THE STRATEGIC USE OF RESETTLEMENT:

Lessons from the Syria Context

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil society organization
DSP	The Durable Solutions Platform
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EU	European Union
IDP	Internally displaced person
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
SUR	Strategic Use of Resettlement
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

1. INTRODUCTION

A. OVERVIEW

As the Syrian conflict enters its ninth year, more than 5.6 million Syrian refugees have been forcibly displaced to nearby countries, in particular Turkey (3,691,333), Lebanon (916,000), Jordan (654,692), and Iraq (247,440).[1] The majority of Syrian refugees are living in increasingly protracted displacement,[2] having fled their home country years prior. For many refugees, protracted displacement contributes to enhanced economic precarity and a lower overall quality of life, as well as exacerbating economic, social, and political challenges experienced by host country communities themselves.

Given the scope and longevity of forced displacement in the Syrian conflict, international responses have often sought to identify and promote **durable solutions** for both Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Durable solutions to displacement can take three forms:

1. **Voluntary return** whereby displaced persons – refugees or IDPs - return to their home countries and/or communities in safety and dignity;

2. **Integration** into the host community to which an individual – refugee or IDP - has been displaced; or

3. **Resettlement** to a third country. This option is available only to refugees who have crossed an international border and are residing in a country of asylum, referred to as a **host country** throughout this report.[3]

Although most Syrian refugees have indicated their desire to return to Syria at some point in the future,[4] conditions throughout the country are such that return in either the short- or long-term remains impossible for most individuals. This is due to a range of factors, including but not limited to: ongoing conflict, protection concerns for certain refugees, an acute scarcity of livelihood opportunities, and heavily degraded infrastructure and security conditions in many communities. At the same time, integration into local communities is not considered an option in most countries hosting large numbers of Syrians. Many Syrian refugees are subjected to human rights violations by national and local governments, as well as non-Syrian community members. At the same time, institutional and legal barriers often prevent Syrian refugees from accessing essential services and securing dignified employment.

Given these challenges, **resettlement is often the desired – or only – durable solution for certain vulnerable refugees.** Vulnerable refugees considered eligible for resettlement are divided into seven categories: persons with legal and/or physical protection needs, survivors of torture and/or violence, persons with acute medical needs, women and girls at risk, persons eligible for family reunification, children and adolescents at risk, and, critically, **persons for whom there are no foreseeable alternative durable solutions.**[5] Defined as the "selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them",[6] resettlement provides a pathway to legal residency in states across Europe, North America, and elsewhere that have chosen to maintain resettlement programs. It is therefore a powerful mechanism for resolving the acute protection needs of vulnerable persons and families, and providing a durable solution to their displacement.

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1   These numbers represent only refugees who have registered with UNHCR; it is suspected that many more are living in host countries without registration. In addition, more than 6,000,000 individuals are internally displaced within Syria. UNHCR. (2019). UNHCR Operational Portal: Syria

2   UNHCR defines a "protracted refugee situation" as one in which 25,000 refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or more. UNHCR. (2019) Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018

3   UNHCR. (2018). Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017

4   UNHCR Refugee Return Intentions Survey

5   For a complete overview about resettlement submission categories see UNHCR Resettlement Handbook - Chapter 1. 2011, p. 37

6   UNHCR Resettlement Handbook - Chapter 1. 2011, p. 3

B. RESETTLEMENT AS A STRATEGIC TOOL

Although resettlement has profound benefits for persons who are resettled to third countries, for the majority of refugees it remains a distant hope. In 2019, fewer than 0.5% of Syrian refugees had their cases submitted for resettlement.[7] This is in line with global trends, as fewer than 1% of refugees worldwide ultimately access this durable solution.[8] As such, without a significant increase in resettlement opportunities, this durable solution remains out of reach for the vast majority of Syrians. While large-scale international efforts have been made to bridge needs gaps by providing a range of support to refugees in host countries, conditions for many refugees remain extremely precarious.

One strategy for achieving this goal, first articulated by UNHCR in 2003, is the **strategic use of resettlement (SUR).** This concept asserts that the overall resettlement system, as well as specific resettlement programs, can be leveraged to positively impact the broader protection environment in a country or region. UNHCR defines SUR as:

> **"the planned use of resettlement in a manner that maximizes the benefits, directly or indirectly, other than those received by the refugee being resettled. Those benefits may accrue to other refugees, the hosting State, other States or the international protection regime in general".[9]**

There are a range of ways in which resettlement programming can be theoretically leveraged to improve protection conditions or, in some ideal scenarios, open up other forms of durable solutions. For example, in its 2003 paper first conceptualizing SUR, UNHCR suggested that the practice could:

- Be leveraged as "part of a package of durable solutions" that would in turn facilitate the achievement of durable solutions for an entire refugee population. For example, resettling a specific group of persons who cannot return home, but also cannot remain in their host country, "could act as a catalyst to support a final decision on repatriation or local integration of the larger population".[10]

- Encourage the local integration of some refugee groups by a host country (for example, those with shared religious or ethnic identities) while resettling those for whom integration is unlikely.

