as she is the head of the seed bank in Saadnayel in Zahlé district, where she manages more than 1,000 varieties of land seeds from different countries, including her home country. She is responsible for inventorying, cleaning, sorting, storing, quality testing the seeds through germination tests (75% must germinate to be considered good and saleable) and distributing and selling them to customers (cf. Buzuruna Juzuruna 2023; cf. Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023) (see Appendix 8).

### Salem Al Azouaq

Salem Al Azouaq was a founding member of *Buzuruna Juzuruna* in 2015 and still works closely with the association. He also owns his own rose farm *Salem's Organic Farm* in Al-Marj, a neighbouring town of Bar Elias in the western Beqaa district. He is originally from Damascus in Syria, where he also worked as a rose farmer and was known for his products in the region. In 2012, he came to Lebanon and has UNHCR refugee status.

On his farm in Al-Marj (see Appendix 8), he mainly grows roses, including the world-renowned Damascene rose, from which he produces a range of high-quality organic products, namely rose syrup, rose tea, rose jam and rose water, which he offers for sale. He also has a variety of vegetables and plants, focusing on local varieties, as well as bees and sheep. On his farm, Salem employs eight people, half of whom are Lebanese and the other half Syrian, the latter all women.

At BJ, he provides his agricultural expertise to the association and serves as a trainer - and also trained Faiqa Al Jasem, among others (cf. Buzuruna Juzuruna 2023; cf. Salem Al Azouaq, personal communication, 5 July 2023).

### **Yoshito Nishino**

Japanese-born Yoshito (“Yoshi”) Nishino left his home country in 2019 after working in Tokyo in business, journalism and as a maths teacher on weekdays and volunteering for tsunami victims on weekends. He came to Lebanon after having volunteered with refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos. He realised that the communities in the Beqaa area, which shelter most of the displaced Syrians behind the Anti-Lebanon, the mountain range that separates the two countries, needed support. Together with other volunteers, he initiated a friendship-based collaboration with Khajak, an Armenian farmer in Anjar, a village of Armenians in the Beqaa right on the border with Syria, whom they helped with farming in exchange for seedlings, which they then distributed to Syrian families so they could start their own vegetable gardens. The initiative quickly expanded and became the Greenhouse for All project, which today includes not only the gardening/agriculture component, but also a school that provides education to children in the area and is run by Yoshi. The project welcomes volunteers from all over the world to enrich the project with their ideas for activities, run art, English, outdoor, sports and other classes, and also employs four local teachers (cf. Yoshito Nishino, personal communication, 16 August 2023; cf. Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023).

### **Kamil Smęda**

Kamil Smęda is a Polish citizen and currently works as a clinical psychologist at *Dom pomocy społecznej w Bochni*, an institution for chronically mentally ill people in Poland. During his psychology studies, he spent a year in Lebanon, where he was enrolled at the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut. During this time, he met Yoshito Nishino, and together with two other dedicated volunteers, he co-initiated the entire *Greenhouse For All* project, which started exclusively with the gardening component and mainly with the distribution of vegetable and fruit seedlings to displaced families from Syria in the village of Deir Zenoun in the Beqaa. As a psychology student at the time, he not only took care of the mental health of the refugees and the people in the village community, but also of the other volunteers (cf. Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023).

## **6. Results**

### **6.1. Introduction**

The following part summarises the results of the interviews conducted with the four informants, following the same categories and structure of Chapter III, where the benefits of gardening were analysed on the basis of a literature review. As can be seen in the table with the guidelines for the conduct of the interviews (see Appendix 3), it was decided to focus on three main categories after asking the interviewees about their background, profession and the activities they engage in, namely the perceived benefits of gardening in the context Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the challenges for both Syrian individuals and communities in engaging in gardening for private or business purposes, and for organisations supporting displaced communities by, among other things, integrating gardening into their humanitarian work.

### **6.2. Benefits and potential of gardening**

#### **Physiological benefits**

None of the respondents explicitly mentioned physical benefits of gardening in the refugee context. However, it is evident that through gardening, the people involved are engaging in physical activity in nature, which has a positive effect on the immune system by increasing vitamin D levels, among other things - points that were analysed in the previous chapter. Kamil mentioned working in the hills at the beginning of *Greenhouse for All's* existence, when the volunteers worked with the Armenian strawberry farmer Khajak in exchange for seedlings, and how much he enjoyed this work (cf. Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023). Chapter III confirmed the positive aspects of this outdoor exercise, and the consumption of untreated organic products, which will be discussed below, is also beneficial to health.

## Nutritional benefits

*Buzuruna Juzuruna, Salem's Organic Farm and Greenhouse for All* all operate on agro-ecological principles where no chemical pesticides are used, only natural ones, so that the end products in the form of vegetables, fruits and flowers are free from chemicals that we mostly find on produce in conventional supermarkets today due to industrial farming. Literature links socio-economic class to the consumption of organic food, with it often being the less educated and less affluent members of society who consume organic food (cf., a.o., Curl et al. 2013). Thus, there is an educational and economic aspect to the consumption of untreated food, which is obviously healthier due to the pesticide residues on the produce as outlined in Chapter III. According to Salem, the consumption of "clean food" is related to how we treat the environment in which we live, a prerequisite for which is a respectful attitude and behaviour: "[...] because the land is the language of the world. As soon as we respect the land, we can eat clean things." (Salem Al Azouaq, personal communication, 5 July 2023).

The value of organic seeds and thus food production also became clear in the conversation with Faiqa. The focus of the association's work is on preserving the high-quality genetic material from which nutrient-rich fruits, vegetables and herbs germinate that are not genetically modified and do not need to be chemically treated - which is related to the power aspect I mentioned in the previous chapter, as growing unmodified and untreated goods increases autonomy from industrial agriculture and the big seed corporations and shifts power towards the ecological counter-movement. BJ's activities, as also mentioned by Faiqa, include distributing seeds and seedlings to displaced communities in nearby camps, encouraging them to grow the "vegetables without medicine" themselves: "And when they taste the vegetables without medicine, they have the courage to complete and to plant more and more." (Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023).



## Psychological benefits

A recurring theme mentioned several times by both Faiqa and Kamil was a general feeling of satisfaction and well-being, even an increase in overall happiness, as a result of engaging in gardening.

In the conversation with Kamil, it became clear that this feeling of happiness was perceived by both sides: by the people involved in the humanitarian-oriented organisation and by the recipients of the aid in the form of the distribution of seedlings, the refugees. In the conversation with Kamil, his enthusiasm and joy in the work and his joy in the memory of supporting the farmer Khajak, "earning" seedlings and giving them to the needy in the communities, became very clear. He associates this joy with the time spent together, which included (intercultural) exchanges where people "drink tea and spend some time together" (Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023). While his own joy and pleasure in carrying out the activities, perhaps related to doing a meaningful activity where the result is visible and leads to a rewarding activity, was obvious and very noticeable, Kamil also twice mentions the happiness and joy he and the other volunteers perceived in the recipients of the seedlings:

It was very great memories of seeing the people- when we were visiting them and seeing them smile and being happy, not only making the gardens but also just spend time and try to communicate together, drink tea and spend some time together. [...]

But in the meantime, when we started helping and seeing how much happiness it's bringing, how much smiles for the kids and children and the whole neighbourhood. It's started to bring more joy in the village and people were very glad to receive us and have some small things to take care of.

(Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023)

In the second part, another aspect emerges: that of taking care of something. Through the seedlings brought to families who have been forcibly displaced from their homeland and have lost their homes and most of their possessions, perhaps even relatives, there is great psychological value in having something to care for.

The feeling of happiness is also evident in a statement by Faiqa, who relates it to letting go of "negative energy" and "negative ideas" when "working with the soil". Similarly, Faiqa states more than once how much she loves her work and praises the

cooperation with her work colleagues, who feel like a family to her - also of great value for people who may have lost their own family and their sense of belonging being in a new country. The working environment at BJ seems to give her this sense of connection and belonging:

They work here because they love the place, they love this work. Not like to bring money or something like that. It's like to make more family, to make more friends; they love this work. If you make something with love, the relation will be amazing. She also said that they all know each other. There are cousins, family friends and there is kind of a connection between the people. They know each other, so it will be more comfortable for all.

(Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023)

Another aspect that came up is personal growth. Kamil was careful about projecting his own feelings onto those of others, saying that he did not really know Arabic at the beginning of the project, which made it difficult for him to judge the perceptions, thoughts and feelings of the recipients. However, he said he himself had felt how he had grown as a person and how this kind of work had given him a sense of peace and "amazing feelings", taking care of the seedlings together with the families. He said he "could sense these feelings also from these people, which are basically a form of healing for the family and overall the community." (Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023). For traumatised communities, this form of healing on an individual and community level is crucial, as most of these people unfortunately do not have access to psychological support in the form of therapy or similar, which is why an alternative way of psychologically healing from experienced trauma is of utmost importance for their holistic well-being.

It is worth mentioning another psychological factor, expressed in two statements by Kamil and Yoshi, who make a link to education and training, through which the beneficiaries can feel empowered, as they, especially the children and young people, receive, together with the seedlings, the hands-on knowledge of how to take care of them and grow them into harvestable plants, in case they did not already have it: "If they can learn how to taking care of the seedlings and plant by themselves, by their own experience, I think it's very good" (Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023). Yoshi highlights the aspect of making the children and their families realize "that we can do it. Even their house, their small space in their camps." (Yoshito Nishino,

personal communication, 16 August 2023). In this statement, the idea shines through that people are given the feeling that they have agency and can create something despite the small scope of action.

Finally, Faiqa mentions a sense of security and support that comes from the sense of community at BJ, where work colleagues, regardless of nationality, feel like family, which is crucial for displaced people who fear discrimination, arrest or even arbitrary deportation, especially for those without valid papers. Although both Faiqa and Salem have legal residency status as refugees, their legal and social status is obviously weaker than that of Lebanese in the country, making this sense of security an important prerequisite for psychological well-being.: “She feels that she is so safe between them-Lebanese. She feels like they are something like a family and they support her, and she feels safe among them.”

### **Societal benefits**

In terms of the benefits to the wider community and society as a whole, a variety of themes emerged in the conversations.

First of all, the aspect of shared time and communication has already been mentioned. Through the care of the saplings that Kamil, Yoshi and others distributed, Syrians not only came together out of curiosity and potentially became closer in community in the camps, but also, as Kamil particularly mentioned, they received the foreigners with great hospitality, drank tea together and had informal conversations that very likely went beyond simply sharing about the care of the saplings. This communication with the "stranger" on both sides, with people from different backgrounds and cultural contexts, thus promoted intercultural exchange. Yoshi also mentions that “any kind of people [...] come and interact” referring to the volunteers from all over the world that Greenhouse for All receives and who contribute to "a variety of activity" for the children, which include the rooftop garden ("Peace Garden") but go beyond mere gardening activities. The project started, as stated, with the latter, focusing on planting gardens for food production, but now goes far beyond that, welcoming people from all parts of the world who naturally contribute to communication and the exchange of ideas, thoughts, skills, stories, etc. from a wide range of backgrounds - which in turn benefits

all sides. The exchange between people from different backgrounds also takes place at Salem's rose farm, where he employs four Lebanese and four Syrians, the latter all women, thus contributing to an exchange and mixing of communities that are not socially on the same level and where one part might face discrimination and resentment. Through gardening together, however, these people are automatically brought together and perceive each other as such: as people for whom nationality, origin, etc. suddenly no longer play a role and political and social aspects no longer matter. Faiqa, with the support of translator Amira, has put this aspect of closeness between cultures, of being human, into beautiful words, highlighting in particular the closeness between Lebanese and Syrian cultures, which were once the same:

The war separates the people. Before, a long time ago, we remember that the Syrians came to Lebanon, and they spent all the summer planting and sharing with the Lebanese and they went back to Syria. Now because there is a war, a big hate starts to grow between them. There are many Lebanese girls married to Syrians and the opposite happens. Now it is not fair to let the people hate each other. And before, she also said, that they were one country. We have one culture; we have many things in common. We are so close.

(Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023)

Apart from the cooperation and exchange between Lebanese and Syrians on Salem's farm and within BJ, and the cross-cultural communication between volunteers from abroad and Syrians and Lebanese from the region, this exchange in the work with *Greenhouse for All* also took place between Lebanese communities which, as mentioned in the first part of this work, are too often separated culturally and especially by their religious affiliation. The form of non-monetary exchange with the Lebanese-Armenian Khajak, based on mutual friendship and help and work in exchange for seeds and seedlings, contributes to strengthening social cohesion, which is essential in a societally fragile and highly diverse country like Lebanon.

The exchange goes beyond mere communication between people from different religious, cultural and national backgrounds, but also includes a learning component: the exchange of knowledge. Agricultural/horticultural expertise and ideas are shared by all sides, resulting in mutual learning and knowledge enhancement. Kamil confirms the findings of the literature review in Chapter III that many Syrians are familiar with

growing food and have a great knowledge of plants and horticultural practices when he says:

Sometimes it was really interesting because we were also exchanging the ideas behind agriculture because mostly we were working with Syrian people, but also Lebanese, but Syrian people are very good, like they know about the agriculture. Sometimes they showed us what to do and how to plant and how to dig some nice rows in the ground, so were all the time exchanging information between us. So we were not only learning from each other, and yes bringing the happiness, the seedlings.

(Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023).

Humanitarian and development work thereby consists not of a one-way movement with the giving from donors to recipients, but rather of two arrows: the exchange of knowledge, ideas and practices from which all sides benefit equally. Out of this exchanged knowledge comes something beautiful, to use Kamil's poetic words: “we were putting the seeds of knowledge into these communities, to work together, and we could see them grow. And we could see how great it was” (Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023).

Working together and doing a meaningful activity clearly creates a sense of community, as can be seen from a variety of statements made by Faiqa, who, as mentioned above, perceives her work colleagues more as family and for whom it does not matter what their nationality is, and which, together with the enjoyment of the work itself, gives her motivation and drive:

But the situation here [at BJ] everything is good. They are good to each other, Syrians and Lebanese, everything is good here [...] at Buzuruna they are like the same here [...] they are like friends in this work, not like they are working. [...] . They work here because they love the place, they love this work. Not like to bring money or something like that. It's like to make more family, to make more friends; they love this work. If you make something with love, the relation will be amazing. She also said that they all know each other. There are cousins, family, friends and there is kind of a connection between the people. [...] She also likes the work but it is like the main thing is the persons she works with. The persons, then the work. She loves the work, but the main cause to be with them is the persons she works with. Like a team. If you work with a team, you can improve more and you love and you will not say 'I am tired'.

(Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023)

Growing vegetables and herbs with high-quality seeds offers Syrian refugees in Lebanon a tangible solution to the problem of food security, as it allows them to achieve a degree

of self-sufficiency that reduces their dependence on external aid. Being able to grow nutritious produce helps improve dietary diversity and health status, and alleviates some of the stress associated with accessing basic needs. Faiqa explains the sustainability of their seeds:

There are seeds that are meant to last, you don't have to come back and buy them again. She said maybe for ten years, you don't need to buy new seeds. That you have your own nutrition, food, something like food surplus, like storage. It is something like you can plant your own food. You can not depend on anyone to buy your food, like self-sustaining. You can buy these seeds and plant for many years and grow your own food.

(Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023)

Salem also refers to self-sufficiency when he talks about a project in cooperation with BJ where about twenty sheep were given to the same number of refugee families who were subsequently trained on farming, with the aim of becoming self-sufficient and self-reliant (cf. Salem Al Azouaq, personal communication, 5 July 2023).

In addition, gardens are outdoor classrooms where children and young people learn about biology, ecology and sustainable agricultural practices. In particular, Greenhouse for All's rooftop peace garden provides this opportunity for hands-on learning experiences that complement formal lessons, which are mainly taught by the local teachers: "If they can learn how to take care of the seedlings and plant by themselves, by their own experience, I think it's very good" (Yoshito Nishino, personal communication, 16 August 2023). Engaging with nature sparks curiosity, creativity and teaches valuable life skills that give young people practical knowledge for their future and give them ideas on how they might one day start a farming business or grow their own fruit and vegetables, as Yoshi puts it:

For the children, then, they start thinking about: 'okay, so in the school we created tomatoes and cucumbers. Maybe in my house, I make zucchinis, I make watermelons'. Like let them, how do you say, make their idea, make their dream, expand what they wish, what they want to.

(Yoshito Nishino, personal communication, 16 August 2023).

This educational aspect of gardening is related to the fact that gardens give a sense of agency and pride: "Because educating youth to create something. But if we can give something or share something, they can make by themselves, they work by themselves,

making something themselves, by their own physical work.” (Yoshito Nishino, personal communication, 16 August 2023). The ability to nurture life and experience growth is a powerful tool, especially in light of the fact that they have often been victims of trauma and may feel powerless. The ability to grow and cultivate one's own food strengthens one's sense of resilience and ability to build something new and beautiful, to create a new life and develop a sense of dignity and purpose, as Yoshi also states: "they [seedlings] bring some dignity or how we say? Some of the very important part of human being, we believe.” (ibid.)

A further aspect was already dealt with above and raised by Kamil, namely that of community healing related to the strengthening of a sense of purpose and bonds among refugees with similar experiences and the volunteers. The garden becomes a place where stories are shared, and mutual support flourishes, creating a sense of belonging in a new and unfamiliar environment as evident in the conversation with Faiqa.

Another theme that crystallised in the conversation with Faiqa, who herself comes from a traditional farming family, is the preservation of farming traditions and cultural values on the part of Syrians, for whom agriculture and gardening are deeply rooted in their cultural tradition, as mentioned earlier. Gardening offers a way to preserve and pass on traditional knowledge and ensure that future generations retain a connection to their roots and this value, which is especially important considering that many of the children in the *Greenhouse for All* project respectively of the camps in Deir Zenoun were born and grew up there and know no other reality than that in the precarious circumstances of these settlements. This transfer of knowledge hence not only perpetuates cultural practices but also fosters a sense of continuity and cultural identity.

Finally, apart from the impact on the displaced communities, the gardening initiatives make a positive contribution to Lebanese society as a whole, contributing to intercultural understanding and friendships and strengthening social cohesion by bridging social divides and promoting social harmony through communal gardening, as already described above, which is important given the tensions that often exist between communities. But the contribution also consists of a contribution of practical knowledge as well as contains an ecological component, as the land and the fruits of the labour will be left to the Lebanese once the Syrians return to their country, as Faiqa says:

When they leave Lebanon, they will let this place for the Lebanese. She feels that they make something good for the Lebanese society. And they start to share, and how you are planting the seeds, they are planting the idea of this way of seeding. And she says that there are plenty of bad things, but the good outnumbers the bad a million times over.

## **Environmental benefits**

In connection with the last point mentioned by Faiqa, the ties to nature as well as the positive ecological impact of the work were evident in all the interviews. All projects embrace an ecological dimension and purpose, namely environmental protection based on the knowledge and conviction about the interconnectedness of people and nature and the need to respect and protect the land we live on and use for basic human needs such as food production.

The farming method followed by all initiatives follows the principles of sustainability, respect and basically the philosophy of permaculture, which is about working with and not against nature and aiming for self-sufficiency, whereby organic farming can be understood as part of the permaculture approach (cf. Shumba 2001). The preservation and protection of the natural environment with all its components and the human being as part of nature underlies the goal of all initiatives, which becomes clear in several remarks. In particular, in the interactions with Faiqa and Salem, this value of holistically conserving both the health of agro-ecosystems and people was palpable. By sustaining and cultivating indigenous seeds, Buzuruna Juzuruna helps to preserve indigenous plants (and the knowledge about them) and in doing so, counteract the loss of biodiversity. And it is the Syrians who, according to Salem, contribute to greater species diversity:

And he was saying also that even though there are a lot of Syrians here, with more Syrians, there is more people planting and contributing to variety. And he was naming a bunch of different things that he plants here. And there may be a lot of Syrians here but they also bring a lot of diversity in plants.