As in the examples above, SUR often frames resettlement programming as a tool for catalyzing large-scale changes inside host countries. Other, smaller-scale interpretations of SUR are also held by some resettlement actors, and will be discussed later in this report.

Example: the strategic resettlement of Afghan and Myanmar refugees in India

According to UNHCR, one successful instance of SUR took place in India. Since 1989, the country has hosted a large number of refugees hailing from Afghanistan and Myanmar, but was reluctant to allow these individuals to become permanent residents of the country. After advocacy from UNHCR and other actors, India agreed to locally integrate Hindu and Sikh refugees who were considered to be of 'Indian' origin, while resettlement countries resettled individuals from other ethnic/religious groups. In this case, the strategic resettlement of certain groups was found to have opened up a previously unavailable solution to some refugees.[11]

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7   UNHCR Operational Portal: Syria.

8   UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2020. 25th Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement, 1-2 July 2019

9   UNCHR Discussion Paper. The Strategic Use of Resettlement. Working Group on Resettlement. Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. 3 June 2003, p. 2

10   Ibid, p. 4

11   UNHCR Discussion Paper. The Strategic Use of Resettlement. Working Group on Resettlement. Geneva, 14 October 2009

C. LOOKING FURTHER: STRATEGIC USE OF RESETTLEMENT IN THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CONTEXT AND BEYOND

Although SUR has existed as a concept since 2003, and is referred to regularly by UNHCR as well as a range of other government and non-governmental actors, little evidence exists as to the:

- Degree to which SUR is employed in refugee contexts worldwide;
- Extent to which SUR has affected positive changes in a given context; and
- The kinds of changes that SUR has been able to achieve in the 16 years since its articulation.

This report represents an in-depth assessment of SUR and the degree to which it has been employed within the Syrian refugee context. Given the scale and protracted nature of cross-border displacement over the course of the Syrian conflict, as well as the large numbers of Syrian refugees who have been resettled since the conflict's inception when compared to other nationalities,[12] this context is well-suited for exploring questions related to SUR. The Durable Solutions Platform (DSP) undertook this research with the aim of exploring the following topics:

- **Identify achieved and potential large- and small-scale benefits** of SUR in Syrian refugee host countries;
- **Examine the extent to which there may have been missed opportunities** to leverage SUR, in particular when the resettlement of Syrians peaked in 2016;
- **Highlight current challenges** to the employment of SUR in this context;
- **Discuss possible ways in which SUR can be better employed** by actors working on Syrian refugee issues; and
- **Analyze the degree to which findings are specific to this particular context**, or may be applicable to other refugee crises.

2. METHODOLOGY

DSP pursued a qualitative methodology for this report, focusing on interviews with key resettlement actors from a variety of professional backgrounds. Given the scope of the Syrian refugee response, DSP focused its research on resettlement activities, and SUR, in the host countries of Jordan and Lebanon. These countries were selected for analysis due to the large numbers of Syrians residing within their borders, and the correspondingly large resettlement programs. The Syrian context is of particular interest in part because in recent years, Syrians have been the most numerous nationality to have benefitted from resettlement.[13]

The decision to pursue the question of SUR was determined through consultations with more than a dozen resettlement stakeholders in both Europe and the Middle East. Research itself took place between October 2019 and January 2020. It began with a desk review of literature related to resettlement and SUR, which was followed by interviews with 22 key informants representing UNHCR, IOM, resettlement country staff, international NGOs, and host country governments. Key informants from resettlement countries are Canadian and German. This is due to the countries' comparatively large and sustained resettlement commitments for Syrian refugees, as well as the accessibility of interviewees to research staff.

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12   For example, during the 2016 surge in Syrian refugee resettlement, a total of 77,254 Syrians were resettled. The next highest nationality, Congolese, saw 22,824 resettlements. In 2019, 27,465 Syrians were resettled. Again, Congolese were the next highest nationality, totaling 17,103 persons. Source: UNHCR Resettlement Data Finder

13   UNHCR. (2019). Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2018.

Notably, no refugees were interviewed for this piece. This was due to a desire to avoid interviewing what is generally a heavily interviewed population, as well as the fact that no individuals within DSP's network of Syrian civil society organizations expressed an interest in participating in this study. The final section of this paper, which recommends areas for potential future research, includes suggestions for topics that would center the perspective of Syrian refugees in nearby host countries.

3. KEY FINDINGS

Based on desk review and interviews, this research identified three overarching findings related to SUR, as well as four persistent challenges to the effectively leveraging SUR in the Syrian refugee context. A brief summary of these findings is provided below, while an in-depth assessment of each challenge in turn can be found beginning on page 13:

Key finding 1: Although SUR is known to most resettlement stakeholders, its usefulness as decision- and policy-making tool was frequently called into question

Almost – though not all – key informants were aware of the existence of SUR as a concept. However, their opinions of SUR varied. Most UNHCR stakeholders acknowledged that SUR has the potential to enhance protection conditions in host countries, but acknowledged that there are challenges to implementing the concept in a way that contributes to positive change. Key informants representing civil society organizations, academics, and stakeholders from resettlement countries themselves adopted a more skeptical stance. While some saw SUR as having limited value as a theoretical concept, none were able to link resettlement programming to any positive changes in Syrian refugees' quality of life in host countries, or other potential metrics of success.

Key finding 2: It was generally agreed that the opportunity to employ SUR is more likely to exist in contexts where third countries are resettling a significant percentage of refugees when compared to the total refugee population in a given host country

Key informants held a general consensus that SUR can be best – and many would argue only – employed in instances where large numbers of refugees are being resettled from a host country. However, in almost all refugee contexts, and certainly in the case of Syrian refugees, even at its peak the number of resettled persons represented a 'drop in the ocean' when compared to the large numbers of individuals who remained in host countries without access to durable solutions. Without making a meaningful impact on the refugee caseload in a given country or region, stakeholders argued that it was not appropriate to then attempt to leverage resettlement in a strategic manner.

Key finding 3: In order to reflect realities in host countries, implementors of SUR must either significantly increase resettlement numbers, and/or explore the ways in which resettlement programming can also have a small-scale impact

In the Syria context, there has been no evidence of SUR as it was initially conceived in UNHCR's 2003 paper – as a path for unlocking new durable solutions for populations – having manifested on the ground. It is moreover highly unlikely that resettlement quotas for Syrians will increase to the extent that new opportunities could emerge, ultimately frustrating the possibility of SUR in the future. It is possible that other contexts may contain examples of this phenomenon that were not captured in this report.

While some key informants highlighted specific, highly limited small-scale benefits (such as the freeing up of hospital space by resettling targeted medical cases), civil society actors were hesitant to define such incremental changes as constituting instances of SUR. With this in mind, SUR stakeholders may wish to expand and reconceptualize the concept to include these more modest gains.

The research additionally identified four main challenges that have hindered the efficacy of SUR as an advocacy and policy-making tool in the Middle East region:

Challenge 1: Key stakeholders possess contrasting conceptualizations of SUR's meaning, as well as what constitutes 'strategic' resettlement

Over time, the meaning and objectives of SUR have come to be understood in fundamentally different ways by various resettlement and migration actors. For example, while the initial concept was devised by UNHCR with a clear focus on maximizing protection benefits, some European stakeholders have increasingly characterized resettlement as a tool for 'strategic' management, suggesting that resettlement programming could help to reduce, and ultimately replace, asylum processes in European countries.[14] It will therefore be necessary for UNHCR and/or other stakeholders to re-affirm the meaning and purpose of SUR, in order to counterbalance other narratives that are not grounded in humanitarian principles.

Challenge 2: Contrasting selection criteria could be a hindrance to resettlement countries employing SUR in a strategic manner

Many newer resettlement countries make use of national selection criteria, in addition to vulnerability, in order to select the refugees that enter through their resettlement programs. If countries wish to add a strategic component to their resettlement programs – for example by resettling refugees with a certain background or vulnerability – this means that a refugee being assessed for resettlement may have to fit three potentially contrasting sets of criteria: vulnerability, national selection requirements, and 'strategic value'. Identifying refugees whose profiles fit such a targeted subset would likely require a significant increase in efforts on the part of resettlement countries and their host country counterparts, a challenge that was underscored by key informants working for resettlement country governments.

Challenge 3: There remains a lack of evidence to demonstrate that employing SUR would result in an improvement of protection conditions in host countries.

Although SUR as a theory was developed 15 years ago, and despite DSP's attempt to identify and highlight field-level evidence of the concept's (successful) implementation on the ground in Jordan and Lebanon, there remains an acute lack of examples where: 1) resettlement programming was implemented in a strategic manner consistent with SUR principles; and 2) such an implementation led to envisaged protection benefits.

Challenge 4: SUR is not mainstreamed throughout UNHCR and other actor's foundational documents on forced displacement and resettlement

Although it is highlighted in a range of UNHCR documents, such as the UNHCR Global Resettlement Needs Report, SUR is often only mentioned as a 'buzzword' with insufficient evidence that SUR had actually been applied (and produced any effects) in the situations outlined. In addition, SUR is not explicitly named and referenced in foundational UNHCR strategy documents such as its Three-Year Strategy (2019-2021). It is understood that this decision was the result of consultations with INGOs and civil society organizations, and linked to the current challenges of SUR language being co-opted by some European actors to refer to migration management, rather than increasing protection dividends.[15] This example is just one of many barriers that must be overcome in order to make SUR an actionable concept.