(Salem Al Azouaq, personal communication, 5 July)

Following these ecological principles, none of the initiatives use chemical pesticides or other means with negative effects on environmental health, relying instead, for example, on the use of natural fertilisers such as manure or compost (cf. Kamil Smęda, personal



communication, 15 August 2023). The use of external means to protect the plants or to maintain growth is apparently neither even necessary, as is clear from the description of the seed preservation and the seed bank by Faiqa:

It's something to save the plants that have already been for a long time and that start to disappear. So, they start to collect them and plant them. When they planted them, they didn't put anything, it is like natural, without any poison sometimes or to put some kind of medicine to them to make them grow quicker. The idea is that if you buy from their seeds, these seeds can grow up each year. If you buy any kinds, like tomatoes, this year, next year your tomatoes will start to make seeds in your place. Without using anything extra, like fertilizer. There are seeds that are meant to lasting, you don't have to come back and buying them again. She said maybe for ten years, you don't need to buy new seeds. That you have your own nutrition, food, something like food surplus, like storage. It is something like you can plant your own food. You can not depend to anyone to buy your food, like self-sustaining. You can buy these seeds and plant for many years and grow your own food.

(Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023)



Figure 18 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall]. 19 June 2022).

The exclusive use of organic and local or internal 'remedies' ("nothing chemical, nothing from outside", Salem Al Azouaq, personal communication, 5 July) further contributes to increasing and strengthening self-sufficiency and benefits the environment by reducing emissions.

Like BJ and *Salem's Organic Farm*, *Greenhouse for All* relies only on the power of nature for its gardening activities and tries to get as much as possible from within and on site, for example by obtaining their own seeds from vegetables and fruits (Figure 18) or, notably, by working with the organic strawberry and vegetable farmer Khajak and obtaining organic seedlings (Figure 19 and 20).

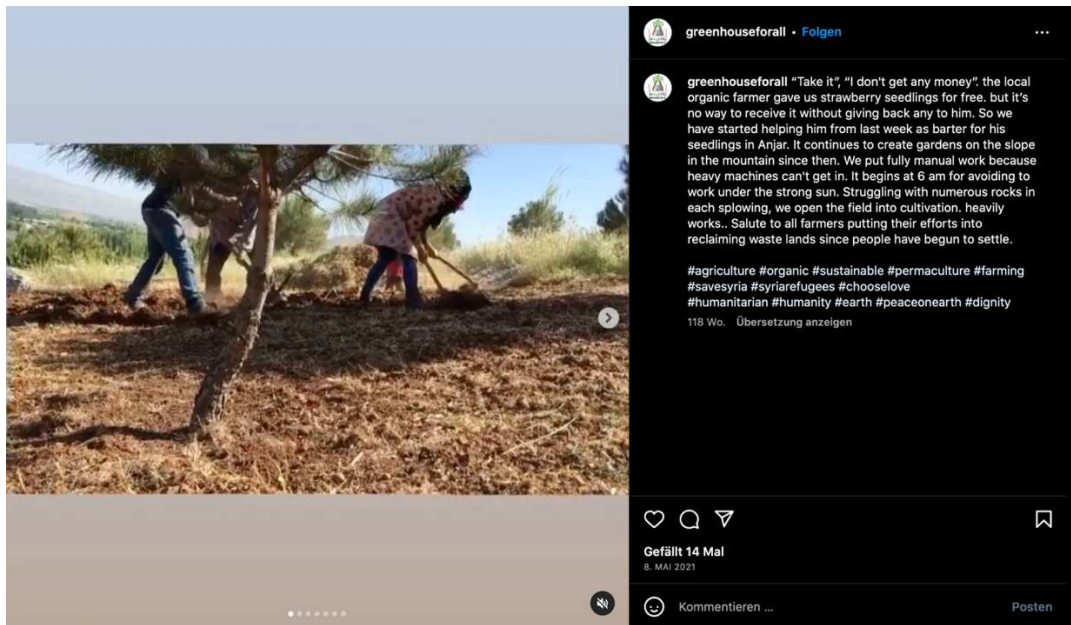


Figure 19 (Greenhouse For All [[@greenhouseforall](#)], 8 May 2021).

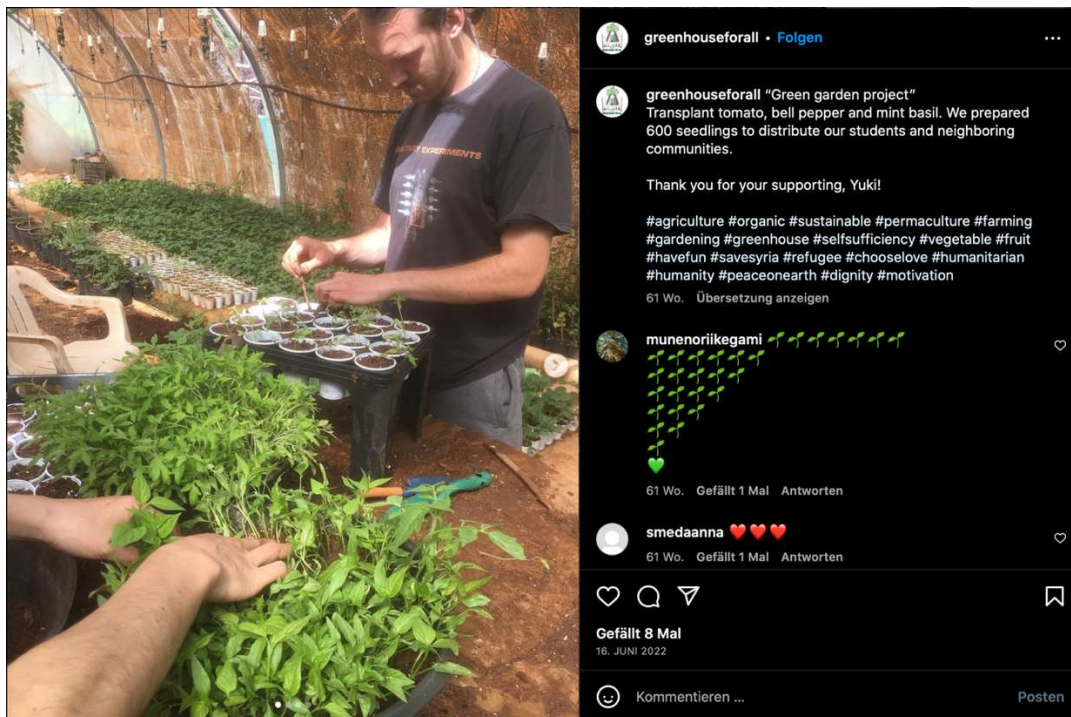


Figure 20 (Greenhouse For All [[@greenhouseforall](#)], 16 June 2022).

The strong sense of connection with nature is also evident in the conversation with Yoshi when he talks about his path to the work he is doing now, explaining how he “sometimes[... travelled to US to meet some indigenous peoples to learn about the cultures and how we get along with nature” (Yoshito Nishino, personal communication, 16 August 2023). This experience obviously influenced and shaped his view of humans as beings connected to and dependent on their environment, and the need to integrate this knowledge and thinking into educational work. This led to the establishment of the school's rooftop garden, where the children are taught ecological values, and also to Yoshi's desire to expand the gardening component by offering proper gardening courses with agroecological training to the young people (cf. *ibid.*). Salem also emphasises the importance of teaching ecological values and how to garden at school:

[...] in schools, just like we teach chemistry and physics and languages even, teaching about the land and how we use it and how we live off of it and that we should protect it- that should be something that is equally important, because the land is the language of the world. As soon as we respect the land, we can eat clean things.

(Salem Al Azouaq, personal communication, 5 July)

And he underlines the value of interconnectedness and the value of the land as such:

The land and farming is really just the future and it is kind of everything, and the land that we farm from is also the land that we build on, and that we eat from and that we live on. And all of the earth is connected, it is all connected.

(*ibid.*)

### **Economic and Vocational benefits**

Finally, the professional and economic potential of gardening is also worth mentioning. As Salem proves, gardening can be turned into a business. Although he is a refugee who does not own any land - a point we will come back to later in the challenges part - he has his own rose farm where he not only grows a variety of roses but also cultivates other plants and keeps bees and sheep, and where he employs staff himself - above we saw this potential in the example of Uganda, how refugees can contribute to society and the local



economy and labour market and employ locals themselves and thus contribute positively to the labour market.

The idea of turning cultivation into a profitable business also underlies the commitment of Greenhouse for All, especially at the beginning of their existence, when they distributed seedlings to individuals so that they could continue gardening, not only to provide food for themselves, but also to eventually sell to the community and establishing a micro-business (Figure 21 and 22).

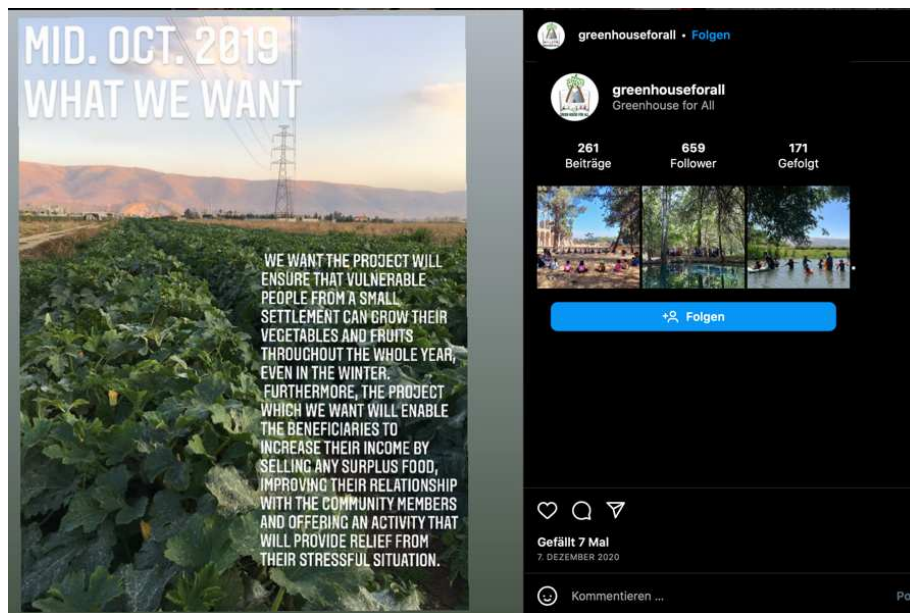


Figure 21 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall]. 7 December 2020).

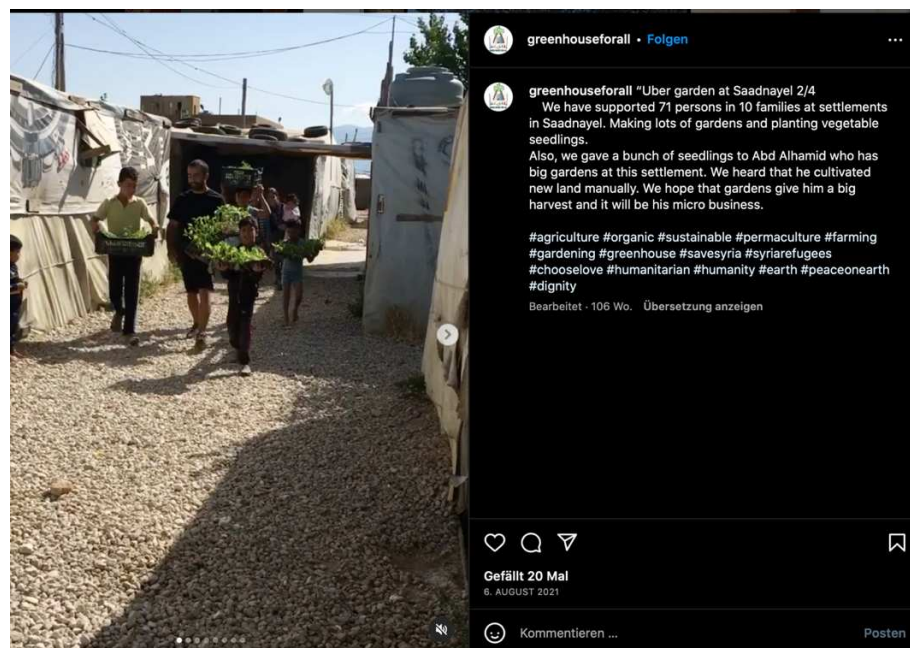


Figure 22 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall]. 6 August 2021).

### 6.3. Identification of challenges and needs

#### Challenges

As for the challenges and needs for change or ideas for improvement, these are addressed in the following part from the perspective of the refugees and the organisations that integrate gardening into their engagement. First, the challenges for Syrian refugees in Lebanon that emerged from the statements of the interviewees are presented, before the problems faced by the organisations are presented in a second step. To conclude this section in an encouraging and motivating way, ideas from the interviewees are presented last, all of whom have shown great enthusiasm, drive and perseverance in an environment that indeed presents many problems and challenges and could make others resign. However, the respondents confirmed the choice of the phrase ‘challenges’ with its inherent proactive undertone instead of ‘problems’ and ‘crises’.

For the displaced Syrian communities in the country, there are "lots of challenges", as Salem puts it. The biggest and recurring problem is that of land and access to it. The legal situation of refugees, even if they have regular residence papers, does not provide for them to acquire and own land. Salem confirms the impossibility of owning land already mentioned in the interview with Kamil by saying that he does not own the rather large land on which he runs his farm, but can only lease it. "Bigger lands are only owned by Lebanese," Kamil explains, which is why both Salem can only rent his land to farm on, for a period of five years before he has to renew the lease, and why *Greenhouse for All* is prevented from planting larger gardens for refugees to grow on, as only small plots of land can be cultivated at their modest shelters with a few plants. The problem this inability to own land brings, as Salem explains, is the time limitation of renting, which inhibits one from thinking, planning and implementing long-term and permanent projects:

And there is a limited time for it. You can't rent it for more than five years before you have to go through the whole process again. And it feels like you always have to do light projects, with the animals and the farm. Because it feels temporary and he doesn't fully own the land.

(Salem Al Azouaq, personal communication, 5 July)

Related to access to land and property is the difficulty of access to housing. Kamil speaks of the high prices people have to pay to live in the tents, which they have to pay to the "owner of the land", the *Shawish*. Faiqa puts it even more drastically, saying that some

people do not even have a place to live, let alone cultivate the land: "And she said that sometimes they didn't find a home to live. They didn't give them houses to live, even if you pay rent, they cannot give it to you. So, what about the land?" (Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023).

In addition, despite the protracted situation, Syrians do not receive adequate legal protection and support from the Lebanese government (cf. Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023; cf. Salem Al Azouaq, personal communication, 5 July). Furthermore, Faiqa feels a general sense of undesirability, which manifests itself mainly in the way Lebanese clients treat her or communicate with her:

Sometimes Lebanese don't treat her well as a Syrian. Racist customers. The customers, the people buying the seeds, sometimes don't treat her in a good way because she is Syrian. The idea is that nobody likes them, they say "it's enough". It is not necessarily what they say but how they treat her, they may not say 'Hi' or treat her in a kind way.

(Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023)

Social tensions between the refugee and host communities were also perceived by Kamil, who speaks of "fights and arguing between the Syrians and the Lebanese, and so many fights, and so many gunfights. Because of the religion, because of the culture, because of everything that is going on in the country" and a sense of jealousy on the part of the Lebanese who are themselves struggling with the economic crisis and the hardship it brings and feel abandoned by humanitarian and development actors in the distribution of their aid:

And the biggest thing I heard from the Lebanese people is, the one thing that I always heard is 'ok why are you helping Syrian people? We are suffering, no one is helping us, not even the government is helping us. There are so many international NGOs giving money to the people, but we are left, and no one is helping us.

(Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023)

Another problem that has emerged is the lack of a sense of security due to the deportations and forced return to Syria by the military and the authorities, which is of course a prerequisite not only for psychological well-being and a quiet and peaceful life, but also for any long-term mental activity such as gardening and food cultivation:

But now, because of the situation that the police picks refugees and let them return back to Syria, they have no safety. And they will plant their land and then they will by force go back to Syria. So, they are not interested to plant because they don't know if anytime they have to leave to Syria. [...] And if you want to plant something, you have to feel at least safe. This work takes time.

(Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023)

The lack of a sense of security naturally hinders any initiative to create sustainable living conditions and grow food so that the refugees can feed themselves. Faiqa says that in Syria, (quasi-)self-sufficiency was possible because "they lived from the land and there was no other source. That is how they get their main food". In Lebanon, however, self-sufficiency and "living off the land" is more difficult to achieve because of access to land and the overall legal and social situation.

Another issue that emerged is access to water, which is a widespread problem in Lebanon, as Faiqa explained (cf. Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023).

Furthermore, it is clear that the situation for refugees in general is characterised by deprivation and hard physical work, which they have to do especially in agriculture [and construction], often involving the whole family, without the freedom and privilege to choose a job (cf. Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023).

Rose farmer Salem further addresses a business-related concern when asked about the particular challenges refugees face in setting up a farming business similar to his. The aforementioned challenge of not having the right to land or property comes up, and also an economic one, that of the lower profit he makes in Lebanon compared to his home country: "He worked in the exact same field, in rose farming there. But one of the main differences is that there, he got a lot, a lot more money for each thing, like for the same amount than here" (cf. Salem Al Azouaq, personal communication, 5 July).

### **For organizations**

In terms of organisations on the ground, the challenges outlined by Kamil and Yoshi were also diverse in relation to those perceived by *Greenhouse for All* and by Faiqa representing BJ.

As with refugees, the issue of land was also a major theme in the conversation with Kamil and Yoshi. Kamil explained that due to a lack of manpower, as the initiative

consisted of only four or five people and even now lacks some consistency in a stable team of several people (like BJ, which has a team of about 20 permanent staff and long-term supporters) and relies on volunteers, who however sometimes support the project for only a month or less, the initiative was and is not able to expand the project. Also emerging in the conversation with Yoshi is the theme of wanting to expand the horticultural component and cultivate an entire field to increase the contribution to increased food supply and thus in-kind support and expand agriculture, but this has not been realised so far due to the inability to cultivate the land or find a piece of land. Kamil mentions that the project has been in possession of a piece of land for one year, which has not yet been cultivated because there were not enough people and time and “so much work and not enough people to take care of it” (Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023). And Yoshi speaks of a general difficulty in finding land, as it must provide conditions for access to water as well as protection from theft - two further challenges (cf. Yoshito Nishino, personal communication, 16 August 2023). The difficulty of finding suitable land with the required environmental conditions was also posted on 17 June (see Figure 23).

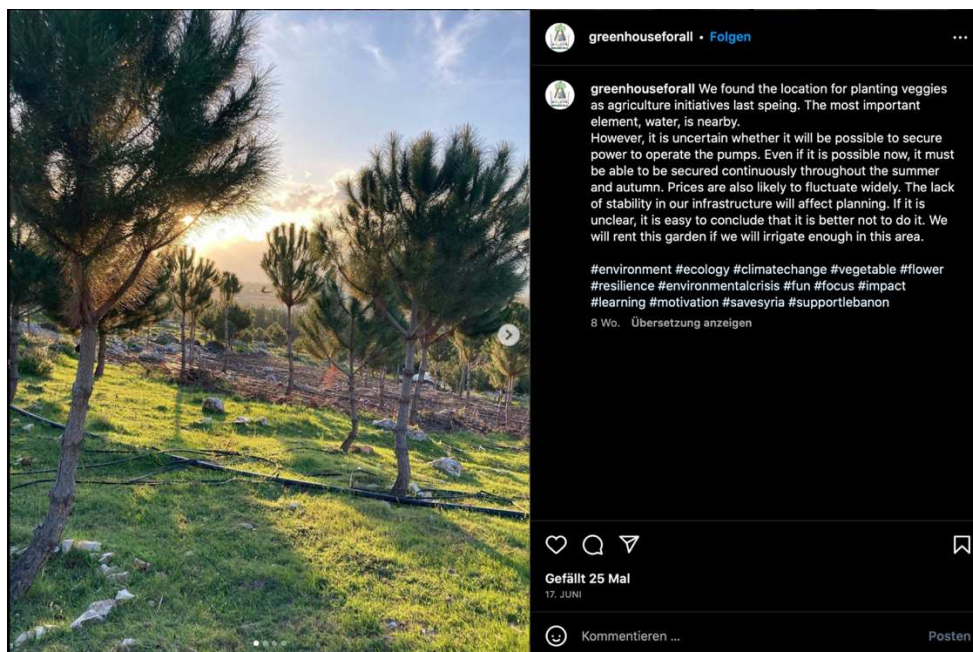


Figure 23 (Greenhouse For All [@greenhouseforall]. 17 June 2023).