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14   See See Bamberg, K. (2018). The EU Resettlement Framework: From a humanitarian pathway to a migration management tool? & Welfens, N. (2018). Setting the Trends for Resettlement in Europe? Germany's New Avenues for Refugee Protection

15   This was echoed by a UNHCR interviewee as well as an INGO resettlement specialist.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESETTLEMENT STAKEHOLDERS

A. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNHCR

Recommendation 1: 'Re-own' the concept of SUR

UNHCR first articulated the concept of SUR and continues to make an effort to preserve SUR as a conceptual tool for enhancing protection. However, the characterization of the concept has remained largely static since its conception. UNHCR could revive and update SUR by explicitly addressing current challenges (such as competing narratives of what constitutes 'strategic' resettlement), and in doing so reinforce the primacy of its definition of SUR.

Recommendation 2: Re-focus the concept of SUR on smaller-scale benefits in order to generate evidence of SUR

Evidencing the benefits of strategic use of resettlement is necessary to transition SUR from a largely rhetorical device towards a blueprint for implementing certain resettlement activities. However, the traditional aim of using SUR to unlock other durable solutions does not appear to be feasible in the near future, due in part to the discrepancy between resettlement needs and available resettlement spaces. Shifting the focus of SUR to include an analysis of and commitment to smaller potential benefits (e.g. specific refugee profiles) could help in making SUR a more operational concept. It may also create new ways for understanding, assessing, and measuring the successes (or failures) of SUR.

Recommendation 3: Provide guidance and coordination for SUR efforts

To foster the implementation of SUR, UNHCR will need to play a pivotal role in providing guidance and coordination for resettlement countries wishing to incorporate a SUR lens to their programming, as well as for host countries exploring ways to address protracted refugee situations.

In addition to reinforcing a shared understanding of SUR within the organization, UNHCR could act as a coordinating entity that encourages resettlement actors to harmonize their programs around targeted SUR-informed goals. For example, UNHCR could provide guidance and context as to where and who should be resettled for strategic gains, and coordinate subsequent resettlement activities. This could be conducted through Core and Contact Groups working on specific displacement situations. It is important to underscore, however, that coordination should be viewed as a stepping stone to securing strategic benefits, and not an objective in and of itself.

The following diagram visually depicts the ways in which UNHCR could provide leadership on this topic:
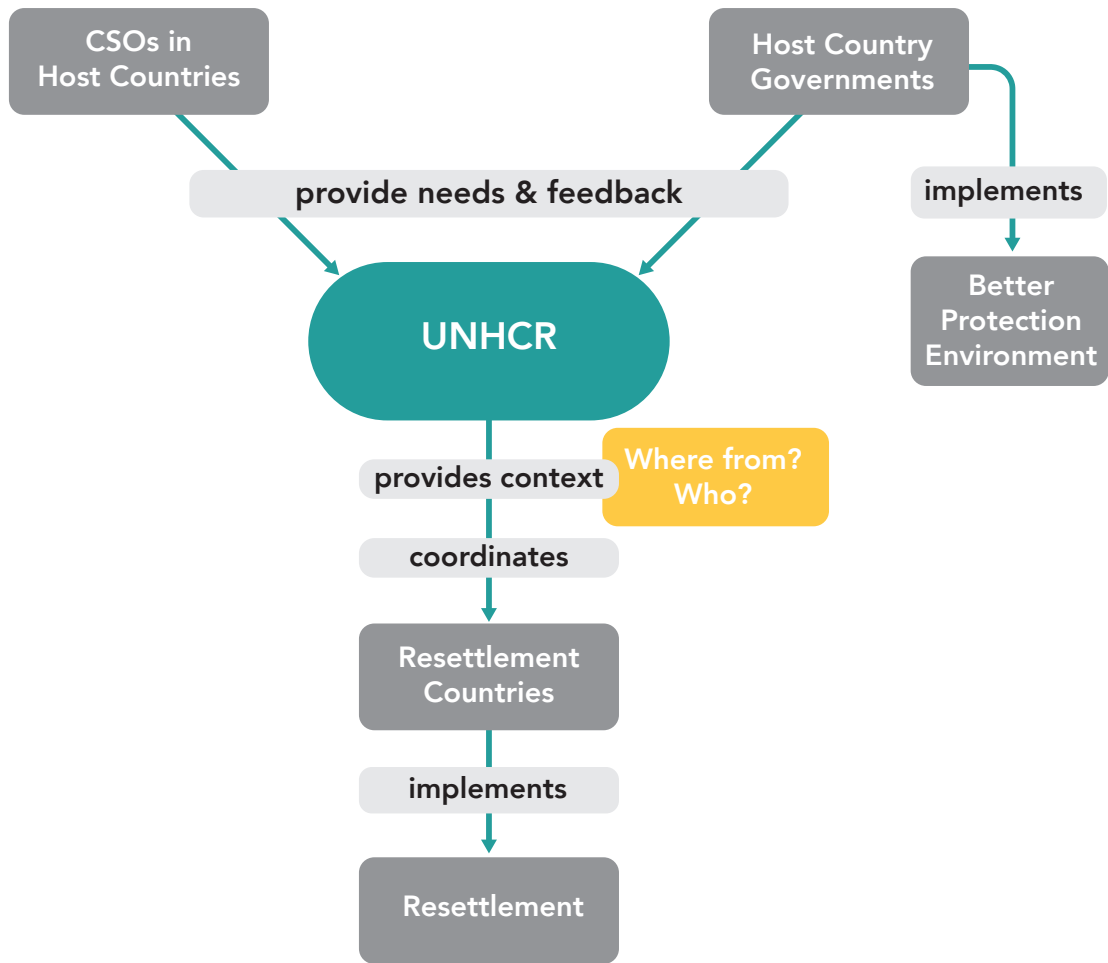
Figure 1: Proposed stakeholder coordination for the implementation of SUR