Another challenge is the overall complexity of the situation due to political tensions and societal challenges, which are a challenge for organisations such as *Greenhouse for All* to address (cf. Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023). In the midst of this complicated web, it can be a challenge to focus on people's immediate needs and support them to create a decent living situation where food and other basic needs are met, against the backdrop of an overall political and societal context with a multitude of challenges that were outlined in chapter two. Moreover, in the context of providing assistance to vulnerable populations, a major challenge arises when trying to meet the needs of different groups without inadvertently leaving anyone behind and not contributing to the concerns of the Lebanese population, especially the poorer sections of the population, about the assistance efforts directed at Syrian refugees, who are beginning to question the allocation of resources for assistance and feel neglected. Kamil puts it as follows:

And the biggest thing I heard from the Lebanese people is, the one thing that I always heard is ‘ok why are you helping Syrian people? We are suffering, no one is helping us, not even the government is helping us. There are so many international NGOs giving money to the people, but we are left, and no one is helping us. So it’s a very tough and complicated situation but you know, it’s hard not to focus on the politics, but yeah, sometimes we did. But mostly it was all about seedlings and plants.

(Kamil Smęda, personal communication, 15 August 2023)

The desire to empower individuals and communities through the promotion of gardening and self-sufficiency is inextricably linked to the fundamental need for safety and stability, as became clear in the conversation with Faiqa. Creating a sense of safety is central to embarking on long-term projects such as growing a home garden, both for the individual and the collective. The fear of deportation and the constant threat of being uprooted shake the foundation for such projects. Efforts to distribute seedlings and encourage Syrian refugees to plant show the importance of not only providing resources, but also creating an environment where people can feel safe in their quest for self-sufficiency. The stories of those working in this field underscore the fact that the very act of planting requires a sense of security - the assurance that their efforts will not be in vain because of external policy decisions. This dilemma raises questions about the compatibility of long-term development initiatives with the unpredictable nature of humanitarian crises. It underscores the need to balance sustainable solutions with immediate protection, as

people can only plan for their future if their present is stabilized (cf. Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023).

### **Needs for change and Ideas of Improvement**

When it comes to the need for change or improvement, this is obviously related to the challenges mentioned above and is summarised below.

Even though Kamil and Yoshi's statements contradict each other, it became clear that the size of the organisation obviously has an influence on the extent to which the organisation's horticultural activities can be expanded. A larger organisation, as BJ shows, usually has more resources to grow and diversify projects, in this case gardening activities, due to more staff and supporters, possibly greater financial resources or funding, more supporters, both in terms of workforce and financial support, etc. When Kamil talked about the land they owned but could not farm, it showed the limitations of the organisation, and likewise when he explained that due to the limited number of staff and time, the focus is currently on running the school and not on running and expanding the garden component of the project. Finding the right balance between capacity and project scope and the two main components with two different objectives is crucial for effective and sustainable response.

Another need was the aforementioned issue of land. For the expansion of the horticulture component, in addition to more support in the form of staff, land with the conditions of access to water and protection from theft is needed, which Yoshi plans to have by next year:

if we have our own land next year would be nice. Because rooftop is really good to let them do, but it's not like we share our harvest because it is so small amount. But if we have land, but that land is covered by fence, not letting people in, steal our harvest, yeah, if we have that kind of land is nice, next year

(Yoshito Nishino, personal communication, 16 August 2023)

Moreover, according to Faiqa (cf. personal communication, 3 July 2023), the need for safety is of utmost importance before venturing into gardening. As mentioned earlier, the fear of deportation and the unstable living conditions of refugees create an environment of insecurity that hinders long-term projects such as gardening. Without the guarantee of

being able to stay in the country, these forcibly displaced communities are understandably reluctant to invest time and effort in initiatives that require a lasting commitment. A stable living situation combined with the certainty that they will not be forcibly resettled is an essential prerequisite for refugees to have the confidence and security to develop their own food sources through gardening.

Furthermore, the success of efforts to integrate refugees into society through gardening also depends on respectful treatment and support from the Lebanese government, which needs to enact an appropriate legal regime for protection and access to services, as well as support from society at large. Faiqa illustrates the need for respectful treatment in the face of the rude and disrespectful behaviour of some of her clients, but also explains this in terms of the burden on Lebanon, which is the country with the highest number of refugees per capita: “And the Lebanese should treat them well, not like, you know, ‘What are you doing in our land? You are taking our work and you are planting our land’. It is too much for the Lebanese” (cf. Faiqa Al Jasem, personal communication, 3 July 2023).

One idea for expanding the garden component of Greenhouse for All came from Yoshi, who suggested offering agricultural training in collaboration with an organic farmer (probably the Armenian farmer Khajak) once he owns the plot of land he envisions for the organisation (cf. Yoshito Nishino, personal communication, 16 August 2023).

#### **6.4. Interim conclusion**

With this latter question from Faiqa, it opens up a discussion on responsibility and burden sharing and a crucial debate on the need for durable solutions, which will be further discussed in the next chapter. It will consider, among other things, how to support Lebanon, which is obviously overwhelmed with the burden of this large number of refugees in the country that for many years had been welcomed with generosity and open borders in a spirit of brotherhood at the beginning of the Syrian crisis. The initial spirit of welcome, however, has turned into frustration in the Lebanese community, especially and understandably in the poor and socially weaker communities, leading to feelings of envy or racism towards Syrians and arrests and forced returns by the government. This was one of the challenges raised in the previous chapter, apart from manifold other challenges that got evident in the interviews. Yet, in addition to the challenges, a number of benefits also became apparent in the discussions with key informants, which have also been featured in the literature under review.

## Chapter V Discussion and reflection: can gardening serve as a means to address the challenges displaced Syrians face in Bekaa and wider Lebanon?

### 1. Comparison of the empirically analysed benefits with the literature review and discussion

In order to contrast the empirical analysis in the field with the results of the literature review and to place them in context, the following table summarises the most important points identified. I then go through the individual categories of benefits determined and compare them with those found in Chapter III on gardening in general and its potential in the context of forced migration, and reflect on the results.

	Key points of the empirical analysis
Physiological benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (indirectly) enjoyment of work in natural surrounding (Kamil)</li> <li>- (indirectly) consumption of organic produce (Kamil; Faiqa)</li> </ul>
Nutritional benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumption of non-treated, organic, “clean” food, “vegetables without medicine” (Faiqa; Salem)</li> <li>- Combatting food insecurity (Yoshi; Kamil; Faiqa)</li> </ul>
Psychological benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General feeling of well-being and satisfaction (Kamil)</li> <li>- Happiness by both refugees and people of humanitarian organization (Kamil)</li> <li>- Taking care of something (Kamil)</li> <li>- Release of “negative energy” and “negative ideas” (Faiqa)</li> <li>- Sense of belonging and sense of connection (Faiqa)</li> <li>- Personal growth (for volunteers/ people engaged in organization but maybe also for recipients) (Kamil)</li> <li>- Sense of peace and “amazing feelings” (also for refugees?) (Kamil)</li> <li>- (intercultural) exchange, spending time together (“drink tea and spend some time together”) (Kamil)</li> <li>- Sense of security/ safety and support by the community; sense of family (Faiqa)</li> <li>- Sense of agency and empowerment; sense of dignity (Yoshi)</li> </ul>
Societal benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (intercultural) exchange and conversations (Kamil; Yoshi)</li> <li>- Transgression of national and cultural boundaries -&gt; Sense of sameness (Kamil; Yoshi; Faiqa)</li> <li>- Strengthening of social cohesion, creation of relationships and friendships (Kamil; Yoshi; Faiqa)</li> <li>- Exchange of knowledge (Kamil)</li> <li>- Sense of community (Faiqa)</li> <li>- Combatting food insecurity -&gt; fostering self-sufficiency and reducing dependency on external assistance (Yoshi; Faiqa; Salem; Kamil)</li> <li>- Educational potential and training (all)</li> <li>- Preservation of indigenous knowledge, traditions, practices and of cultural values (Faiqa)</li> <li>- Empowerment of people by provision of knowledge, training, education; sense of agency and empowerment (Kamil; Yoshi)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family and community healing (Kamil)</li> <li>- Contribution to host society by ecological contribution as well as fostering societal harmony</li> </ul>
Environmental benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustainability</li> <li>- Preservation of heirloom seeds/ indigenous plants and related knowledge</li> <li>- Respect for nature -&gt; working with nature; conservation of agroecological health</li> <li>- Organic farming without use of chemicals</li> <li>- Sense of connection with natural surrounding</li> <li>- Teaching of ecological values to children and youth and inspiring them for ecological cultivation</li> </ul>
Economic and vocational benefits/potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Turning farming into agrobusiness (Salem)</li> <li>- Linking gardening with training (Yoshi)</li> </ul>

Although it is not explicitly mentioned, it is obvious that both the physical activity of planting in a natural environment and the consumption of untreated, i.e. organic, produce, for which no chemicals in the form of pesticides or fertilisers are used in the case of all three facilities - *Greenhouse for All*, BJ and *Salem's Organic Farm* - have a positive impact on the physical health and well-being of the individual. In the chapter on the general benefits of gardening, it was shown that exposure to sunlight and physical activity in nature is a benefit of gardening that has a positive impact on physical health. The interviews did not discuss the cultivation of medicinal plants for the treatment of diseases, however BJ's focus is on the preservation of indigenous seeds and indigenous knowledge about plants, including herbs, and Salem also talked about the positive effects of rose products for instance, such as their anti-inflammatory effect, when talking to him away from the taped interview.

Growing and eating "vegetables without medicine" provides food with high nutritional value and produce that is free of harmful pesticide residues or other chemical residues.

To what extent cultivation can contribute to combating the food and nutrition insecurity that is also prevalent in the region and visible in everyday life is questionable. In the case of *Greenhouse for All*, the school's roof garden does not offer enough space and capacity to grow food that could be distributed to the children attending the school. In addition, as Kamil mentioned, there is a lack of human resources in particular to develop the garden component of the project to the point where the food can actually be

distributed. During my internship, the families of the children attending the school did receive food parcels containing a variety of products, but these consisted mainly of high-carbohydrate products purchased in the market thanks to a fundraiser organised by one of the long-term volunteers. For the expansion of the agricultural component of the project, there is not only a lack of human support, but also the necessary spatial requirements in the form of land. BJ also aims at food security by distributing seedlings to nearby refugee communities. However, the extent to which food insecurity can actually be addressed and tackled would firstly require more and more detailed research assessing the situation over a long period of time, and secondly is generally difficult to assess as food security as a concept is complex in itself. In the theoretical part, we talked about the three elements that make up food security, namely availability, accessibility and adequacy, and thus relate not only to the amount of food consumed, but also to food adequacy, among others. IDPs are one of the population groups that face difficulties in achieving all three elements, thus violating their right to adequate food. While horticulture has the potential to ensure food accessibility and availability, it does not automatically guarantee adequate nutrition, both in terms of quantity and quality. A balanced diet is often difficult to achieve even for many people who come from comparatively privileged backgrounds, as shown, for example, by the current prevalence of overweight and obesity versus malnutrition, which, however, often occurs in parallel with malnutrition. Displaced people living in tents and in even worse socio-economic conditions face even greater difficulties in meeting this basic requirement for overall well-being (cf. WHO 2021b). The children of the *Greenhouse for All* school, for example, do not show sufficient awareness of the value of healthy eating habits, so a stronger emphasis on nutrition education would be beneficial. One suggestion would therefore be to establish a stronger link between the school's rooftop garden and lessons on gardening and nutrition, which could be done, for example, by making practical use of the food grown, explaining it and preparing a dish with it. Healthy eating requires knowledge of its value and importance, which underlines the need for appropriate awareness-raising in the refugee context as well.

A variety of psychological benefits were found, which largely coincide with the benefits described in the literature review. A general feeling of psychological well-being, joy and happiness was described for all those involved in gardening, which can be attributed to the activity itself, but also to the care of the plants, which has therapeutic effects as noted

in the theoretical part, the release of "negative energy" through working with the soil and the plants, as well as to the social interactions and the resulting sense of connection, belonging and security. Especially in the conversation with Faiqa, the latter aspect became very clear when she referred to BJ's community as her family, regardless of the person's national origin, which shows how meaningful work done together can help fulfil this crucial need for people to feel a sense of belonging and home.

In Stuart-Smith's *The Well Gardened Mind* (2020), she links caring for plants to caring for oneself and associates it with increased self-esteem and the overall therapeutic effects of gardening. Her findings are clearly reflected in the statements from the interviews, as caring for plants, letting go of negativity and remaining feeling peaceful, calm and content emerged. Salem did not mention it, but visiting his rose farm (see Appendix 8) did not make it difficult to be reminded of the psychological impact of green spaces and flowers in particular on emotional wellbeing, as the beauty was abundant, and through his farm Salem was able to continue his traditional work as a rose grower, which he had previously done in Syria, which probably gave him a sense of home and familiarity as well as dignity.

A sense of dignity has been observed by Yoshi and is sought through the activities of *Greenhouse for All*. The idea of giving people a sense of self-determination and empowering them to create their own living space, grow their own food and become more independent of outside help is crucial to a sense of one's own dignity. As mentioned earlier, forcibly displaced people are often highly dependent on outside assistance, often for many years. Thinking about sustainable solutions that empower individuals and help restore people's sense of self-worth and self-respect should be at the heart of any response to the refugee situation and the work of organisations on the ground. The equality and dignity of all human beings is at the core of the UDHR and must be one of the most important principles. It emerges from the discussions that the theoretical results and considerations are also visible in practice or at least receive attention and appreciation. Even if no state measures and regulations are taken due to the lack of legal protection and rights, which do not provide the conditions for equality for Lebanese and refugees, the people involved can actually feel a sense of equality through initiatives such as BJ or *Greenhouse for All* through the joint work of people of different nationalities and origins,



as well as agency through the care of plants and the possibility to provide for one of their basic needs, namely food, themselves.

Yet, the psychological effects of gardening in the refugee context need to be assessed and interpreted with caution, as firstly, the effects on psychological well-being are subjective and may differ from person to person. Secondly, the number of people interviewed cannot provide a comprehensive picture, as more people would need to be interviewed, especially displaced people. And third, a general limitation is that it is difficult to attribute the impact to a single cause. Well-being or health in the holistic sense is the result of a multitude of conditions that cannot be attributed to a single cause. In Faiqa's case, for example, she seems to feel this sense of belonging strongly, but it is difficult to say that it is only due to gardening together. Perhaps she would have this feeling in some other activity in the community - it may be because of the way people in the association interact with her, the pursuit of meaningful work, the beautiful surroundings, or perhaps because of the feeling of being connected to her family's tradition in pursuing an agricultural activity. It is therefore difficult to pinpoint communal gardening as the sole cause.

The observed benefits for the wider community and society as a whole also reflect many aspects analysed in the literature. Through gardening together, participants not only experience a sense of community through people from different backgrounds working together, but also exchange ideas, both in the form of conversation and cultural exchange, as well as the sharing of knowledge and practices. This leads to a sense of community and can ultimately help strengthen social cohesion on a larger scale. When communities in a country such as Lebanon are often so separated from each other due to (perceived) religious and cultural differences, and one village and community is distinct from the other, intra- and inter-community exchanges are crucial for the cohesion of society and the avoidance of societal tensions, which, as explained, often lead not only to discriminatory and racist behaviour, but all too often to violent clashes. Displaced communities often portrayed as scapegoats for the latter as well as the economic problems, which in turn is linked to religious affiliation and has implications for broader relations in the region, as countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia or France, and Syria in particular, have an influence on the country, or rather the political and social (as well as

economic) state of the country is shaped by broader regional relations and conflicts. In particular, community gardening, as within BJ, where national boundaries are transcended through shared meaningful activity in natural environments, has a potential already seen in the example of *Incredible Edible* (IE), where their whole-of-society approach led to the inclusion of the whole community connected through gardening. Integration with education, as modelled by IE, is also pursued by *Greenhouse for All* with the linking of gardening and education and the vision of providing agricultural education in the future. In this way, gardening activities have the potential to cover and be integrated into different components of society and to open up future opportunities that are crucial, especially for the younger generations who often do not know any other environment than the camp. When appropriately combined with education and training, gardening has the potential to not only help address food insecurity and improve nutritional health when the value of nutrition is known or taught, but also to open up future opportunities, thereby encouraging and empowering youth by providing them with skills and training. The potential therefore depends crucially on the extent to which education about nutrition, crop production, diet and ecological values is combined with education about agricultural practices and perhaps even business training. The economic and professional potential was evident in the meeting with Salem who, despite the challenges he faces, owns a farm himself and trains people like Faiqa, enabling them to earn their own living through horticulture/agriculture. Again, the importance of exchange becomes clear. Individuals can help each other by sharing their knowledge and helping each other not only to learn but also to expand and monetise their activities. Organisations can contribute by consciously starting there and realising the potential by providing agricultural and entrepreneurial and/or financial training.

Chapter III also spoke about the inherent cultural value of gardening through the preservation of indigenous knowledge, as home and community gardens reflect indigenous farming traditions. This is beautifully implemented on the ground through the purpose and work of BJ, including the preservation of heirloom seeds in the seed bank managed by Faiqa.

The ecological benefits, which are mainly the use of heirloom seeds and indigenous plants and the associated knowledge, as well as the ecological and sustainable farming methods,

which include the maintenance of agro-ecological health through the respectful treatment of nature, e.g. by not using chemicals that are harmful to the environment, as well as a sense of connection with nature and the teaching of ecological values, are in line with approaches found in the literature, e.g. the *Lemon Tree Trust*, which approaches the refugee issue not only from an anthropocentric, human rights-based approach, but also includes the wider environment, including the natural environment. Holistic responses that transcend the boundaries between human and non-human are necessary in today's world with its multiple environmental problems such as climate change and its consequences, biodiversity loss, water pollution or plastic waste - to name but a few - which, as can be seen in the example of the war in Syria, can in turn lead to consequences that ultimately have a negative impact on human coexistence and respect for human rights. Mainstreaming environmental considerations into human rights-based solutions is key, and agroecological ways of food production that avoid the use of harmful chemicals and instead make respectful use of nature and what it has to offer can be one such way, as the examples of all three initiatives studied have shown.

## 2. Discussion of the identified challenges and needs

	Challenges, Needs and Ideas for Change/ Improvement
For displaced individuals and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “lot of challenges” (Salem)</li> <li>- Issue of land: no legal right to acquire and own land -&gt; only lease possible (for maximum 5 years) which makes long-term planning and projects difficult (Salem; Kamil)</li> <li>- Access to housing (Faiqa)</li> <li>- No legal protection and governmental support (Salem, Kamil)</li> <li>- Sense of undesirability; racist behavior by host community; unfriendly treatment (Faiqa)</li> <li>- Social tensions among refugee and host communities; fights (also violent) among communities (Kamil)</li> <li>- Jealousy by Lebanese due to feeling of abandonment by humanitarian aid (Kamil)</li> <li>- Deportations of refugees to Syria -&gt; lack of sense of security -&gt; impact on mental well-being and motivation to cultivate (Faiqa)</li> <li>- Difficulty to be self-sufficient through food cultivation due to economic and social insecurities</li> <li>- Access to water (Faiqa)</li> <li>- Economic hardship forces whole family to earn money in agriculture [or other informal sectors, i.e. construction] -&gt; no choice (Kamil)</li> <li>- For establishment of agribusiness: issue of land + lower profit than in Syria</li> </ul>

For humanitarian organisations/ initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issue of land: need for manpower to cultivate -&gt; difficulty to expand gardening project; difficulty to finding land that offers conditions for cultivation (access to water; protection against theft) (Kamil; Yoshi)</li> <li>- Complexity of overall societal, economic and political situation (Kamil)</li> <li>- Helping some might increase jealousy among others -&gt; how to leave no one behind? (Kamil)</li> <li>- Sense of safety and stability as prerequisite for implementation of gardening projects</li> <li>- Balancing/ Aligning long-term visions with short-term assistance in a fragile, ever-changing context</li> </ul>
---	---

	Needs	Ideas
For displaced individuals and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for security and sense of safety (Faiqa)</li> <li>- Need for stability and conditions for long-term actions (Faiqa; Salem)</li> <li>- Need for respectful treatment and governmental support (Faiqa)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- turning gardening into business (Salem)</li> </ul>
For humanitarian organisations/ Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for more resources - financial and human (Kamil)</li> <li>- Need for land with water access and protection of theft (Yoshi)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Linking gardening with education and training (Yoshi)</li> </ul>

As far as the organisations are concerned, the main challenges identified are related to the implementation and especially the expansion of the gardening activities, especially in case of *Greenhouse for All*, and are mainly related to the availability of resources. Firstly, it is about the availability of land or spatial resources, as the space available to refugees living in the camps is not sufficient to grow a larger home garden. As Lebanon has a 'no-camp policy', this means that the camps are not formalised, which is why the settlement of displaced communities in the Deir Zenoun area is on private land regulated by a Shawish and does not provide for big spaces for the cultivation of food. The space attached to their tent is often small and only offers room for planting a few seedlings, which would by no means be enough to grow enough vegetables for a family's needs. The space needed would have to be larger and could be realised, for example, in the form of community gardens, which BJ realises with the community garden they manage together with the nearby refugee communities. Yoshi envisages a similar approach, although he reports difficulties in finding available land with the necessary conditions, such as access

to water or protection from theft, among others. The need for resources also means financial and human resources in the form of manpower to expand the agricultural component of the project, which means that a stable team is needed, as is the case with BJ, which has about twenty employees. Apart from the challenge of lack of resources, another major challenge is the instability and complexity of the whole situation. How is it possible to implement long-term ideas and pragmatic solutions to address problems such as malnutrition or dependency on external aid faced by refugees in such an unstable and ever-changing environment? For humanitarian organisations, this means practical challenges in everyday life, which manifested itself, for example, during my internship at *Greenhouse for All*, in the absence of students at school because families hid in the large agricultural fields at night for fear of the Lebanese military deporting them. Furthermore, in providing assistance to vulnerable households, the question arises as to where to draw the line as to who is in need and who is not, respectively where to stop assistance. Trying not to exclude anyone and to distribute aid and assistance equitably is a challenge, especially in the face of growing resentment and envy among non-refugee communities and worsening social tensions due to the worsening socio-economic situation of the entire country while at the same time UN funding is being cut.