Recommendation 4: Provide insights on refugee needs, and feedback on SUR

UNHCR works directly with refugee populations in host countries, and is well-positioned to collate and present refugee needs to resettlement stakeholders. These needs can provide insight into target areas or populations that resettlement programming could focus on in order to maximize strategic gains.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES

Recommendation 1: Underscore that resettlement is a mechanism to secure durable solutions for refugees and share responsibility with host countries

Despite the current tendency to conceptualize 'strategic' resettlement as resettlement that serves national foreign policy objectives, countries are strongly urged to focus on resettlement as a responsibility sharing mechanism with host countries, rather than a migration management tool. This is in line with the principles detailed in the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees.[16] Definitions of SUR should instead cleave closely to those articulated by UNHCR.

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16   Global Compact on Refugees. UNHCR report to the UN General Assembly. 13 September 2018.

Recommendation 2: Increase resettlement quotas

Asylum conditions in Jordan and Lebanon, as well as many host countries outside the scope of this research, remain in dire need of improvement. Although resettlement is just a part of the solution, a significantly increased resettlement quota can 1) alleviate some pressure on countries hosting high numbers of refugees, and 2) enhance standing, trust, and coordination in ways that can result in strategic protection gains by demonstrating an international commitment to burden-sharing.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen the impact of resettlement programming

A number of factors are necessary to ensure that conditions are in place for the implementation of SUR. These include: cooperative relationships between host countries and resettlement countries, long-term planning of resettlement activities through multi-year quotas (instead of ongoing one-year allocations), development assistance, and diplomatic engagement. In addition, selection criteria should be limited to UNHCR submission categories.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY STAKEHOLDERS

Recommendation 1: Provide insights on refugee needs, and feedback on SUR

To ensure that resettlement activities (including SUR initiatives) are developed according to actual needs, local civil society organizations (including refugee-led organizations and refugee communities) are encouraged to provide UNHCR with insights concerning the needs of refugees and host communities, as well as opportunities for SUR interventions. Civil society organizations may also be well-placed to monitor the impacts of resettlement and SUR efforts, which would contribute to an evidence base for this strategy.

Recommendation 2: Establish and maintain a shared understanding of SUR's scope

Civil society organizations working on resettlement should work with other actors, including UNHCR, to articulate the scale and impact that SUR can contribute to in their countries of operation. In particular, organizations should decide to what degree they should be pursuing large-scale, contextual shifts versus smaller-scale benefits for targeted populations.

Recommendation 3: Continue to challenge the conceptualization of SUR as a migration management tool

At present, the definition of SUR as a migration management tool is common among many European resettlement stakeholders. International NGOs and other advocacy groups are therefore essential to preserve the integrity of SUR and space for its implementation, particularly in Europe. The more actors who are able to clearly articulate a shared understanding of SUR, the greater a platform they will likely have for countering misleading conceptions of strategic resettlement.

One important limitation of this research relates to the perspective of **host countries.** Due to time and access constraints, only two individuals were interviewed to capture the perspective of host country governments. One is a current official in the Lebanese government, while the other is a former member of the Jordanian government. Given this limited insight into host country perspectives and priorities, this report makes no recommendations for host country governments.

5. CONCEPTUALIZING THE 'STRATEGIC USE OF RESETTLEMENT'

Interviews suggest that SUR remains a vague concept for many actors, including those working in the migration and resettlement sphere. As such, before analyzing SUR in the context of the Syrian refugee response, it is essential to first unpack the concept itself, and the way that it has been understood and implemented since its initial articulation in 2003.

A. BENEFITS OF SUR:

As previously stated, SUR was initially conceptualized as:

> **"the planned use of resettlement in a manner that maximizes the benefits, directly or indirectly, other than those received by the refugee being resettled. Those benefits may accrue to other refugees, the hosting State, other States or the international protection regime in general."**[17]

These benefits can be accrued on both large and small scales, although this division is not static, and rather refers to a continuum of possible positive changes. For instance, the resettlement of targeted medical cases could potentially lead to small-scale benefits (e.g. the freeing of ten hospital beds), or large-scale benefits (e.g. decreased pressure on a host country's medical services overall).

B. TIME AND TIMING:

Successfully leveraging a resettlement program for strategic change requires a detailed understanding of host country contexts, and the targeted development of context-appropriate interventions. Therefore, as pointed out by several key informants from UNHCR, both the desired benefits and strategies for achieving those benefits are likely to change and the context evolves over time. For example:

1. In the **beginning of a displacement crisis**, many refugees will be arriving to a host county. Targeted resettlement of refugees early on may help to support calls for the host country to **keep borders open to ongoing refugee arrivals.**

2. As **displacement becomes more protracted**, the needs of refugees inside host countries will become more acute, and the number of refugees in need of assistance may expand. Here, resettlement of certain populations may **free up resources** for those who remain (e.g. medical cases, children at risk), as well as help to **minimize impact on host communities.**

3. If the context in the home country improves, it may be possible for a **majority of refugees to return.** Here, the targeted resettlement of individuals who cannot return (for example, due to subjugated religious or political affiliations) may indirectly **facilitate return for those who are willing and able.**

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17   UNCHR Discussion Paper. The Strategic Use of Resettlement. Working Group on Resettlement. Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. 3 June 2003, p. 2

The diagram below provides a visual outline of the range of SUR uses, as described above:[18] [19]
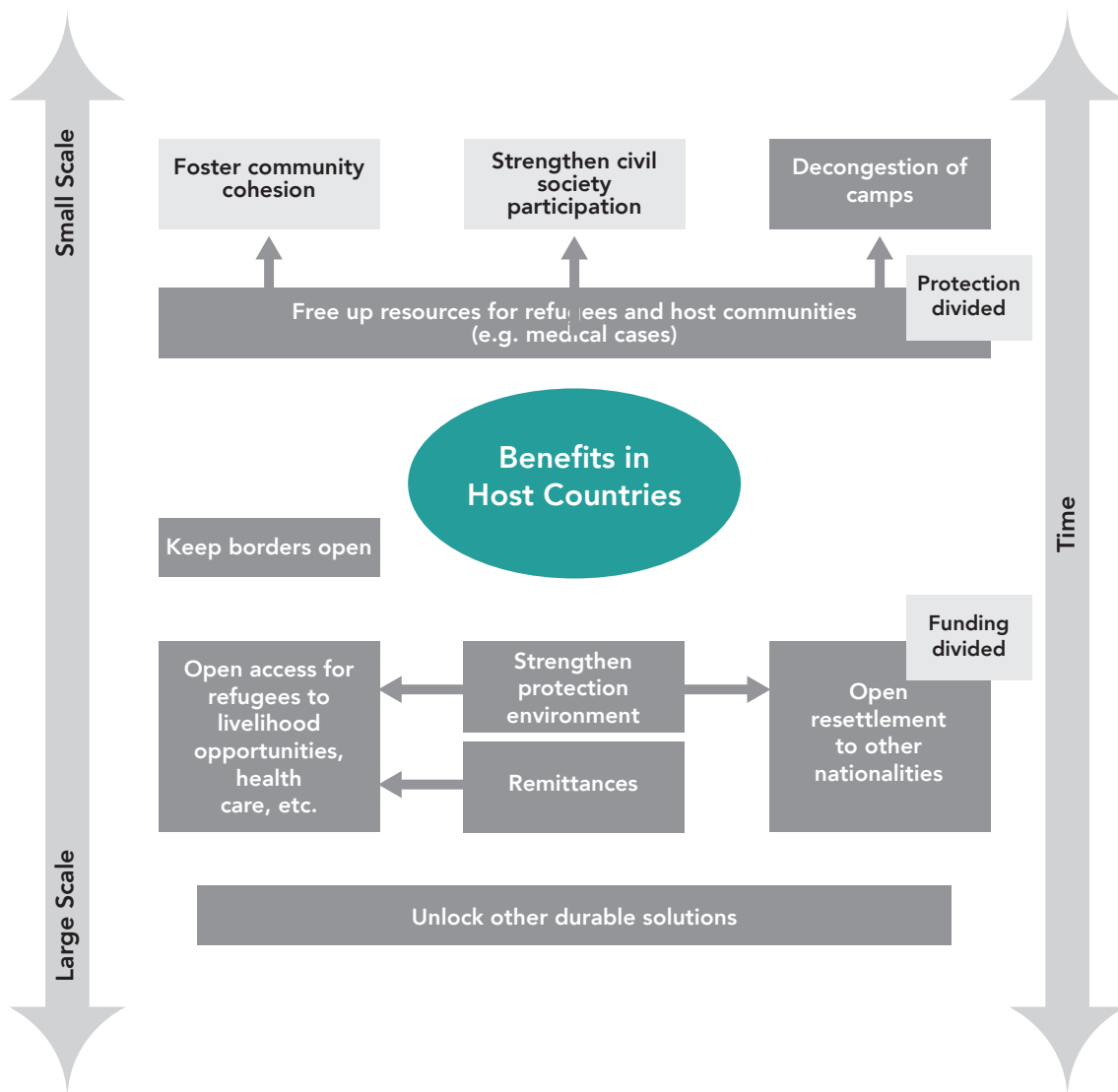