Therefore, increased cooperation is needed to maximise the impact of the organisation. This includes building an extended, transcultural and transnational network that aims to save costs, share best practices and knowledge and promote mutual support. To meet resource needs, it is also important to ensure stability of human resources by not relying solely on volunteers, who in the case of *Greenhouse for All* are often temporary contributors. Building a committed and stable team, as demonstrated by the success of the BJ team, is crucial. In addition, securing financial resources through funding from UN agencies or government bodies would improve sustainability and impact. In the case of *Greenhouse for All*, which is registered as an NGO with the Japanese government, applying for funding from government agencies could help overcome problems rooted in the organisation's financial constraints.

Among the refugees, the challenges mentioned were mainly legal, social and, as Kamil indirectly stated, economic. Legal challenges were mainly mentioned by rose farmer Salem and related to setting up an agricultural business and especially the lack of a right

to land, which is in line with the problems mentioned in the literature. Although Salem (as well as Faiqa) are registered as refugees with the UNHCR, they face a major challenge in possessing land, which prevents motivated and enterprising people like Salem from full ownership of their land and growing their business as desired, bringing instability, insecurity and, again, dependency. Planning long-term agricultural projects is made difficult by the fact that the land lease has to be renewed every five years. Since horticulture or agriculture is a long-term endeavour, as is the establishment and expansion of an entrepreneurial activity, this makes it difficult for refugees to build a self-determined life with a stable monetary income and a secure livelihood - which is ultimately what the Lebanese government's policies and regulations are designed to prevent, because permanence in the form of genuine integration of displaced persons into the host society and economy is precisely what is not wanted. Instead, "voluntary repatriation" is sought as a "durable solution", but this is often not voluntary, but the opposite - forced return. There is a lack of legal protection and state support for Syrian refugees. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the UNHCR has not been issuing residence permits to refugees since 2015 and the military is increasingly deporting people. The resulting immense psychological strain in the form of fear and the feeling of insecurity became clear in the conversation with Faiqa.

The enormous number of refugees in the country with the simultaneous deterioration of economic conditions has led to an immense burden on the entire society and threatens social cohesion, stability and harmony. This leads to resentment, frustration, anger, jealousy and even violent confrontations, which is very dangerous as it can escalate again and again, especially against the backdrop of pre-existing religious and cultural as well as international struggles in the region and Lebanon's historical past of fragility, social upheaval and armed struggles.

However, there are limitations in assessing and discussing the research on the experiences of displaced Syrians as presented by Faiqa and Salem. First, it must be acknowledged that their circumstances are not representative of the entirety of Syrian IDPs, who live in difficult socio-economic conditions, often in tents in sub-optimal conditions. In addition, Faiqa and Salem both enjoy relative stability with a consistent income and shelter, and a

supportive environment within BJ, which does not accurately represent the challenges faced by many others in the situation of forced migration.

In addition, the literature review identified several critical issues that require deeper investigation in the field. Legal challenges, precarious working conditions characterised by lack of social protection and exploitation, and general economic and social hardships such as poverty and limited access to labour and health services were not adequately explored. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the plight of displaced Syrians, further research would be needed in the field. This should include interviews with a wider range of refugees, including those without legal status and especially those living in informal settlements. The economic challenges, although indirectly raised by Kamil, seem to be overshadowed by the legal and social problems in the interviews with Salem and Faiqa, which may not reflect the reality of refugees in the informal camps, whose socio-economic reality is different.

### **3. Bekaa in a wider picture – reflections on the way forward**

Looking at the Bekaa in a broader context, it becomes clear how great the burden is on this region, which hosts such a large number of Syrian refugees who are neither adequately supported by the government nor by third sector actors, as can be seen in the living conditions and everyday life of these people. This raises the question of what approaches to solutions and future perspectives are possible.

After analysing the difficulties of Lebanon as a country in itself, it became clear that the country does not have the prerequisites for taking in such a large number of refugees - nor does any other country, given the huge proportion. I myself come from the leading European country that takes in the most refugees, and third in the world in this respect, namely Germany. According to the UNHCR (2023b), Germany has taken in 2.2 million refugees, of which 900,000 are from Ukraine alone. This corresponds to about 2.7% of the country's total population of about 83 million people. If the same influx of refugees as in Lebanon is now imagined (calculated with a percentage of 25), this would result in an absolute number of almost 21 million people. This figure is unimaginable, especially when one imagines the social, economic and political consequences in a

country that has a much stronger social cohesion, is economically rich and functions well politically than is the case in Lebanon. What this thought experiment makes clear is how incredibly heavy the burden is on Lebanon, and it makes the government's policies and behaviour, while grave from a human rights perspective, understandable to a certain extent. The decision to use the term 'forcibly displaced persons' as term instead of refugees and the non-ratification of the 1951 Geneva Document, as well as the 2015 decision to prohibit the UNHCR from issuing further residence papers, for example.

Considering the three main durable solutions - integration, voluntary repatriation, third-country resettlement - it becomes clear that a complete integration of these people is not only not desired by the government, but also not feasible on this scale.

As for the second proposed solution, namely assisting voluntary return, there is currently a great debate about whether the country is safe for the return of Syrian refugees. As states around the world began to normalise relations with the Syrian government with in particular the readmission of the al-Assad regime to the Arab League in May this year [2023], public opinion is divided on whether it is time for Syrian refugees to return - also given that return to the country of origin is the preferred solution of the majority (at 58%) of Syrian refugees surveyed (cf. SNHR 2023; cf. UNHCR 2023c). According to a variety of human rights organisations, such as an Amnesty International report (2021b) or a HRW report (2021), as well as a variety of analyses, given reports of torture and arrests upon return, enforced disappearances, extortion and even death at the hands of the Syrian government and its security apparatus, it is by no means safe for those who have fled the same government for fear of political persecution to return to the same country under the very same regime (cf., a.o., Jordan et al. 2022). A report by the Middle East Institute shows that even the claim that the northern parts of the country are safe for return due to stabilisation measures by foreign actors does not correspond to the actual situation for returnees and that, in general “the presumption that Syria is now safe for return is often motivated by political expediency and a false equivalency between “safety” and reduced military operations in a particular area, rather than an in-depth understanding of conditions on the ground and the challenges that returnees face“ (Jordan et al. 2022). Furthermore, this paper has shown that many returnees are not deported 'voluntarily' but instead are deported by military force to border officials, causing strong fear and insecurity among displaced communities. As long as there continue to be ongoing human



rights violations by the Syrian security apparatuses, which have followed the same policies since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, and as long as there is no political transition and no legal environment that respects international and human rights law, most Syrian refugees will not be able to fulfil their dream of returning.

Resettlement in a third country, as the third main durable solution, therefore remains the most sustainable and feasible solution. According to UNHCR (2023c), over 600,000 Syrian refugees needed resettlement in 2022, making it the national group with the highest resettlement needs. However, the realisation of resettlement depends on international solidarity and willingness to share responsibility, as there is neither a right to resettlement nor an obligation for states to accept refugees. It cannot be further analysed here, but given stricter control of Europe's external borders and the increasing refusal of many states in Europe and beyond to accept refugees, resettlement is a permanent solution that is essential in itself, but still depends on the willingness of governments and political decisions. To ensure that resettlement is truly 'durable', sustainability cannot be ensured by placing people in camps that prevent them from building a life of dignity. 'Durability' must also be ensured within the 'durable' solution by strengthening refugee self-reliance, as envisaged in the GCR (2018). In this work, I wanted to advocate for a sustainable and "non-anthropocentric human rights approach", by which I mean an approach that seeks long-term, creative and holistically thought-out solutions that also incorporate considerations on the environment - both in terms of the social and the natural environment. In my opinion, permaculture as an approach to thinking and design can not only encourage to look for alternatives to industrial farming methods, but also inspire stakeholders to think about solutions based on the integration of human and natural elements and valuing diversity and regeneration. The value of refugees' potential contribution to the host economy and society in terms of knowledge and cultural contributions needs to be recognised. Uganda, although not ideal, is an example of how entrepreneurial courage and bottom-up innovation can make a positive contribution to the country when the political and legal environment allows. The meeting and conversation with Salem Al Azouaq made it clear that many IDPs are very business-minded and that legal regulations can limit their ability to expand and grow their business idea. Nevertheless, it was evident that jobs are created, knowledge is shared and both cultural

and ecological heritage is preserved in the form of knowledge, practices and seed conservation.

Incorporating gardening into thinking about long-term relief interventions that link human and environmental health can be a practical tool for humanitarian actors to address the concrete challenges faced by displaced people. Lebanon is a country that presents an extremely sensitive environment for hosting this large number of forcibly displaced persons. It became clear that, first, the forced deportation of people cannot be considered a durable solution and violates human rights and international law through the breach of the principle of non-refoulement. Second, Lebanon cannot be left alone with the burden of hosting this large number of displaced people. Therefore, it is crucial that European countries in particular live up to their humanitarian responsibilities and host people in need through resettlement. Third, humanitarian efforts by UNHCR or other international organisations and third sector actors should consider establishing and supporting gardening activities. These can take various forms, as shown in this paper: Rooftop gardens, community gardens that bring together refugee and host communities, support for the establishment of kitchen gardens in camps, refugee shelters or refugee homes in general, support for the establishment of an agricultural micro-enterprise, and more. This topic would require much more research, especially in assessing the concrete impact in specific areas, such as its contribution to food and nutrition security. Nevertheless, by analysing the challenges of the country and the Syrian displaced communities within it, and confirming thanks to the interviews a variety of benefits of gardening, it could be shown that integrating gardening into solution thinking has a potential that deserves further investigation.

## **Chapter VI Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to analyse and explore the potential of gardening as a tool to address the multiple challenges that forcibly displaced communities face in host societies. To this end, the case of displaced Syrians in Lebanon was chosen for personal motives and due to the fact that the country ranks first in the world in terms of the relative number of refugees hosted per capita. The challenges of the country in general were analysed based on an extensive literature review before looking at the challenges that forcibly displaced Syrians in particular face in the country. It was later hypothesised that gardening can serve as a tool to integrate refugee communities and help combat the problems they face by placing it in the context of human and refugee rights. Its practicality and potential were explored in a later step by conducting an on-site analysis of the Bekaa region and presenting local initiatives, as well as conducting interviews with key informants.

With the post-2019 economic stalemate and social and political difficulties, as well as a past full of civil conflicts where religious and cultural differences divide the country, Lebanon already offers an environment where conditions are definitely not favourable for hosting a number of refugees who make up more than a quarter of the total population. The government, which was initially friendly and benevolent to people fleeing their brother country Syria, has gradually imposed stricter regulations after 2015, leading to major legal challenges for forcibly displaced Syrians in the country. The legal obstacles go hand in hand with impediments to accessing basic services such as food and establishing decent livelihoods, and broader societal challenges such as discriminatory behaviour and even arrests and forced returns to the Syrian border.

Given the many challenges both for the country itself and specifically for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as well as the protracted nature of the situation, it is necessary to reflect on what sustainable, long-term and mutually beneficial approaches and solutions might look like. Simply closing the borders and deporting people to a country where they may face human rights abuses cannot be an adequate response. Since the United Nations has to

work with governments and its way of working is bureaucratic and slow, I decided to look for practical, hands-on solutions on the ground at a different level.

For this reason, the integration of gardening into organisational activities was presented as one of these practical approaches by third sector actors. Gardening was explored in a broad understanding that includes both kitchen gardens and community gardens, and was conceptualised and explored as a means to integrate and address food and nutrition insecurity and other socio-economic challenges. It was argued that gardening has a multitude of benefits embracing holistic aspects of human health and the wider natural environment, and offers a potential to link it with education and training, and to generate enterprise. By embedding it in the context of human rights and linking it to key refugee legal frameworks, the aim was to demonstrate that the integration of gardening into humanitarian action is in line with the objectives of the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees, one key objective of which is to strengthen refugee self-reliance, and that it holds promise for providing a dignified livelihood in appropriate conditions that respect human rights.

To explore the focus of gardening as a tool on the ground, the regional focus was on the Bekaa region, where the situation on the ground was first analysed through a literature review. In a second step, two initiatives, namely *Greenhouse for All* and *Buzuruna Juzuruna*, were presented and interviews were conducted with experts from the organisations who outlined benefits, challenges and needs for change. The key findings include:

Main benefits identified:

- Consumption of organic produce
- General feeling of well-being and happiness through the common work, the social interactions, the release of “negative energy” and the taking care of something
- Sense of belonging and connection to the community; sense of safety
- Sense of agency and empowerment; sense of dignity
- (intercultural) exchange including exchange of knowledge, exchange of seedlings and work with the potential to transgress national/cultural boundaries – potential to strengthen communal/societal cohesion

- Strengthening of self-sufficiency and independence from external aid by growing own food; – potential to tackle food insecurity
- Preservation of indigenous seeds, practices and cultural traditions and value
- Family and community healing
- transmission of ecological values to future generations through integration in education

Main challenges identified:

- For displaced individuals:
  - Issue of land and the legal obstacles to own it – difficulty to plan and implement long-term projects; access to housing
  - Inadequate governmental support and legal framework -> even deportations – lack of sense of safety
  - Sense of undesirability; discriminatory and racist treatment; jealousy by host community due to perceived unfairness in aid distribution among society; social tensions
  - Difficulty of self-sufficiency; economic hardship
- For humanitarian organizations:
  - Lack of resources: land with access to water and protection against theft, human resources -> difficult of expansion of gardening projects
  - Complexity of overall societal, economic and political situation -> Aligning long-term visions with short-term assistance in a fragile, ever-changing context

Based on field observations and a comprehensive study of gardening as a tool in the context of displacement, and by linking the need for change to personal reflections, the following recommendations are made:

- Lebanon should not be left alone with the burden of hosting this large number of Syrian refugees, and European governments must assume their humanitarian responsibilities by sharing the burden.
- Humanitarian action on the ground should adequately respond to the protracted nature of today's refugee crises through sustainable forward-looking action, targeting both refugees and vulnerable host communities in order to prevent or reduce societal tensions.
- Humanitarian funding must go to those actors who provide practical and effective assistance that enhances the refugee communities' sense of dignity and self-reliance rather than placing them in a state of complete dependency.

- Gardening can be used and should be further explored by context-specific research as one such tool for providing assistance and for the integration of refugee communities into host societies by positively contributing to food and nutrition security, increasing self-reliance and autonomy, improving overall well-being, strengthening social cohesion and lastly, benefitting the natural environment

Despite the results of the present work, however, some limitations must be pointed out. The methodology of the study is partly based on expert interviews I conducted, but these serve more as a stimulus for further interviews and as a starting point for further analysis in the field. The data obtained from the interviews is not representative and interviews with displaced persons without legal residence status and in a different socio-economic situation would be particularly necessary.

Another limitation is drawing conclusions from the interviews and the research in general, as it is difficult to establish a cause-effect relationship, especially as the positive effects on subjectively perceived well-being and food security are difficult to attribute to a single cause.

Gardening is not a silver bullet to overcome all the challenges refugees face, and even with well-organised and resourceful initiatives, there is no guarantee that gardening in the context of displacement and its integration into action will have the desired impact. Nevertheless, this study is intended to serve as an inspiration for further evaluative research in the field and to contribute to the overall sparse literature in the field, as well as to stimulate overall thinking about solutions that are truly "durable" - sustainable, holistic, creative and non-anthropocentric.

## Bibliography

Abi-Nassif, C. (2021).

“The inaction trap: Paralysis and denial in Lebanese politics” [online]. Available on: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/inaction-trap-paralysis-and-denial-lebanese-politics> (Accessed on 5 May 2023).

Abouzeid, M., Halwani, D. A., Mokdad, A. H., & Habib, R. R. (2021).

“A Generation at Risk: The Impacts of Lebanon's Escalating Humanitarian Crisis on Children” In: *Frontiers in public health*, 9, 704678. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.704678>.

ACAPS (2022).

*Lebanon. Humanitarian impact of crisis on children*. Geneva: ACAPS.

ACHR (2023).

„Urgent Appeal: The Lebanese Government Should Immediately Stop the Security Crackdown and Forced Deportations [online]. Available on: <https://www.achrightrights.org/en/2023/04/28/13119/> (Accessed on 31 May 2023).

Adelman, E., Chopra, V. & Dryden-Peterson, S. (2019).

*Including and Educating Syrian Refugees in National Education Systems – the Case of Lebanon*. Paris: UNESCO.

Altai Consulting (2019).

*Financial lives of Lebanese and Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: A Report to the World Bank Group (IBRD and CGAP) for a Technical Assistance Project. Financed by the State & Peace Building Fund*. Available at: [https://www.findevgateway.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/financial\\_lives\\_of\\_lebanese\\_and\\_syrian\\_refugees\\_in\\_lebanon.pdf](https://www.findevgateway.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/financial_lives_of_lebanese_and_syrian_refugees_in_lebanon.pdf) (Accessed on 2 June 2023).

Amnesty International (n.d.)

“Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants” [online]. Available on: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/> (Accessed on 21 May 2023).

Amnesty International (2021a).

*‘I Wished I Would Die’. Syrian Refugees Arbitrarily Detained on Terrorism- Related Charges and Tortured in Lebanon*. London: Amnesty International.

Amnesty International (2021b).

*“You’re Going to Your Death”’: Violations Against Syrian Refugees Returning to Syria*. London: Amnesty International.

Andersen, L. E. (2016).

*The Neglected Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon and the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies.