Figure 2: Graphic model depicting potential benefits of SUR in host countries

C. IMPLEMENTING SUR:

In order to transition SUR from theory to praxis, resettlement stakeholders must strategically plan and **choose between different potential caseloads** for resettlement. For instance, after caseloads have been determined by UNHCR criteria, if a decision must be made between prioritizing resettlement for *Caseload A*, which would exclusively result in individual protection benefits (the traditional priority of resettlement programming), and *Caseload B*, where additional benefits can be gained, stakeholders should focus on caseload B. This does not mean that the resettlement needs of highly vulnerable refugees in *Caseload A* are wholly ignored – however, resettlement programming would choose to prioritize caseload B because it represents the greatest potential protection dividends.

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18   The wording is generally adapted from the list of benefits provided in the UNHCR 2009 Discussion Paper. However, although 'freeing up resources for refugees and host communities (e.g. medical cases)' and to 'open resettlement to other nationalities' are implicitly included in the 2009 Discussion Paper overview, they are not explicitly mentioned as potential benefits. 'Protection and funding dividends' were also added to the overview for clarification purposes as was the classification of benefits into cultural and protection benefits.

19   The 2009 Discussion Paper also covers potential benefits in resettlement countries and in regional contexts.

The manner in which SUR is implemented also depends on the specific benefits that actors wish to accrue. For example, in order to free up targeted resources for a certain vulnerable group, resettlement programming might be developed to identify and target specific refugee profiles (such as children with disabilities, large families, or LGBTI individuals). In addition, focusing on key localities (such as a town, village, or neighborhood)[20] may help break down a displacement context into smaller, more targeted problems towards which resettlement programming can be applied to find solutions. For instance, if there is a severe housing shortage in a particular area, resettlement could be a tool to lighten the need for housing in the short or medium-term.

Example: targeted resettlement profiles in Jordan

Specific profiles for resettlement are already established through Core Groups and employed by UNHCR and other resettlement actors working throughout the region. In Jordan, for instance, children with disabilities (who require specialized schooling) and large families receive special attention for resettlement. At the host country level, the strategic rationale is that the resettling of children with special needs arising from their disabilities will free up space for Syrian and Jordanian children with similar needs who live in Jordan. However, whether or not the resettlement of these individuals in turn impacted local resources, such as school slots for special needs children, could not be identified during this research.

In order to achieve larger or more complicated goals, SUR will require long-term planning, including multi-year resettlement planning, coupled with diplomatic efforts and development assistance.[21] In addition, as highlighted by several key informants, resettlement (strategic or not) is a necessary but insufficient component to unlocking solutions for refugees in protracted displacement. Although resettlement plays an important role for demonstrating solidarity and a global commitment to responsibility-sharing, it is just one tool among many for pursuing comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

"Resettlement cannot be the entire solution to displacement"

- Key Informant, IOM Lebanon

D. SUR AS AN ADVOCACY TOOL IN RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES

When the concept of SUR was first developed, only a small number of countries maintained resettlement programs, and resettlement spaces globally were on the decline. Europe as a whole was particularly weak in this regard:[22] excepting the Nordic countries, only the Netherlands, Ireland, and the United Kingdom resettled refugees, and quotas of European countries were generally much lower than quotas from traditional resettlement countries such as the United States.[23]

In this context, the introduction of SUR by the UNHCR Working Group was not only intended to explore new strategies within host countries, but to **advocate for an increase in resettlement countries and resettlement places – particularly in Europe.**[24] This overarching objective has not changed throughout the years, and today SUR remains part of broader calls to increase and expand resettlement worldwide.

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20   This measure has been proposed by a key informant.

21   UNHCR Position Paper on the Strategic Use of Resettlement. Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement. Geneva, 6-8 July 2010

22   Migration Policy Institute (2003). Study on the Feasibility of setting up resettlement schemes in EU Member States or at EU Level, against the background of the Common European Asylum system and the goal of a Common Asylum Procedure

23   The Nordic countries engaged in resettlement in 2003 were Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Overall, from 2003-2018, the US has led in resettlement (642,783 resettled persons), followed by Canada (118,570), and Australia (89,677). Next is Sweden, which resettled 31,194 over this time period, followed by the UK (25,223), etc. Source: The History of Resettlement: Celebrating 25 Years of the ATCR. UNHCR.