- Al Jazeera (2023).  
 „Middle East round-up: Rockets fly between Lebanon and Israel” [online]. Available on: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/13/middle-east-round-up-rockets-fly-between-lebanon-and-isr> (Accessed on 28 April 2023).
- Aljuni, S.; Kawar, M. (2015).  
*Towards decent work in Lebanon: issues and challenges in light of the Syrian refugee crisis*. Beirut: International Labour Organization, ILO Regional Office for Arab States.
- Amel (2019).  
 Publication of 13 booklets in Arabic on sustainable agricultural techniques: a project of the Buzuruna Juzuruna association, supported by Amel Association International” [online]. Available on: <https://amel.org/publication-of-13-booklets-in-arabic-on-sustainable-agricultural-techniques-a-project-of-the-buzuruna-juzuruna-association-supported-by-amel-association-international/> (Accessed on 19 August 2023).
- Arab Barometer VII (2022).  
*Lebanon Report*. Available at: [https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABVII\\_Lebanon\\_Country\\_Report-ENG.pdf](https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABVII_Lebanon_Country_Report-ENG.pdf) (Accessed on 8 May 2023).
- Assouaad, L. (2021).  
*Lebanon’s Political Economy: From Predatory to Self-Devouring*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Ayoubi, B. A. (2018).  
*Zahle and Bar Elias: Municipality-Led Evictions in Central Bekaa: Conflict Analysis Report – September 2018*. Beirut: UNDP Lebanon.
- Azhari, T. (2021).  
 “Lebanese banks swallow at least \$250m in U.N. aid” [online]. Available on: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-crisis-aid-trfn-idUSKCN2DT1CH> (Accessed on 4 June 2023).
- Bailey, Dame S. (2017).  
 “Looking back to the future: the re-emergence of green care”. In: BJPSYCH INTERNATIONAL. 14(4), 2017. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1192/S205647400000204X> P.
- Bercito, D. (2021).  
 “From Beirut to Brazil”. In: CCAS Newsmagazine, Spring/Summer 2021.
- Bhattacharjee, L., Phithayaphone, S. & Nandi, B. K. (2006).  
*Home Gardens: Key to Improved Nutritional Well-Being. Report of Pilot Project TCP/LAO/2902 (A) “Promotion of home gardens for improved nutritional well-being”*. Bangkok: Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry,



Lao People's Democratic Republic & Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

- Black, R. E., Morris, S. S. & Bry, J. (2003).  
“Where and why are 10 million children dying every year?” In: *THE LANCET*, vol. 361, 2003, pp. 2226-2234.
- Blanchet, K., Fouad, F. M. & Pherali, T. (2016).  
“Syrian refugees in Lebanon: the search for universal health coverage”. In: *Conflict and Health* 10, 12 (2016). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-016-0079-4>.
- Bowler D. E., Buyung-Ali, L. M., Knight, T. M. & Pullin, A. S. (2019).  
„A systematic review of evidence for the added benefits to health of exposure to natural environments“. In: *BMC Public Health*, 10, 2010, 456. DOI: 10.1186/1471-2458-10-456.
- Bou-Antoun, Layal (2014).  
“Food-processing industry as a basis for community dynamics and local socio-economic development”. In: *Mediterranean Interdisciplinary Forum on Social Sciences and Humanities, MIFS*. Beirut, Lebanon.
- Brogard, A. (2023).  
“Losing the Cedars of Lebanon” [online]. Available on <https://histecon.fas.harvard.edu/climate-loss/cedars/index.html> (Accessed on 6 June 2023).
- Brun, C. & Fakih, A. (2022).  
“Debunking the dangerous myth that refugees are an economic burden in Lebanon” [online]. Available on: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2022/09/26/Syrian-refugees-Lebanon-economics> (Accessed on 30 May 2023).
- Brun, C., Fakih, A., Shuayb, M. & Hammoud, M. (2021).  
*The Economic Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: What it Means for Current Policies. World Refugee & Migration Council Research Report*. Ottawa: World Refugee & Migration Council.
- Buck, D. (2016).  
*Gardens and health: Implications for policy and practice*. United Kingdom: The King's Fund.
- Buzuruna Juzuruna (2023a).  
“The story” [online]. Available on: <https://www.buzurunajuzuruna.com/the-story> (Accessed on 19 August 2023).
- Buzuruna Juruzuna (2023b).  
“The Team” [online]. Available on: <https://www.buzurunajuzuruna.com/the-team> (Accessed on 20 August 2023).

- Callen, T. (2012).  
 “Gross Domestic Product: An Economy’s All”. In: *Finance & Development. Back to Basics*, pp. 14-15.
- Cambridge University Press (2020).  
*The Syrian War: Between Justice and Political Reality*, pp. 1 – 8. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108768016.001>.
- Campbell, L. (2014).  
*Cross-sector cash assistance for Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon: An IRC Programme: CaLP Case Study*. Available on: <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/calp-case-study-lebanon-web.pdf> (Accessed on 4 June 2023).
- Cammett, M. (2015).  
 “Political and Sectarian Dimensions of Welfare Provision in Lebanon” [online]. Available on: <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/articles/details/1972/political-and-sectarian-dimensions-of-welfare-provision-in-lebanon> (Accessed on 07 May 2023).
- Cammett, M. (2014).  
 “Partisan Activism and Access to Welfare in Lebanon”. In. *St Comp Int Dev*, 46, 2011, pp. 70-97. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-010-9081-9>
- Carrascal, I. H. (2021).  
 “Women’s Rights in Lebanon- The Difficulties of Reaching Gender Equality”. In: *The Lebanon Papers*, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, 4(10), 2021.
- Clarke, P. (2010).  
 “Incredible Edible: how to grow sustainable communities”. In: *FORUM*, 52(1), 69-76. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2304/forum.2010.52.1.69>.
- Clatworthy J, Hinds JM, Camic P (2013).  
 “Gardening as a mental health intervention: a review”. In: *Mental Health Review Journal*, 18 (4), pp. 214–225.
- Cornille, T. A., Rohrer, G. E. & Mosier, J.G. (1987).  
 „Horticultural Therapy in Substance Abuse Treatment”. In: *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*, Vol. 2, 1987, pp. 3-7.
- Corriero, A.C., Aborode, A.T., Reggio, M. & Shatila, N. (2022).  
 “The impact of COVID-19 and the economic crisis on Lebanese public health: Food insecurity and healthcare disintegration”. In: *Ethics, Medicine and Public Health*, 22, 2022, 100802. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jemep.2022.100802>.
- Curl, C. L., Beresford, S. A. A., Hajat, A. et al. (2013).  
 “Associations of Organic Produce Consumption with Socioeconomic Status and the Local Food Environment: Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA)” [online]. In: *PLoS One*, 8(7), 2013. DOI: [10.1371/journal.pone.0069778](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0069778).

- Darwish, Talal (2013).  
 “Soil resources of Lebanon”. In: *Soil Resources of Mediterranean and Caucasus Countries*.  
*Extension of the European Soil Database*. Luxembourg: Joint Research Centre of the  
 European Commission.
- Diab, J. L. (2023).  
*Safe Return and Voluntary Repatriation for Syrian Refugees from Lebanon: What  
 Needs to Happen Next?* UNU-CPR Discussion Paper. New York: United Nations  
 University.
- Dibeh, G., Fakh, A. & Marrouch, W. (2017).  
 “Decision to Emigrate Amongst the Youth in Lebanon”. In: *IZA – Institute of Labor  
 Economics, 10493, 2017*.
- Donnellan, Á. (2023).  
 “One seed at a time: Lebanese project promotes agroecology for farmer autonomy”  
 [online]. Available on: <https://news.mongabay.com/2023/06/one-seed-at-a-time-lebanese-project-promotes-agroecology-for-farmer-autonomy/>.
- EEAS (2023).  
 “Concept note - Side event organised by EuroMed Rights, CLDH, ASGI & ALEF  
 ahead of the Brussels VII Conference on the Future of Syria and the Region: ‘Dead  
 on the land and dead at sea’: no alternatives for Syrian refugees in Lebanon” [online].  
 Available on:  
[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/EuroMed%20Rights\\_side-event\\_B7C.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/EuroMed%20Rights_side-event_B7C.pdf) (Accessed on 25 June 2023).
- EMMA Lebanon (2013).  
*Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) of the Agricultural Labor Market  
 System in North and Bekaa, Lebanon. Recommendations for growing livelihood  
 opportunities for refugees and host community families*.
- El Arnaout, N., Rutherford, S., Zreik, T., Nabulsi, D., Yassin, n. & Saleh, S. (2019).  
 “Assessment of the health needs of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Syria’s  
 neighboring countries.” In: *Conflict and Health* 13, 31 (2019). DOI:  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-019-0211-3>.
- El-Khazen, F. (1991).  
*The Communal Pact of National Identities: The Making and Politics of the 1943  
 National Pact*. Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies.
- Environmental Justice Foundation (2023).  
 “20 Years Battling Pesticides” [online]. Available at: <https://ejfoundation.org/news-media/20-years-battling-pesticides> (Accessed on 5 May 2023).

- Essiex-Lettieri, D, Howzell, R., Rawsson, B., Mirza, A. & Therkelsen, J. (2017). *Refugee Work Rights Report: The Syrian Crisis and Refugee Access to Lawful work in Greece, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey*. Oakland: Asylum Access.
- ETF (2021). *Skills and Migration Country Fiche Lebanon*. Turin: European Training Foundation. Available on: [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-04/etf\\_skills\\_and\\_migration\\_country\\_fiche\\_lebanon\\_2021\\_en.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-04/etf_skills_and_migration_country_fiche_lebanon_2021_en.pdf) (Accessed on 3 May 2023).
- European Commission (2023). “Lebanon: €60 million in humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable” [online]. Available on: [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/lebanon-eu60-million-humanitarian-aid-most-vulnerable-2023-03-30\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/lebanon-eu60-million-humanitarian-aid-most-vulnerable-2023-03-30_en) (Accessed on 4 June 2023).
- Fakhoury, T. (2017). “Governance strategies and refugee response: Lebanon in the face of Syrian displacement”. In: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 49(4), pp.681–700.
- FAO (2001). *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001*. Rome: Food and Agricultural Organisation.
- Farrier, Aa., Dooris, M. & Morley, A. (2019). “Catalysing change? A critical exploration of the impacts of a community food initiative on people, place and prosperity”. In: *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 192, 22019.
- Fieldhouse, D.K. (2008). “Lebanon and the French, 1918-1946”. In: *Oxford Academic Books*, 2008, pp. 304-334.
- Freedom House (n.d.). “Freedom in the World 2023: Lebanon” [online]. Available on <https://freedomhouse.org/country/lebanon/freedom-world/2022> (Accessed on 27 April 2023).
- Funke (n.d.). „Die libanesische Diaspora“ [online]. Available on: <https://www.kas.de/de/web/extremismus/islamismus/die-libanesische-hisbollah> (Accessed on 5 May 2023).
- Fawaz, M. (2018). “Barriers faced by Syrian refugees in accessing health care in urban areas in Lebanon”. In: *BAU Journal- Health and Wellbeing*, 1(3), article 32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54729/2789-8288.1084>.

- Fergusson, R. S. & Lovell, S. T. (2013).  
 “Permaculture for agroecology: design, movement, practice, and worldview. A review”. In: *Agronomy for Sustainable Development*, Vol. 34, 2014, pp. 251–274. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13593-013-0181-6>.
- Galhena, D. H., Freed, R. & Maredia, K. (2013).  
 “Home gardens: a promising approach to enhance household food security and wellbeing”. In: *Agriculture & Food Security*, 2(1), 2013. DOI: 10.1186/2048-7010-2-8.
- Gaub, F. (2015).  
*Lebanon’s civil war: seven lessons forty years on*. Paris: European Institute for Security Studies.
- Geha, C. & Talhouk, J. (2018).  
*Politics and the Plight of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*. Lebanon: American University of Beirut, Political Studies and Public Administration Department.
- Gillmann, S. (2019).  
 „Sharing seeds could help farmers grow better food“ [online]. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/en/horizon-magazine/sharing-seeds-could-help-farmers-grow-better-food> (Accessed on 4 May 2023).
- Global Nutrition Report (2022).  
 “Country Nutrition Profiles: Lebanon: the burden of malnutrition at a glance” [online]. Available at: <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/asia/western-asia/lebanon/> (Accessed on 6 June 2023).
- Government of Lebanon and the UN (2022).  
*Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2022-2023*.
- Goulson, Dave (2017).  
*The Garden Jungle: or Gardening to Save the Planet*. London: Vintage.
- Habib, R. R. (2019).  
*Survey on Child Labour in Agriculture in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon: The Case of Syrian Refugees*. Beirut, Lebanon: American University of Beirut Press.
- Haddad, T. (2020).  
 "Religious Welfare Organizations, Citizenship, and the State in Lebanon". In: *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 11(3), 2020, pp. 20190040. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2019-0040>.
- Harris, D. R. & Fuller, D. Q. (2014).  
 “Agriculture: Definition and Overview”. In: Smith, C. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology* [online], pp. 104-113. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2\_64.

- Hathaway, J. C. (2018).  
 “The Global Cop-Out on Refugees”. In: *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 30 (4), 2018, pp. 591–604. DOI:10.1093/ijrl/eeey062.
- He K., Hu F. B., Colditz G. A., Manson J. E., Willett W. C. & Liu S. (2004).  
 “Changes in intake of fruits and vegetables in relation to risk of obesity and weight gain among middle-aged women”. In: *Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord.*, 28(12), 2004, pp.1569–1574.
- Hellen Keller International (n.d.).  
 „What We Do: Helping Families Grow Better Food: 828 million children and adults go to bed hungry every night” [Online]. Available on: <https://helenkellerintl.org/helping-families-grow-better-food/> (Accessed on 10 June 2023).
- Henley, A. D.M. (2016).  
*Religious Authority and Sectarianism in Lebanon*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Hoogerbrugge, I. & Fresco, L. O. (1993).  
*Homegarden Systems: Agricultural Characteristics And Challenge* (Gatekeeper series; No. 39). IIED: <https://edepot.wur.nl/73745>.
- Holmgren, D. (2002).  
*Permaculture: Principles & Pathways Beyond Sustainability*. Victoria, Australia: Holmgren Design Services.
- Talukder, A., Haselow, N. J., Oseei, A. K. et al. (2010).  
 “Homestead food production model contributes to improved household food security and nutrition status of young children and women in poor populations: lessons learned from scaling-up programs in Asia (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and Philippines)”. In: *Field Actions Science Reports* [Online], Special Issue 1, 2010. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/404>.
- Homsy, N. (2023).  
 “Some Lebanese public school teachers resume morning classes“ [online]. Available on: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/lebanon/2023/03/06/some-lebanese-public-school-teachers-resume-morning-classes/> (Accessed on 5 June 2023).
- Honein-AbouHaidar, G., Noubani, A., Eell Arnaout, N., Ismail, S., Nimer, H., Menassa, M., Coutts, A. P., Rayes, D., Jomaa, L., Saleh, S. & Fouad, F. M. (2019).  
 “Informal healthcare provision in Lebanon: an adaptive mechanism among displaced Syrian health professionals in a protracted crisis“. In: *Conflict and Health*, 13(40), 2019. DOI: 10.1186/s13031-019-0224-y.
- Hourani, G. (2007).  
*The Impact of the Summer 2006 War on Migration in Lebanon: Emigration, Re-Migration, Evacuation and Return*. Louaize: NDU Press.

Housing Monitor (n.d.).

“Housing Narratives: Bar Elias Refugee Camp: The Story of a Community Under Threat” [online]. Available on: <https://housingmonitor.org/barelias/index-en.html> (Accessed on 26 August 2023).

Howarth, M., Brettle, A., Hardman, M., & Maden, M. (2020).

“What is the evidence for the impact of gardens and gardening on health and well-being: a scoping review and evidence-based logic model to guide healthcare strategy decision making on the use of gardening approaches as a social prescription.” In: *BMJ open*, 10(7), e036923. DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2020-036923.

HRW (2021).

“Our Lives Are Like Death” [online]. Available on <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/10/20/our-lives-are-death/syrian-refugee-returns-lebanon-and-jordan> (Accessed on 9 September 2023).

HRW (2022).

“Human Rights Watch: Lebanon: Events of 2022” [online]. Available on <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/lebanon> (Accessed on 25 April 2023).

Hume, C., Grieger J. A., Kalamkarian, A., D’Onise K. & Smithers, L. G. (2022).

„Community gardens and their effects on diet, health, psychosocial and community outcomes: a systemic review”. In: *BMC Public Health* 22, 1247, 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-13591-1>.

ICAR-IIHR (n.d.).

*Backyard Nutritional Kitchen Garden—A success story*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Agricultural Research-Indian Institute of Horticultural Research. Available on: <https://krishi.icar.gov.in/jspui/bitstream/123456789/7315/1/Backyard%20nutritional%20kitchen%20gardening.pdf> (Accessed on 10 June 2023).

ICJ (2022).

*Lebanon: Upholding Judicial Independence: Discussion and Recommendations on the Draft Law on the Independence of the Judiciary: An Advocacy Paper*. Geneva: International Commission of Jurists.

ILO (2016).

*Guiding Principles : access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

International Crisis Group (2020).

*Easing Syrian Refugees’ Plight in Lebanon: Middle East Report N°211: 13 February 2020*. Brussels: International Crisis Group.

IOM (n.d.).

“IOM and the government of Japan provide critical water access and street lighting assistance to local communities in Lebanon’s Saadnayel” [online]. Available at:

<https://mena.iom.int/stories/iom-and-government-japan-provide-critical-water-access-and-street-lighting-assistance-local-communities-lebanons-saadnayel> (Accessed on 19 August 2023).

IPC Global Partners (2022).

*Lebanon: Acute Food Insecurity Situation September - December 2022 and Projection for January - April 2022*. Lebanon: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis.

IPC Global Partners (2021).

*Technical Manual Version 3.1: Evidence and Standards for Better Food Security and Nutrition Decisions*. Rome: FAO.

Jalkh, R., Dedeire, M. & Requier Desjardins, M. (2020).

“An Introduction to Food Cooperatives in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon: Territorial Actors and Potential Levers to Local Development Through Culinary Heritage”. In: *Food ethics*, 5(20), 2020.

Janmyr, M. (2017).

“No Country of Asylum: ‘Legitimizing’ Lebanon’s Rejection of the 1951 Refugee Convention”. In: *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 29(3), 2017, pp. 438-465. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eex026>.

Jbeili, E. (2020).

“Can Lebanon Rely on its Diaspora?”. In: *LAU Magazine & Alumni Bulletin*, 21(1), 2020.

Jordan A., Akil, S., Shaar, K. (2022).

“Data shows nowhere in Syria is safe for return” [online]. Available on: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/data-shows-nowhere-syria-safe-return> (Accessed on 410September 2023).

Karak, M. (2019).

“Climate Change and Syria’s Civil War ” [online]. Available on <https://daily.jstor.org/climate-change-and-syrias-civil-war/> (Accessed on 22 April 2023).

Keilberth, M. (2023).

“Eine Nation im freien Fall“ [online]. Available at: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/libanon-konferenz-paris-krise-zentralbank-1.5745545> (Accessed on 7 May 2023).

Khatib & Wallace (2021).

“Lebanon’s politics and politicians”. Available on: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/08/lebanons-politics> (Accessed on 5 May 2023).



- Kikano, F., Fauveaud, G. & Lizarralde, G. (2021).  
 “Policies of Exclusion: The Case of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon”. In: *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 34(1), 2021. DOI: 10.1093/jrs/feaa058.
- Knit For Peace (2017).  
*The Health Benefits of Knitting*. London: Knit for Peace. Available on:  
<https://knitforpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/The-Health-Benefits-of-Knitting-Preview.pdf> (Accessed on 7 June 2023).
- Kukrety, N. (2016).  
*Poverty, Inequality and Social Protection in Lebanon*. Beirut: Oxfam and Issam Fares Institute of American University Beirut.
- Lateef, A.s.A. (2007).  
 “Geological history of the Bekaa Valley”. In: *Second International Conference on the Geology of the Tethys, Cairo University*, 03/2007, pp. 391–402.
- Langlois, A. (2022).  
 “Syrian refugees in Lebanon face an uncertain future”. ” [online]. Available on:  
<https://www.newarab.com/analysis/syrian-refugees-lebanon-face-uncertain-future>  
 (Accessed on 30 May 2023).
- Lapakko, D. (2007).  
 “Communication is 93% Nonverbal: An Urban Legend Proliferates”. In: *CTAMJ*, summer 2007. Available on:  
<https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=>
- LEADERS (2019).  
*Dignity at Stake: Challenges to Accessing Decent Work in Lebanon: Discussion Paper*. Available on: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/dignity-stake-challenges-accessing-decent-work-lebanon> (Accessed on 30 April 2023).
- Lebanon Support. (2016).  
*Formal Informality, Brokering Mechanisms, and Illegality. The Impact of the Lebanese State’s Policies on Syrian Refugees’ Daily Lives*. Lebanon: Lebanon Support. Available at: <https://civilsociety-centre.org/resource/formal-informality-brokering-mechanisms-and-illegality-impact-lebanese-state%E2%80%99s-policies>  
 (Accessed on 14 August 2023).
- Lemon Tree Trust (n.d.).  
 “About” [online]. Available at: <https://lemontreetrust.org/about/> (Accessed on 1 August 2023).
- Lee, T. (2022).  
 “The Fertile Crescent explained” (online). Available at:  
<https://news.uchicago.edu/explainer/fertile-crescent-explained> (Accessed on 13 August 2023).

- Marks, J. (2023).  
 “Statement: Lebanon’s Forced Deportations Pose Grave Risk to Syrian Refugees” [online]. Available on: <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2023/4/26/lebanons-forced-deportations-pose-grave-risk-to-syrian-refugees> (Accessed on 30 May 2023).
- MedGlobal (2022).  
*Climate Change, War, Displacement, and Health: The Impact on Syrian Refugee Camps* [online]. Available on: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/climate-change-war-displacement-and-health-impact-syrian-refugee-camps> (Accessed on 22 April 2023).
- Mejia, A. (2022).  
 “Crisis or Challenge?” [online]. Available on: <https://www.lead-eu.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Crisis-or-Challenge-Our-choice-final.pdf> (Accessed on 04 May 2023).
- Merriam-Webster (n.d.a).  
 „Agriculture“. In: *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary* [online]. Available on: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/agriculture> (Accessed on 14 May 2023).
- Merriam-Webster (n.d.b).  
 “Horticulture“. In: *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary* [online]. Available on: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/horticulture> (Accessed on 14 May 2023).
- Millican, J., Perkins, C. & Adam-Bradford, A. (2018).  
 “Gardening in Displacement: The Benefits of Cultivating in Crisis“. In: *Journal of Refugee Studies*. DOI: 10.1093/jrs/fey033.
- Minority rights Group International (n.d.).  
 “Druze” [online]. Available on: <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/druze-2/> (Accessed on 06 May 2023).
- Mizrahi, M. B. (2021).  
 “Incredible Edible Todmorden: Impacts on Community Building, Education, and Local Culture. A Case for the Operationalization of a Sustainability-led Discourse.” In: *European Journal of Cultural Management & Policy*, 11(2).
- MoE/UNDP/GEF (2015).  
*Economic Costs to Lebanon from Climate Change: A First Look*. Beirut: Ministry of Environment & United Nations Development Programme.
- Montagnini, F. (2006).  
 “Homegardens of Mesoamerica: Biodiversity, food security, and nutrient management”. In: *Tropical Homegardens*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 61-84. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4020-4948-4\_5.

- Morley, A., Farrier, A. & Dooris, M. (2017). *Propagating Success? The Incredible Edible Model: Final Report*. Available on: <https://www.incredibleedible.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Propagating-success-the-incredible-edible-model-Final-report.pdf> (Accessed on 7 June 2023).
- National Geographic (n.d.). "Fertile Crescent" [online]. Available on <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/fertile-crescent/> (Accessed on 15 April 2023).
- National Geographic Society (2022). "The Art and Science of Agriculture" [online]. Available on: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/agriculture/> (Accessed on 14 May 2023).
- Nassar, J. (2023). Syrian Refugee Deportation in Lebanon: A Critical Perspective [online]. Available on: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/89817> (Accessed on 20 May 2023).
- Nguyen, H., Ly, S., Biskupska, N., Pravalprukskul, P., Brown, S., Ro, A., Fielding, M. (2016). *Understanding gender and power relations in home garden activities: Empowerment and sustainable home garden uptake*. Taiwan: World Vegetable Center publication number: 17-813.
- Nicolopoulou-Stamati, P., Maipas, S., Kotampasi, C. et al. (2016). "Chemical Pesticides and Human Health: The Urgent Need for a New Concept in Agriculture". In: *Frontiers in Public Health*. 4, 2016. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2016.00148>.
- Nisbet, C., Lestrat, K. E. & Vatanparast, H. (2022). „Food Security Interventions among Refugees around the Globe: A Scoping Review”. In: *Nutrients*. 14(3): 533, 2022. DOI: 10.3390/nu14030522.
- NRC (2020). *The Obstacle Course: Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon: Executive summary and key recommendations*. Available on: [https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/the-obstacle-course-barriers-to-education/executive-summary---the-obstacle-course\\_barriers-to-education.pdf](https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/the-obstacle-course-barriers-to-education/executive-summary---the-obstacle-course_barriers-to-education.pdf) (Accessed on 29 May 2023).
- NRC & UNHCR (2021). *Legal Identity and Housing, Land and Property Rights of Syrian Refugees from a Durable Solutions Perspective*. Available at: <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/legal-identity-hlp-rights-syrian-refugees-from-durable-solutions-perspective/> (Accessed on 6 June 2023).

- Nyasha, M., Shiela, N. & Martin, C. (2014).  
 “Effectiveness of Nutrition Gardens in enhancing sustainable livelihood of orphans and vulnerable children: A case study of Mkoba Nutrition Gardens in Gweru Urban, Zimbabwe”. In: *International Journal of Management Sciences*, 2(5), 2014, pp. 209-221.
- OCHA (2017).  
*New Way of Working*. New York City: OCHA.
- OHCHR (2010).  
*The Right to Adequate Food: Fact Sheet No. 34*. Geneva: OHCHR.
- OHCHR (2018).  
 „The principle of non-refoulement under international human rights law“ [online]. Available on: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Migration/GlobalCompactMigration/ThePrincipleNon-RefoulementUnderInternationalHumanRightsLaw.pdf> (Accessed on 21 May 2023).
- OCHR, UNEP & UNDP (2022).  
*What is the Right to a Healthy Environment? Information Note*. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-01/UNDP-UNEP-UNHCHR-What-is-the-Right-to-a-Healthy-Environment.pdf> (Accessed on 27 August 2023).
- OHCHR & UN HABITAT (2014).  
*The Right to Adequate Housing: Fact Sheet No. 21/Rev. 1*. Geneva: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- OLG & Economic Service (2023).  
 “IIF expects Lebanese GDP will continue to shrink in 2023” [online]. Available on: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1331320/iif-expects-lebanese-gdp-will-continue-to-shrink-in-2023.html#:~:text=In%20value%20terms%2C%20the%20GDP,the%20end%20of%20the%20year> (Accessed on 8 May 2023).
- Olney, D. K., Talukder, A. Iannotti, L. L. Ruel, M. T. & Quinn, V. (2009).  
 “Assessing impact and impact pathways of a homestead food production program on household and child nutrition in Cambodia”. In: *Food and Nutrition Bulletin*, 30(4), 2009, pp. 355-369.
- Paul, John (2013).  
 "Please Pick Me" – How Incredible Edible Todmorden is repurposing the commons for open source food and agricultural biodiversity. In J. Franzo, D. Hunter, T. Borelli & F. Mattei (Eds.). *Diversifying Foods and Diets: Using Agricultural Biodiversity to Improve Nutrition and Health*. Oxford: Earthscan, Routledge, pp.336-345.

- Purrington (2020).  
 “Man and his Environment” [online]. Available on:  
<https://carljungdepthpsychologysite.blog/2020/09/30/man-and-his-environment/>  
 (Accessed on 27 August 2023).
- Rao, M.R., Rao, B.R.R. (2006).  
 “Medicinal plants in tropical homegardens.” In: Kumar, B.M., Nair, P.K.R. (eds)  
*Tropical Homegardens. Advances in Agroforestry*, vol 3. Springer, Dordrecht. DOI:  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4948-4\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4948-4_12).
- Regional Health Systems Observatory – EMRO (2006).  
*Health System Profile - Lebanon*. Cairo: World Health Organization. Regional Office  
 for the Eastern Mediterranean.
- Relph, M. K., Meyer, C. & Tazreen, A. (2016).  
 “Gardening: A Sustainable Solution for Malnutrition?” Available on: (Accessed  
 on 9 June 2023).
- Rybak, C., Mbwana, H. A., Bonatti, M., Sieber, S. & Müller, K. (2018).  
 “Status and scope of kitchen gardening of green leafy vegetables in rural Tanzania:  
 Implications for nutrition interventions”. In: *Food Security*, 10(6), 2018, pp. 1437-  
 1447. DOI: 10.1007/s12571-018-0869-b1.
- Sajadian, C. (2020).  
 “The Agrarian Question in Lebanon Today: A View from the Bekaa Valley”. In:  
*Jadaliyya. Arab Studies Institute*.
- Saidi, N. H. (1986).  
*Economic Consequences of the War in Lebanon*. Oxford: Centre for Lebanese  
 Studies.
- Santos, M., Moreira, H., Cabral, J. A., Gabriel, R., Teixeira, A., Bastos, R. & Aires, A.  
 (2022).  
 „Contribution of Home Gardens to Sustainable Development: Perspectives from A  
 Supported Opinion Essay”. In: *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*, 19(20), 2022,  
 13715. DOI: 10.3390/ijerph192013715.
- Sanyal, R. (2017).  
 “A no-camp policy: Interrogating informal settlements in Lebanon”. In: *Geoforum*,  
 84, 2017, pp. 117-125. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.06.011>.
- Save the Children (2022).  
 “Half of the Lebanese Children Now Need Support due to Food, Healthcare  
 Shortages- New Data” [online]. Available on:  
[https://www.savethechildren.net/news/half-lebanese-children-now-need-support-  
 due-food-healthcare-shortages-new-data#](https://www.savethechildren.net/news/half-lebanese-children-now-need-support-due-food-healthcare-shortages-new-data#) (Accessed on 6 May 2023).

- Save the Children (2023).  
 “One Million Children Left Without Education in Lebanon after Public Schools Shut their Doors” [online]. Available on: <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/one-million-children-left-without-education-lebanon-after-public-schools-shut-their-doors> (Accessed on 5 June 2023).
- Schmelter, S. (2018).  
 “Gulf States’ Humanitarian Assistance for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon”. In: *Civil Society Review issue 3 - Unraveling “Civil Society:” Policy, Dependency Networks, and Tamed Discontent. Reflections from Lebanon and Palestine*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.28943/CSR.003>.
- Shumba, O. (2001).  
 “Concepts and Potential Benefits of Permaculture at Household Level in Refugee Situations”. In: UNHCR (2021). *Practising and Promoting Sound Environmental Management in Refugee/Returnee Operations: Papers Presented at an International Workshop, Geneva, Switzerland, 22-25 October 2001*. Geneva: UNHCR, pp. 35-43.
- Shuayb, M. (2020).  
 “Exceptional and Futureless Humanitarian Education of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Prospects for Shifting the Lens”. In: *Refuge Canada s Journal on Refuge*, 36(2), pp. 20-30. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.40717>.
- Shuayb, M., Makkouk, N. & Tuttunji, S. (2014).  
*Widening Access to Quality Education for Syrian Refugees: the Role of Private and NGO Sectors in Lebanon*. Beirut: Centre for Lebanese Studies.
- Slim, R. (2021).  
 „Testimony | ‘Lebanon: Assessing Political Paralysis, Economic Crisis, and Challenges for U.S. Policy’” [online]. Available on: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/testimony-lebanon-assessing-political-paralysis-economic-crisis-and-challenges-us> (Accessed on 6 May 2023).
- SNHR (2023).  
*Statement: Readmitting the Syrian Regime into the Arab League Does Not Mean that Syria is Safe for the Return of Refugees Since the Syrian Regime is Still Committing Crimes Against Humanity*. Syrian Network for Human Rights. Available on: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/readmitting-syrian-regime-arab-league-does-not-mean-syria-safe-return-refugees-syrian-regime-still-committing-crimes-against-humanity> (Accessed on 6 August 2023).
- Syrian Lebanese Higher Council (1991).  
*Agreement for Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination between the Lebanese Republic and the Syrian Arab Republic [Informal Translation]*. Available at: [https://www.syrleb.org/SD08/msf/1507751474\\_.pdf](https://www.syrleb.org/SD08/msf/1507751474_.pdf) (Accessed on 10 July 2023).

- Siegner, A., Sowerwine, J. & Acey, C. (2018).  
 “Does Urban Agriculture Improve Food Security? Examining the Nexus of Food Access and Distribution of Urban Produced Foods in the United States: A Systematic Review“. In: *Sustainability*, 10(9), 2018, 2988. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10092988>.
- Smidl, S., Mitchell, D. M. & Creighton, C. L. (2017).  
 “Outcomes of a Therapeutic Gardening Program in a Mental Health Recovery Center“. In: *Occupational Therapy in mental Health*, 33(4), pp. 1-12. DOI: 10.1080/0164212X.2017.1314207.
- Soemarwoto O. (1987).  
 “Homegardens: a traditional agroforestry system with a promising future“. In: *Agroforestry: A Decade of Development*. Section 3, Chapter 10, 1987. Available at: [https://apps.worldagroforestry.org/Units/Library/Books/Book%2007/agroforestry%20a%20decade%20of%20development/html/3\\_homegardens.htm?n=18](https://apps.worldagroforestry.org/Units/Library/Books/Book%2007/agroforestry%20a%20decade%20of%20development/html/3_homegardens.htm?n=18) (Accessed on 7 June 2023).
- Soga, M., Gaston, K. J. & Yamaura, Y. (2017).  
 “Gardening is beneficial for health: A meta-analysis“. In: *Preventive Medicine Reports*, Vol. 5, 03/2017, pp. 92-99. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2016.11.007>.
- Stevens, G. A., Bennett, J. E., Hennoyq, Q., Lu, Y., De-Regil, L. M. & Rogers, L. et al. (2015).  
 „Trends and mortality effects of vitamin A deficiency in children in 138 low-income and middle-income countries between 1991 and 2013: a pooled analysis of population-based surveys“. In: *THE LANCET*, 3(9). DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(15\)00039-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(15)00039-X).
- Stuart-Smith, S. (2020).  
*The Well Gardened Mind. Rediscovering Nature in the Modern World*. London: William Collins.
- Stuetz, W., Gowele, V., Kinabo, J., Bundalaa, N., Mbwana, H., Rybak, C., Eleraky, L., Lambert, C. & Biesalski, H. K. (2019).  
 “Consumption of Dark Green Leafy Vegetables Predicts Vitamin A and Iron Intake and Status among Female Small-Scale Farmers in Tanzania“. In: *Nutrients*, 11(5): 1025, 2019. DOI: 10.3390/nu11051025.
- Suri, S. (2020).  
 “Nutrition Gardens: A Sustainable Model for Food Security and Diversity“. In: *ORF Issue Brief*, No. 369, 2020, Observer Research Foundation.
- Synge, P. M., Herklots, G. A. C., Perrott, R., & Janick, J. (n.d.).  
 “horticulture“. In: *Encyclopedia Britannica* [online]. Available on: <https://www.britannica.com/science/horticulture> (Accessed on 14 May 2023).

- Tabish, S. A. (2017).  
 “Lifestyle Diseases: Consequences, Characteristics, Causes and Control”. In: Journal of Cardiology & Current Research, 9(3): 00326. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15406/jccr.2017.09.00326>.
- Takano T (2002).  
 “Urban residential environments and senior citizens’ longevity in megacity areas: the importance of walkable green spaces”. In: Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, 56(12), pp 913–8.
- Talukder, A., Haselow, N. J., Osei, A. K., Villate, E., Reario, D., Kroeun, H., SokHoing L., Uddin, A. Dhunge, S. & Quinn, V. (2010).  
 “Homestead food production model contributes to improved household food security and nutrition status of young children and women in poor populations”. In: *The journal of field actions: Field Action Science Reports*. Special Issue 1, 2010. “Urban Agriculture”. Available on: <https://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/404> (Accessed on 2 June 2023).
- Talukder, A., Kiess, L., Huq, N., de Pee, S., Darnton-Hill, I., & Bloem, M. W. (2000).  
 “Increasing the production and consumption of vitamin A–rich fruits and vegetables: lessons learned in taking the Bangladesh homestead gardening programme to a national scale”. In: *Food Nutr. Bull.* Vol. 21, pp. 165–172. DOI: 10.1177/156482650002100210.
- Tandel B. M., Nayaka, P. & Timbadia, C. K. (2015).  
 “Cost-effective-dietary Backyard Kitchen Gardening: A success story.” In: *Rashtriya Krishi* 10(1), 2015, pp. 113–114. Available at: [http://www.researchjournal.co.in/online/RKE/RK%20Eng%20%20%2010%20\(1\)/10\\_113-114.pdf](http://www.researchjournal.co.in/online/RKE/RK%20Eng%20%20%2010%20(1)/10_113-114.pdf) (Accessed on 10 June 2023).
- TERI (2014).  
*Introducing the concept of nutri-gardens to address rural malnutrition by involving IOCL’s Kisan Seva Kendras*. Navi Mumbai: The Energy and Resources Insitute.
- Thompson, R. (2018).  
 “Gardening for health: a regular dose of gardening”. In: *Clinical Medicine*, 18(3), 2018, Wang X., Ouyang Y., Liu J., et al. (2014).  
 “Fruit and vegetable consumption and mortality from all causes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer: systematic review and dose-response meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies”. In: *BMJ.*, 349:g4490, 2014. DOI: 10.1136/bmj.g4490.
- Totten, M. J. (2013).  
 “Can Beirut be Paris Again?” [online]. Available on: <https://www.city-journal.org/article/can-beirut-be-paris-again> (Accessed on 04 May 2023).
- Trinh L. N., Watson J. W., Hue N. N., De N. N., Minh N. V., Chu P., Sthapit B. R. & Eyzaguirre P. B.(2003).



“Agrobiodiversity conservation and development in Vietnamese home gardens”. In: *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 97(1-3), 2003, pp. 317–344. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-8809\(02\)00228-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-8809(02)00228-1).

Trovato, M. G., Al-Akl, N., Ali, D. Abou Fakher, S. (2020).

*Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Protection Amidst Crises. AUB Interim report. Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management Department, Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences/American University of Beirut.* Available at: [https://admigov.eu/upload/Trovato\\_2020\\_Lebanon\\_Interim\\_Report.pdf](https://admigov.eu/upload/Trovato_2020_Lebanon_Interim_Report.pdf) (Accessed 10 June 2023).

UN General Assembly (1951).

*Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 28 July 1951*, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html> (Accessed on 21 May 2023).

UN General Assembly (2016).

*New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 3 October 2016, A/RES/71/1.* Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57ceb74a4.html> (Accessed on 10 August 2023).

UNESCWA (2016).

*Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security in Lebanon.* Lebanon: UNESCWA.

UN-Habitat and UNHCR (2018).

*Housing, Land and Property Issues of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon from Homs City: Implications of the Protracted Refugee Crisis.* Beirut: UN-Habitat Lebanon.

UNHCR (n.d.).

“Refugee Data Finder. What is the difference between population statistics for forcibly displaced and the population that UNHCR is mandated to protect and/or assist?” [online]. Available on: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/forcibly-displaced-pocs.html> (Accessed on 21 May 2023).

UNHCR (2006).

*Finding durable solutions.* UNHCR Global Appeal 2006. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/4371d1a60.pdf> (Accessed on 8 August 2023).

UNHCR (2017).

*Protection in Focus.* Issue No. 1, 2017. Beirut: UNHCR Lebanon.

UNHCR (2018).

*Global Compact on Refugees,* 2018. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/63b43eaa4.html> (Accessed on 5 June 2023).

- UNHCR (2019).  
 “Refugee Definition” [online]. Available on:  
<https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/legal-framework/refugee-definition>  
 (Accessed on 21 May 2023).
- UNHCR (2022a).  
 “Global Appeal 2023” [online]. Available on:  
<https://reporting.unhcr.org/globalappeal2023> (Accessed on 21 May 2023).
- UNHCR (2022b).  
 “Refugee Data Finder. Welcome to UNHCR’s Refugee Population Statistics Database” [online]. Available on: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>  
 (Accessed on 21 May 2023).
- UNHCR (2022c).  
 “Lebanon: Fact Sheet” [online]. Available on: [https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2023/01/UNHCR-Lebanon-Operational-FactSheet-Year-end-2022\\_Final-rev.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2023/01/UNHCR-Lebanon-Operational-FactSheet-Year-end-2022_Final-rev.pdf) (Accessed on 4 June 2023).
- UNHCR (2022d).  
 “Refugee Data Finder” [online]. Available on: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/> (Accessed on 11 March 2023).
- UNHCR (2022e).  
 “Global Trends” (online). Available on: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends#:~:text=The%20announcement%20by%20the%20US,if%20other%20countries%20follow%20suit.> (Accessed on 30 July 2023).
- UNHCR (2023a).  
 “Bekaa (Zahle)” [online]. Available on: <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/bekaa-zahle>  
 (Accessed on 9 August 2023).
- UNHCR (2023b).  
 “Germany” [online]. Available on: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/donors/germany>  
 (Accessed on 3 September 2023).
- UNHCR (2023c).  
 “Syria situation” [online]. Available on:  
<https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/syria-situation> (Accessed on 4 September 2023).
- UNHCR Lebanon (n.d.a).  
 “Education” [online]. Available on:  
<https://www.unhcr.org/lb/education#:~:text=30%25%20of%20school%20aged%20refugee,and%20not%20attending%20any%20training> (Accessed on 29 May 2023).

UNHCR Lebanon (n.d.b).

“Basic assistance [online]. Available on: <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/basic-assistance> (Accessed on 4 June 2023).

UNHCR Lebanon (2022).

“UNHCR, IOM: Shipwreck tragedy off the Lebanese coast underscores need for continuing support to Lebanon” [online]. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/15255-unhcr-iom-shipwreck-tragedy-off-the-lebanese-coast-underscores-need-for-continuing-support-to-lebanon.html> (Accessed on 25 June 2023).

UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF (2022).

“VASYR 2022: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 2022” [online]. Available on: <http://microdata.unhcr.org/> (Accessed on: 25 March 2023).

UNICEF (2021a).

*Lebanon: Children’s future on the line*. Lebanon: UNICEF Lebanon Country Office.

UNICEF (2021b).

*Lebanon*. Lebanon: UNICEF.

USAID (n.d.a).

“What is Food Security” [online]. Available on: <https://www.usaid.gov/agriculture-and-food-security#:~:text=What%20is%20Food%20Security%3F,hunger%20or%20fear%20of%20hunger>. (Accessed on 03 May 2023).

USAID (n.d.b).

“Agriculture and Food Security” [online]. Available on: <https://www.usaid.gov/agriculture-and-food-security#:~:text=What%20is%20Food%20Security%3F,hunger%20or%20fear%20of%20hunger> (Accessed on 04 May 2023).

Veen E. J., Bock, B. B., Van den Berg, W., Visser A. J. & Wiskerke J. S. C. (2016).

“Community gardening and social cohesion: different designs, different motivations”. In: *The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, 21(10), 2016, pp. 1271-1287. DOI: 10.1080/13549839.2015.1101433.

Venugopal K. R. (1999).

“Food security vs. nutrition security”. In: *Health for the millions*, 25(2), pp. 18–19.

Villeneuve PJ, Jerrett MG, Su J, Burnett RT, Chen H, Wheeler AJ, Goldberg MS (2012).

“A cohort study relating urban green space with mortality in Ontario, Canada”. In: *Environmental Research*, Vol. 115, pp 51–8.

- Wang D. & Glicksman A. (2013).  
“‘Being grounded’: benefits of gardening for older adults in low-income housing”.  
In: *Journal of Housing for the Elderly*, 27(1–2), pp. 89–104. DOI:  
10.1080/02763893.2012.754816.
- WHO (2022).  
“Pesticide residues in food” [Online]. Available on: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/pesticide-residues-in-food> (Accessed on 8 June 2023).
- WFP Lebanon (2022).  
*Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis of Lebanese Residents*. Lebanon: World Food Programme.
- World Bank (n.d.).  
“What is Food Security?” [online]. Available on:  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update/what-is-food-security> (Accessed on 03 May 2023).
- World Bank (2020).  
*Lebanon Economic Monitor: The Deliberate Depression: Fall 2020: Global Practice for Macroeconomics, trade & Investment: Middle East and North Africa Region*. Washington D.C.: World Bank Group. Available on:  
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/6d27772f-4540-5b0d-8c8f-69732a3abb4a/content> (Accessed on 23 May 2023).
- World Bank (2021).  
*Lebanon Economic Monitor. Lebanon Sinking (To the Top 3)*. Washington DC: World Bank Group.
- World Bank (2022).  
“The World Bank in Lebanon” [online]. Available on:  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview> (Accessed on 08 May 2023).
- World Bank (2017).  
“Lebanon Health Resilience Project” [online]. Available on:  
<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/616901498701694043/lebanon-health-resilience-project>  
(Accessed on 25 May 2023).
- WHO (2021a).  
“Malnutrition” [online]. Available on: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malnutrition> (Accessed on 8 June 2023).
- WHO (2021b).  
“Obesity and Overweight [online]. Available on: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight> (Accessed on 10 September 2023).

- WHO (2002).  
*The World Health Report 2022. Reducing risks, promoting healthy life*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- WHO (2004).  
*Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- World Vision Lebanon (2021).  
*Vulnerability Screening*. Lebanon: World Vision Lebanon.
- Wimmen, H. (2016).  
“Libanon - Geschichte und Politik” [online]. Available on: <https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/laenderprofile/228362/libanon-geschichte-und-politik/> (Accessed on 8 May 2023).
- Wright S.D., Wadsworth A.M. (2014).  
“Gray and green revisited: a multidisciplinary perspective of gardens, gardening, and the aging process”. In: *Journal of Aging Research*, 283682, 2014. DOI: 10.1155/2014/283682 .
- Zablith, N., Diaconu, K., Naja, F., El Koussa, M., Loffreda, G., Bou-Orm, I. & Saleh, S. (2021).  
“Dynamics of non-communicable disease prevention, diagnosis and control in Lebanon, a fragile setting”. In: *Conflict and Health*, 15(4), 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-020-00337-2>.
- Zurayk, R., Abdul Rahman, S. & Traboulsi, T., (2008).  
*From `Akkar to `Amel, Lebanon's Slow Food Trail. Places, Products and Producers from Lebanon*. Beirut: Slow Food Beirut.

## Appendix

### *Appendix 1: List of interviewees and their occupation*

<b>Organisation/Work</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Buzuruna Juzuruna	Faiqa Mohammed Al Jasem	Head of the seed bank
Buzuruna Juzuruna & Salem's Rose Farm	Salem Al Azouaq	Agricultural trainer and expert at BJ; Owner of Salem's Organic Farm
Greenhouse For All; Dom pomocy społecznej w Bochni	Kamil Smęda	Co-Founder of the Organization and Volunteer; Clinical Psychologist
Greenhouse For All	Yoshito Nishino	Founder and Head of Organization

### *Appendix 2: Form of consent*

#### *Consent Form – Data Privacy*

The interviewee agrees to participate in this research study and understands that he/ she can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind. He/ She had the purpose and nature of the study explained and had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

All the information that is provided for this study will be treated confidentially. Please choose and specify the degree of anonymous:

- I would like, that my name and other information (job position, etc.) are changed, which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about. The identity will remain anonymous in any report/ discussion about the thesis.
- I agree, that my name as well as my job position is mentioned in the thesis and its discussion. For any other publication or discussion than the thesis itself, the researcher must obtain additional permission or treat the data anonymously.

The (disguised) extracts from the interview may be quoted in the master thesis.

He/ She agrees that the interview is being audio-recorded. The signed consent forms and the original audio recordings will be retained on the private computer device of the researcher until the master thesis is defended.

Date: 15 August 2023



Signature of researcher

Signature of participant

*Appendix 3: Guidelines for the semi-structured interviews*

Note: In brackets are the questions specifically addressed to Faiqa Mohammed Al Jasem and Salem Al Azouaq, as they specifically ask about the situation as being Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Question</b>
<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- [legal status]</li> <li>- [life/occupation before the emigration from Syria]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you please introduce yourself and your background?</li> <li>- [Could you explain your legal status?]</li> <li>- [When did you come to Lebanon?]</li> <li>- [What did you do before in Syria? What did you work/ what was your profession?]</li> </ul>
<p>Involvement in project &amp; responsibilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you explain what you precisely do/did with XXX?</li> <li>- Can you explain more about your work?/ What does your gardening work consist of?</li> <li>- What is/was your role and your responsibilities?</li> <li>- [How many people work on your farm and of which nationality are they?]</li> </ul>
<p>Project components/activities &amp; the rationale behind/goals to be pursued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you tell more about the project? What are the activities? What are the components of the project?</li> <li>- What is the idea/rationale/concept behind the gardening activities?</li> </ul>
<p>Benefits and Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What benefits do/did you perceive?/ Can you explain the beneficial aspects?</li> <li>- Can you talk about which benefits you see of gardening in the refugee context?</li> <li>- [How does gardening make you feel?]</li> </ul>
<p>Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Which challenges do you see of gardening in the context of forced displacement?</li> <li>- Apart from XX do you perceive further challenges?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you tell us more about the challenges that Syrians have here to grow their own food and being more self-sufficient?</li> <li>- [How do you feel received as a refugee in the country?]</li> <li>- [What challenges do you face here in terms of being a refugee and in terms of your occupation?]</li> <li>- [What challenges do you perceive in gardening activity?]</li> <li>- [Do you see challenges for especially refugees to have this kind of gardening business you have?]</li> </ul>
Needs for change/ ideas of improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you think could be improved so that gardening activities, also from other small organizations, could be facilitated?</li> <li>- Can you reflect about what would need to change to increase refugees' ability to be more self-sufficient?</li> <li>- What do you think how the situation could change?</li> <li>- [What would need to be changed/ improved for more Syrians to start a gardening business?]</li> </ul>
End	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is there something else you want to mention?</li> <li>- Do you want to add something?</li> <li>- Is there something positive or something that gives you hope?</li> </ul>

*Appendix 4: Interview 1 - Faiqa Mohammed Al Jasem*

Interviewer: Luisa Elleser (LE)  
Interviewee: Faiqa Mohammed Al Jasem (FMAJ)  
Translator: Amira Kassim Kozeay (AKK)  
Date and Time: 3 July 2023, 4 pm  
Location: Saadnayel

LE: Hello. Could you kindly introduce yourself and explain what you do with Buzuruna Juzuruna?



FMAJ/AKK: She is from Aleppo, Syria and came here [to Saadnayel, Bekaa, Lebanon] in 2019. Her husband was working here before and she came to this place in the middle of the war. She started working in this place by cleaning the seeds, storing the seeds and buying and selling the seeds.

LE: Could you explain your legal status and what you did before in Aleppo, like what you worked?

FMAJ/AKK: She is legally in Lebanon; she has her papers and there is someone who asks her to renew her papers all the time. Each year she goes to that place, to the police/Lebanese government and she renews her paper, so she is legally in Lebanon. Legal refugee status. Her family, from many generations, has been working with seedlings in Syria. But her main work was teaching children before. But traditionally, her family, from generation to generation, taught how to work with seedlings because she is from a farming family. The first generation gave the other generations the way [knowledge] to seed and how to store the and sell seeds.

LE: Sorry, again to the legal status. Is Buzuruna Juzuruna giving you money to renew the legal status? Or are you kind of legally protected through Buzuruna Juzuruna?

FMAJ/AKK: No, some friend, not Buzuruna Juzuruna. She didn't ask them to help with their papers because she already had them before. She is already legal, so no need to ask them but they help others. She has been having them before, she has no problems here in Lebanon. If you are talking about the government, it is good to have her paper from that place, but if she has from another place, it's good, so not normative.

LE: How do you feel, do you feel any challenges in your situation of being a refugee? How do you feel perceived?

FMAJ/AKK: Sometimes Lebanese don't treat her well as a Syrian. Racist customers. The customers, the people buying the seeds, sometimes don't treat her in a good way because she is Syrian. The idea is that nobody likes them, they say "it's enough". It is not necessarily what they say but how they treat her, they may not say 'Hi' or treat her in a kind way.

LE: That's not nice.

FMAJ/AKK: But the situation here [the work atmosphere at Buzuruna Juzuruna], everything is good. They are good to each other, Syrians and Lebanese, everything is good here.

LE: "Good here"- you mean in Buzuruna Juzuruna?

FMAJ/AKK: Yes, at Buzuruna they are like the same here.

LE: ...because as I understood you have Lebanese, Syrians, French people, all working together.

FMAJ/AKK: Yes, they are like friends in this work, not like they are working.

LE: Do you have the feeling that it is especially gardening or agricultural work or working with the soil in nature that creates this community feeling, or doesn't it have anything to do with that?

FMAJ/AKK: She said that working with the soil is something that you can let go of negative energy and sometimes negative ideas. They work here because they love the place, they love this work. Not like to bring money or something like that. It's like to make more family, to make more friends; they love this work. If you make something with love, the relation will be amazing. She also said that they all know each other. There are cousins, family friends and there is kind of a connection between the people. They know each other, so it will be more comfortable for all.

LE: That's beautiful.

FMAJ/AKK: She said that she likes to be here not for work but because there are some of her friends here. So she prefers to be with the friends, to spend time with them; more than work. She also likes the work but it is like the main thing is the persons she works with. The persons, then the work. She loves the work, but the main cause to be with them is the persons she works with. Like a team. If you work with a team, you can improve more and you love and you will not say "I am tired".

LE: That is beautiful, really. Can you explain more about your work? What you do with the seeds and what your gardening work consists of?

FMAJ/AKK: She said that she start, from the beginning, what they want to plant before . She gives them the seeds, what they plant, what they should plant for the next year. Then, after that when they pick the seeds, she can put them in the fridge or she can clean it and put it here. There are about 100.000 kinds of seeds in this room. She is responsible of buying and selling here. She is like a manager, we can say, of the seeds, from A to Z. Getting everything ready for people that come and buy them, and they have a lot of stuff back there. [not understandable] It will be for 75% should plant from these seeds, should germinate. The success rate should be 75%. It is the quality: the quality is good. This is her responsibility.

LE: And could you explain more about the concept or the idea behind the seed bank? Because as I understood, the heirloom seeds are also from Syria, but also from other places, like France, Iran and other places. What is the idea behind?

FMAJ/AKK: It's something to save the plants that have already been for a long time and that start to disappear. So, they start to collect them and plant them. When they planted them, they didn't put anything, it is like natural, without any poison sometimes or to put some kind of medicine to them to make them grow quicker. The idea is that if you buy from their seeds, these seeds can grow up each year. If you buy any kinds, like tomatoes, this year, next year your tomatoes will start to make seeds in your place. Without using anything extra, like fertilizer. There are seeds that are meant to lasting, you don't have to come back and buying them again. She said maybe for ten years, you don't need to buy new seeds. That you have your own nutrition, food, something like food surplus, like storage. It is something like you can plant your own food. You can not depend to anyone to buy your food, like self-sustaining. You can buy these seeds and plant for many years and grow your own food.

LE: And do you also do that? Do you grow your own food?

FMAJ/AKK: She tells that before in Syria, they had that, they grew their food. They lived from the land and there was no other source. That is how they get their main food. But here it is harder. It is not the same. But she still gives seeds to her parents and here it is harder to establish that, living of the land as it is in Syria. But she still tries to do that.

LE: That is an interesting point. Can you tell more about the challenges that Syrians have here to grow their own food and being independent food-wise, like self-sustaining?

FMAJ/AKK: She says that they give the neighbours [Syrians living in the camps next to Buzuruna Juzuruna], already ready seedlings or some seeds to plant and they give them for free and they encourage them to start working to having their own vegetables. And when they taste the vegetables without medicine, they have the courage to complete and to plant more and more.

She said that before they need land to plant. But now, because of the situation that the police picks refugees and let them return back to Syria, they have no safety. And they will plant their land and then they will by force go back to Syria. So, they are not interested to plant because they don't know if anytime they have to leave to Syria.

LE: But do they have access to land?

FMAJ/AKK: Some of the people yes, some no. And there is a big problem of water here in Lebanon.

LE: But they don't have the legal right to have land, right? Because they don't have legal status, I mean.

FMAJ/AKK: No, no.

LE: To finalize, can you maybe reflect about what would need to change also regarding the regulations, the societal situation, the political situation in order to increase refugees' ability to get more self-sufficient regarding food, like growing their own food?

FMAJ/AKK: She tells that they need to feel safe before they plant the land. And the Lebanese should treat them well, not like, you know, 'What are you doing in our land? You are taking our work and you are planting our land'. It is too much for the Lebanese. And she said that sometimes they didn't find a home to live. They didn't give them houses to live, even if you pay rent, they cannot give it to you. So, what about the land? And if you want to plant something, you have to feel at least safe. This work takes time.

I asked her if all the Lebanese don't like Syrians and if all don't treat her respectful. She tells me 'No'. In this farm, there are many Lebanese that are so good and in many places. But this idea you can find at any place. There are many people that don't like [Syrians], - at any place, you can see some welcoming and some who don't like [Syrians].

LE: That's a sad end...

FMAJ/AKK: I tell her that I am Syrian, so I want to hear the positive things: if someone supports her, teaches her something...She said that she has friends here that are like family. She feels that she is so safe between them- Lebanese. She feels like they are something like a family and they support her, and she feels safe among them. The main idea: sometimes we meet someone we don't like and sometimes we meet someone welcoming, and they love.

(...)

The war separates the people. Before, a long time ago, we remember that the Syrians came to Lebanon, and they spent all the summer planting and sharing with the Lebanese and they went back to Syria. Now because there is a war, a big hate starts to grow between them. There are many Lebanese girls married to Syrians and the opposite happens. Now it is not fair to let the people hate each other. And before, she also said, that they were one country. We have one culture; we have many things in common. We are so close.

LE: For the interview part, for the recording, is there something you want to add? Something positive or something that gives you hope? Maybe we can end with a positive message and then I can stop recording.

FMAJ/AKK: She said that the most positive thing is this place; they are planting here. They are about twenty families with many, many kinds. If we forget the bad things with the unpolite people, but everything here is positive. When they leave Lebanon, they will let this place for the Lebanese. She feels that they make something good for the Lebanese society. And they start to share, and how you are planting the seeds, they are planting the idea of this way of seeding. And she says that there are plenty of bad things, but the good outnumbers the bad a million times over.

LE: Thank you so much.

*Appendix 5: Interview 2 - Salem Al Azouaq*

Interviewer: Luisa Elleser (LE)  
Interviewee: Salem Al Azouaq (SAA)  
Translator: Sydney Rubin (SR)  
Date and Time: 05 July 2023, 3 pm  
Location: Al-Marj, Lebanon

LE: Could you kindly introduce yourself and your work here on the rose farm?

SAA/SR: He started the farm in 2016. He is from Damascus.

LE: Could you also explain your legal status here and when you came to Lebanon?

SAA/SR: He came here in 2012.

LE: And the legal status?

SAA: Worked with the government and it's okay. Not any problem with the government in Lebanon here.

LE: So, you are a registered refugee with UNHCR?

SAA: Yes, exactly.

LE: Could you explain what you do here on the rose farm- what you sell, what you harvest, the idea behind the rose farm?

SAA/SR: So, the idea behind the farm is that they use everything local and everything from here and there is nothing chemical, nothing from outside. And then he was saying a bunch of different kind of roses, including the Damascus Rose and other kind of vegetables and plants and focuses on local kinds. He makes rose tea, rose jam, rose water, syrup. And there are different kinds of syrup, like summer syrup. And also, they have bees here that benefit a lot from the roses.

LE: *Shukran*. Can you explain whether this land is yours and how you managed to buy the land as a refugee?

SAA: I can't pay this land. I rent this land.

LE: And do you have the legal right to rent the land?

SAA/SR: Yes, he has the legal right to rent it. It has been five years that he has been renting it. And also recently, there has been another friend who lives right over there, who was enthusiastic about the project and who rented more land, so he has recently expanded.

LE: Thank you. Can you explain about challenges that you face here in terms of being a refugee or also in terms of having the rose farm?

SAA/SR: Lots of challenges. Mainly, just that even though he has legal status here, he can't own the land - he has to rent it. And there is a limited time for it. You can't rent it for more than five years before you have to go through the whole process again. And it feels like you always have to do light projects, with the animals and the farm. Because it feels temporary and he doesn't fully own the land. And also he said that now Syria is almost empty because so many people have left. And the Lebanese government doesn't really support them here even though there are so many Syrians that have come from Lebanon.

LE: Thank you. Can you explain about your activities with Buzuruna Juzuruna- what you did with them, what is your relationship with them now?

SAA/SR: He was a founding member of it, from eight years ago. Now, they still work a lot together and collaborate. But they have kind of different missions: they do more the

seeds and vegetables and stuff, and he does more the flowers, so it's like different things that they are focusing on but still working together closely.

[Short interruption]

We stopped the recording briefly because he asked us to stop to ask a separate question. But we were just continuing to talk about Buzuruna Juzuruna and the relationship between this farm and their farm. And we were talking about cross-breeding and how one of their goals is to keep different varieties separate from each other. If they wanted to cross-breed and produce something new – a new generation- it could take about eight years, he said, and they do that sometimes, but their main focus is preserving the older generations, so they have to be careful about keeping different varieties separate. And also he trained Faiqa and a lot of the other people who work at Buzuruna Juzuruna, as one of the founding members of them.

LE: Can you tell us what you did before in Syria- whether you were also a farmer or what was your profession?

SAA/SR: He worked in the exact same field, in rose farming there. But one of the main differences is that there, he got a lot, a lot more money for each thing, like for the same amount than here. And also, that there are a lot more people working in that kind of field there, too.

LE: And can you tell us how gardening makes you feel? And what kind of benefits and challenges you perceive in gardening activity?

SAA/SR: The land and farming is really just the future and it is kind of everything, and the land that we farm from is also the land that we build on, and that we eat from and that we live on. And all of the earth is connected, it is all connected. And he wanted to be understood that in schools, just like we teach chemistry and physics and languages even, teaching about the land and how we use it and how we live off of it and that we should protect it- that should be something that is equally important, because the land is the language of the world. As soon as we respect the land, we can eat clean things.

LE: And apart from the challenge of owning the land, do you see other challenges for other, especially refugee, people to have this kind of gardening business as you have it?

SAA/SR: He is saying that it's hard for him, as a Syrian, even if he bought the land, it is hard to have a paper with his name on it, confirming that he owns the land, like the legal aspect of having proof is hard.

LE: How many people you employ here and whether they are Lebanese or Syrians or of other origin?

SAA/SR: *Yes, I have here about three workers from Lebanon. And also, one Lebanese helps with working in land. Also, I have four women working here. Syrian women. (...)* He mentions all the names of the people who work here. The women do the same thing as the men, but they also help with milking the sheep. They have 28 sheep here but about seven give milk.

LE: Maybe one last question that will be an open question. I would be interested in knowing what you think about what would need to be changed or improved for more Syrian refugees to start a gardening business like you have it?

SAA/SR: He was saying about a project that he did with Buzuruna Juzuruna that they bought like twenty sheep and had twenty families come and taught them about farming. The goal was that they could be self-sufficient and not rely on other things and learn how to do it themselves. And he was saying also that even though there are a lot of Syrians

here, with more Syrians, there is more people planting and contributing to variety. And he was naming a bunch of different things that he plants here. And there may be a lot of Syrians here but they also bring a lot of diversity in plants.

LE: Okay that's fine. Thank you so much, Salem!

### *Appendix 6: Interview 3 - Kamil Smęda*

Interviewer: Luisa Elleser (LE)

Interviewee: Kamil Smęda (KS)

Date and Time: 15 August, 3.30 pm

Location: Videocall via Zoom

LE: Hello. Could you please introduce yourself and your background?

KS: Hi, my name is Kamil and I am 26 in about few days. I studied Psychology and one year, I also studied in Lebanon, at the USJ, *Université Saint-Joseph*. Right now, I am working in a mental institute for chronically mentally ill people. And I have been volunteering in Lebanon with Yoshi with Greenhouse from a very long time.

LE: Okay, thank you. Could you explain what you precisely did with Greenhouse for all? What was your role and your responsibilities?

KS: I was there from, let's say, the beginning of the organization. We focused on the gardening and agriculture, but also later we've started a school project. The whole work was taking care of the school and taking care of the children. There was not a mandatory thing to do- everyone focused what they are good at. Since I've studied Psychology, I wanted to take care of the mental health and the advocacy of the children and the people around me, and also for the volunteers and everyone around us, that's what I was doing.

LE: That's nice. And could you explain more about the gardening activities and what was the idea behind the whole garden component?

KS: Yes, I can say how I started the whole journey with Greenhouse for All. It was me and my friends and Yoshi, who is my friend and the head of the organization that is doing the gardening in the Bekaa. I remember the first day when we arrived to meet him, just five minutes after we started, we grabbed the tools and all the plants and seedlings and we went with some translator to a very rural part of the village. And we met some family and I didn't have any idea what I am going to do but we just started talking and few minutes later, we started digging the ground and doing the small garden. This is how it started- we started carrying tools and seedlings to the people and the villages. It started with only one family and of course we wanted to see how the seedlings are growing, so the next week, we came to visit the place and there were the neighbours that were visiting the family who was doing this whole idea, the gardening, and said: 'I also have some small place, maybe you can do it at my place'. So, we followed her lead, and we went to another garden, so it was like a domino effect basically. Because everyone wanted a small garden, everyone was asking us because we were the only foreigners in the whole area. So, they knew who to ask for the seedlings. This is how we started doing the whole idea of gardening. Doing small gardens. It was very great memories of seeing the people- when we were visiting them and seeing them

smile and being happy, not only making the gardens but also just spend time and try to communicate together, drink tea and spend some time together.

LE: And where did you get the seedlings from? You grew them yourself?

KS: So, Yoshi, who is the head of the organization, was looking for a particular place to start growing because he wanted to do organic seedlings from seeds ourselves. But how we did it, was that we managed to find an Armenian gardener – his name is Khajak -, so he had very big strawberry fields. So, right now he changed a little bit, but I remember in the beginning, we were climbing the hills and doing all the very hard work that required gardening of strawberries. Not only planting but picking the strawberries, but also making the seedlings in the greenhouse. I think in one year we made like 10.000, 20.000 seedlings, maybe more. So it was lots and lots of work. And how it worked: it was that we were helping Kajak and for all the time we were spending time together, not only we became friends, but for all the work, he let us bring the strawberries and the unused seedlings, the manure and also the tools we sometimes borrowed. [not understandable] But the things we were using we earned through work and through friendship.

LE: Beautiful exchange.

KS: Yes, exactly.

LE: That sounds wonderful, really. Yes, I remember Kajak. And can you explain what was the whole idea behind? You said that you started the project with Yoshi and two other people, so you were the base, right? So, what was the rationale behind this whole gardening project?

KS: So, when we started there was not really an idea. We had to cultivate the idea of what we were doing because we started with having not any background or any thoughts of what we were doing. But in the meantime, when we started helping and seeing how much happiness it's bringing, how much smiles for the kids and children and the whole neighbourhood. It's started to bring more joy in the village and people were very glad to receive us and have some small things to take care of. It's not only when we were doing the gardens, mostly the families, the older people, were looking what we were doing but the kids were always helping us. Sometimes it was really interesting because we were also exchanging the ideas behind agriculture because mostly we were working with Syrian people, but also Lebanese, but Syrian people are very good, like they know about the agriculture. Sometimes they showed us what to do and how to plant and how to dig some nice rows in the ground, so were all the time exchanging information between us. So we were not only learning from each other, and yes bringing the happiness, the seedlings.

LE: That is beautiful. I just realize now that you had this exchange, this non-monetary exchange, with Kajak, to then get the seedlings, the manure etc to have another form of exchange with the Syrian and the Lebanese population in Deir Zenoun.

KS: Yeah, yeah.

LE: Nice. Can you explain a bit further the beneficial aspects, especially you as a studied Psychologist, did you perceive certain mental health benefits or other benefits of the ones that you listed?

KS: I think, one is, after some time, we started focusing on self-sustainability. So not on our self-sustainability but we tried to bring it to the people. We tried to show them that okay, maybe you have some small land and you can take care of something. And of course, as a person you grow, no matter how you take a look at it. Of course, I cannot read minds and I couldn't speak Arabic that well at that time. But I could sense how

much I grew and how much it was bringing me this peace and amazing feelings just one or two persons (??) a day just taking care of the seedlings together with the families. So I do believe that if I had these feelings, I could sense these feelings also from the people, which are basically a form of healing for the family and overall the community.

LE: That's beautiful, thank you. But you said that they have a piece of land, right? But this piece of land is not a registered land that is allocated to them?

KS: Mh, that is very complicated. Because not only we were helping were mostly refugees living in the tents. And these tents were placed mostly next to the big places of acre. Usually, they had to pay for the tents to have. They had to pay, before the inflation, I think it was around USD 200 per month to have a tent to the owner of the land. When I learned that, I was just shocked how people who have nothing basically still have to pay so much to the owner for the tent. And during time of summer and spring, they had to work, the whole family. So that is a big disadvantage of these people, they had no choice, they had to survive. And also, they couldn't really own land. Mostly, the Syrian people, they don't have much laws in Lebanon since they are refugees, but also its been a very long time, 12 or 13 years now, I think. I think the situation is not getting better. So yes, it is very complicated. And it is very hard to understand from our point. When we were talking about making gardens, it was very, very small area, maybe twenty plants. Bigger lands are usually owned by the Lebanese farmers and the Syrian people are working there, so we didn't really have those big fields, because we had no manpower to do so. Except of one time when we were helping a sheikh, which is the like Imam, priest let's say, of that place, so we were doing many acres of land together, and also we were doing this irrigation system. So yeah, sometimes, we were trying to find a bigger land and in exchange for our work, we tried to get some benefits for the other people. So maybe they can use that land, maybe they can farm this place as a community and work together.

LE: And where the Lebanese land owners open to these kind of suggestions?

KS: I think, actually, the owner of the land was the Syrian skheikh, so they have way more money than the other people. I think, he was Syrian, if I am not mistaken. I think they have very tough relations between each other because also the situation of the Lebanese people is really dire. And also there is always fights and arguing between the Syrians and the Lebanese, and so many fights, and so many gunfights. Because of the religion, because of the culture, because of everything that is going on in the country. And the biggest thing I heard from the Lebanese people is, the one thing that I always heard is 'ok why are you helping Syrian people? We are suffering, no one is helping us, not even the government is helping us. There are so many international NGOs giving money to the people, but we are left, and no one is helping us. So it's a very tough and complicated situation but you know, it's hard not to focus on the politics, but yeah, sometimes we did. But mostly it was all about seedlings and plants.

LE: What do you think how the situation could change, apart from what is happening now with the deportations of Syrians back to the country, I mean, which is against law and super cruel?

KS: yeah, I don't think there...I literally have no idea or no opinion of how it could improve because it is so complicated.

LE: Okay, back to the gardening component. What do you think could be improved so that gardening activities, also from other small organizations, could be eased, facilitated?



KS: Mh I think what was good in our organization which was very small because it was only 4 or 5 people at one time. We couldn't really help bigger amount of people. I mean, at one time, we rented a piece of land for a year, but there was so much work and not enough people to take care of it. [Not understandable]. But what we were doing is basically exchanging ideas, learning from each other and giving the ideas, like what we were using. Because at the time, we were only working with plants and seedlings. Like we were putting the seeds of knowledge into these communities, to work together, and we could see them grow. And we could see how great it was. So yeah, I am very grateful for that time actually.

LE: That's perfect. That's so inspiring what you did. Is there something else you want to mention, you want to say before finishing the recording?

KS: Mh yeah, I think I talked a lot about the whole seedlings and the history. It's been like two years now, maybe more, maybe less I don't know. But I'm not really accurate with my memories but I was trying to do my best. But yeah also recently the whole effort was focused on the school and the school project. So yeah we kind of, I am still more thinking about the school and the whole idea between taking care of children and registering and trying to manage the teachers and the volunteers and everything. So it was more like managing than cultivating recently. But I do believe that these memories were the greatest like going to work everyday since the morning until the very late night and starting in the hills and going to the city to bond and make gardens and then coming back to the hills again and yeah it was very bonding. Yeah, it was just great. Thank you.

LE: I mean really, even though it may be two years, your enthusiasm is very visible and hearable also. Thank you so much Kamil.

#### *Appendix 7: Interview 4 - Yoshito Nishino*

Interviewer: Luisa Elleser (LE)

Interviewee: Yoshito Nishino (YN)

Date and Time: 16 August, 8.30 pm

Location: Videocall via Zoom

LE: Hello, could you kindly present yourself and your background?

YN: Yes, hi. I am Yoshi, Yoshi Nishino from Japan. My plan is having life in Japan [*I have lived in Japan*] and sometimes I travelled to US to meet some indigenous peoples to learn about the cultures and how we get along with nature, these things. I learn from them. And I have friends living in the countryside and doing agriculture. Often I help them and then think about how we get along with things. I also have experience taking care of the kids and teaching kinds. Most of the kids when I worked in facilities is kind of no parents or with lots of problems. I also thought during that period 'What can I do? What the society needs to support the kids. How we can help them'. This is kind of my background. And then coming to Lebanon...for me kids in Japan, kids in Lebanon, there is not a a difference, for me it's the same. So 'what can I do for them?' This is kind of the start why we made a school. This is kind of introduction if that's alright.

LE: Great, thank you. Yeah exactly, can you tell more about the project Greenhouse for All? What are the activities, what are the components of the project?

YN: So, project starts end of 2020. Mainly we start with agriculture activities, making seedlings- tomatoes, cucumber, lettuce, zucchinis, any kind. And also going to the refugee camps to support them. Why? Because educating youth to create something. But if we can give something or share something, they can make by themselves, they work by themselves, making something themselves, by their own physical work. They [seedlings] bring some dignity or how we say? Some of the very important part of human being, we believe. That's we think the distribution helped for them. So yeah, that is our activity at the beginning.

LE: and then the project expanded to the school, right?

[Connection problems – the call got interrupted]

LE: Okay, we had connectivity issues. So you were saying that the seedlings are also to bring dignity to the life of the people, and that's when connection stopped. So could you explain how this is also connected to the education project?

[Recurring connection problems – the text was not understandable]

YN: So we will start from where again?

LE: Maybe you can explain a little bit about the school, the rooftop garden and how maybe the garden project is connected with the education project?

YN: Yeah so, sure, some of the kids cannot follow the path of the educational system of the authorities or like some kids can go to school first years and continue, but some cannot follow that. What we give them is like support [difficult to understand/not understandable].

LE: Can you explain the rooftop garden?

YN: Yeah, sure. We checked one more field and maybe where kids come by their hand, by their experience. If they can learn how to taking care of the seedlings and plant by themselves, by their own experience, I think it's very good. So we tried to find a field out of school but couldn't find it [difficult to understand/not understandable]. Some of the persons going to steal during the harvest season. [difficult to understand/not understandable]

So maybe we make field garden on the rooftop in our school. It is more safe and at least we have enough water.

[Connection problems].

LE: Can you talk about which benefits you see of gardening in the refugee context? Regarding, you were mentioning the creation of safe space, mental benefits you were observing?

[Connection problems].

YN: So, one of the benefits, let them realize that we can do it. Even their house, their small space in their camps.

LE: and for the children in particular?

YN: For the children, them, they start thinking about: 'okay, so in the school we created tomatoes and cucumbers. Maybe in my house, I make zucchinis, I make watermelons'. Like let them, how do you say, make their idea, make their dream, expand what they wish, what they want to. So, I think creating vegetables on our rooftop is just the beginning. But next year, if they really want to, we bring some organic seeds for them. If they need 'okay, I want to have like radish seeds' and then we can give them. And then like they ask us for example how can grow out, we can give them [the education]. First year, they do this. They try to create them, they try to planning and everything by themselves, maybe this is like the second step. So that kind of way [difficult to understand/not understandable].

LE: Thank you. And what do you think would you need as an organization or what are ideas how the gardening activities could be expanded?

YN: So yeah definitely if we have our own land next year would be nice. Because rooftop is really good to let them do, but it's not like we share our harvest because it is so small amount. But if we have land, but that land is covered by fence, not letting people in, steal our harvest, yeah, if we have that kind of land is nice, next year.

LE: And apart from the danger of stealing are there other challenges? Regarding access to water or the legal situation.?

YN: Yeah sure, we need the land and water and things. And we have a friend, organic farmer, maybe we can ask him do a lecture to kinds. So first year they receive the idea, or like the activity what we had. But next year is more the question if we have by themselves and they can create by themselves with teacher, like organic farmer.

LE: Ah okay so to have a real gardening class with a teacher?

YN: Yeah, that's the way we increase our activities. That kind of way.

LE: Great, good luck. That's all from my side. Do you want to add something - what you wish for as an organization or like something you want to mention before I stop the recording?

YN: You mean like the activity of the agriculture, like general, like other things, even education things?

LE: Yeah I mean, I already asked for the benefits, but I just want to ask you if you want to mention something before I stop the recording of the conversation?

YN: Yeah we don't want to force, we don't want to push something to the kids. Okay you should learn this, or you should study something like this- we don't want to. Because each kid has different talent, different capabilities, everything. But if we can give some various kind of activities or ideas or studies or learning, maybe they can pick their own way, their own interest. They pick some of things. Sure, it is nice if they get some idea for their profession in the future, what they will be. but some of the activities, some of our class, the classes are not only for looking for their profession, like get the idea of their profession. Generally, it's helping their life. For example, they even not going to be a

farmer but they can make their own vegetables and things by themselves. This is nice. I think it's really connected to [difficult to understand/not understandable] or the global warming. [difficult to understand/not understandable]. I think our activities we give to kids is really connected to their lives. Even not chose some of profession but activities, but still, if it helps their live itself, I think it is nice. We don't know who one of the kids like which activity, they remember. [difficult to understand/not understandable]. Any kind of people if they come and interact. To meet kids and the kids receive something from them. I don't know like in the future, some of the things if it works for them, maybe it is nice.

[Addition via Whatsapp audio message as the call was interrupted due to connection problems]

“Okay, many of the children who come to our school, are previous school drop-outs or have parents who are not interested in education. We want to give these children the opportunity to be exposed to the variety of jobs as well as schooling. Because it is difficult for them to go on to higher education because after our schools, they will be in the situation where they really have to work. But on the other hand, we never know what sparks the children's interest. Even if the activities we provide do not directly lead to their future jobs, if they enrich their lives even a little bit, I think that is special benefit. That is why we would like to continue to welcome the diverse range of people and create a variety of activity with them.”

*Appendix 8 – Collection of self-made photos of the visits to the organisations or of the internship activities*



(Elleser, Luisa. *Arts class in Peace Garden*. [own photograph]. 17 June 2023).



(Elleser, Luisa. *The Peace Garden*. [own photograph]. 5 July 2023).



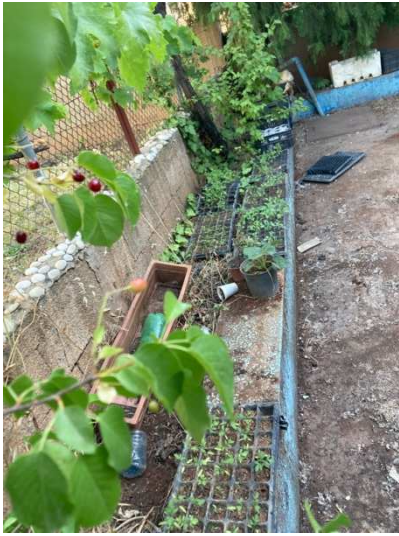


(Elleser, Luisa. *Vegetable Patch in the Peace Garden*. [own photograph]. 21 June 2023).



(Elleser, Luisa. *The beauty of cultivation. Edible and non-edible plants growing out of recycled materials*. [own photograph]. 5 July 2023).





(Elleser, Luisa. *Preparing seedlings for the distribution*. [own photograph]. 2 July 2023).





(Elleser, Luisa. *Schoolchild with seedlings that are distributed among the refugee families.* [own photograph]. 5 July 2023).



(Elleser, Luisa. *Explanation of how native seeds are obtained from adult plants on the farm in Saadnayel.* [own photograph]. 10 June 2023).





(Elleser, Luisa. *View of the Saadnayel farm with the cultivation fields, the circus and the view of the anti-Lebanon mountain bordering Syria* [own photograph]. 10 June 2023).



(Elleser, Luisa. *The Seed Bank in Saadnayel* [own photograph]. 3 July 2023).



(Elleser, Luisa. *Salem's Organic Farm in Al-Marj and his rose products for sale* [own photograph]. 5 July 2023).

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

By submitting this Master's thesis, I attest of the fact that all the work included is my own and was written without the help of a third party.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Furthermore, this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or other purposes.

23 September 2023, Sant Cebrià de Vallalta

---

*Date, City*



---

*Signature*