24   Interview with key informant

In this regard, while SUR is not explicitly mentioned in UNHCR's Three-Year Strategy (2019-2021),[25] it can be seen as contributing to the strategy's broad goal of greatly expanding resettlement and complementary pathways for refugees.[26] In order to turn this vision into a reality, the Strategy puts forth three main objectives:

1. Growing resettlement through the engagement of new resettlement countries and increase of total spaces;

2. Advancing complementary pathways to resettlement; and

3. Building the foundation for support of refugees through the promotion of welcoming and inclusive societies.

4. Resettlement programming as it exists today has the potential to apply an SUR lens toward accomplishing any of these three above-stated goals.

A Syrian refugee family living in East Amman, Jordan. October 2019. Photo by: Mais Salman/DRC

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25   UNHCR Three-Year Strategy (2019-2021) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, June 2019

26   Ibid, p. 6

6. THEORY TO PRACTICE: ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING SUR

SUR has been continuously reaffirmed by UNHCR as relevant and worthy of integration into decision-making on resettlement. However, as highlighted in the key findings section, there are a range of challenges that complicate the real-world application of this concept in today's complex displacement contexts. This section will explore in greater detail the genesis of these challenges, as well as efforts being taken to mitigate them in the field.

A. CHALLENGE 1: KEY STAKEHOLDERS POSSESS CONTRASTING CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF SUR'S MEANING, AS WELL AS WHAT CONSTITUTES 'STRATEGIC' RESETTLEMENT

Although UNHCR has been clear that SUR is a tool for enhancing the protection environment in host countries, some resettlement and migration actors have nonetheless articulated 'strategic use of resettlement' to mean leveraging resettlement to manage migration influxes, particularly in Europe. The potential for this misunderstanding was flagged as early as 2003, when the UNHCR Working Paper noted that resettlement should *not* be misunderstood as:

> **"…a quid pro quo for states continuing to accept new arrivals. The meeting of a state's obligation to provide asylum should not be dependent on the provision of resettlement assistance".**[27]

Since 2003, new European countries have opened resettlement programs, while the European Union itself has become increasingly involved in the resettlement space. The reframing of SUR, and resettlement more broadly, as a tool for migration management has increased as more actors join the resettlement space,[28] and traditional actors shift their understanding of resettlement's purpose and utility.[29]

The diversification of resettlement stakeholders appears to have contributed to a shift in the broader conversation – since 2015, the European Union has agreed on two ad hoc resettlement schemes that welcomed approximately 63,000 refugees to EU member states.[30] In 2016, the European Commission also presented a proposal for a permanent **EU resettlement framework**, which would establish standardized procedures and selection criteria for all participating EU member states.[31] Throughout these negotiations, which are ongoing, stakeholders have repeatedly discussed the 'strategic use' of this framework, and resettlement more broadly. However, the term has come to have different meanings. For example, in a 2017 press release from the Council of the European Union, the Estonian Minister of Interior was quoted as saying that:

> **"Resettlement is a strategic instrument to manage migration flows. At the same time, resettlement is an important legal pathway to offer protection to those in real need […] It will help decrease flows to our own external borders, disrupt the business model of smugglers, and balance the efforts done in other fields, for example in returns".**[32]

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27   UNCHR Discussion Paper. The Strategic Use of Resettlement. Working Group on Resettlement. Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. 3 June 2003, pp. 5f.

28   See van Selm, J. (2013). Great Expectations. A review of the strategic use of resettlement. UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES)

29   Today, Australia's approach of preventing the access to individual asylum through 'offshore processing' is a clear example of replacing the resettlement (of some refugees) with the access to individual asylum. See also the fact sheet by the Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law (2019) for an overview on Australia's refugee policy including offshore processing.

30   Factsheet of the European Commission. Delivering on Resettlement, 2019

31   European Parliament. Resettlement of refugees: EU framework, 2019

32   Council of the European Union (15 November 2017). EU resettlement framework: Council ready to start negotiations. Press release

This quote blurs the definition of 'strategic' resettlement to mean something markedly different from UNHCR's initial concept. [33]

Some discussions surrounding the EU resettlement framework have also suggested that resettlement commitments could be conditional on third countries' cooperation on asylum and migration matters. Such an approach would turn resettlement into a 'bargaining tool' for the EU – a 'strategic use of resettlement' according to certain actors, but one that is far from SUR and it's focus on centering vulnerable refugees and host country communities. A range of civil society organizations have voiced their concerns in this regard.[34][35]

The existence of competing and sometimes misleading conceptualizations of SUR has the potential to lead to **strategic 'misuses'** of resettlement programming, whereby resettlement is leveraged in a way that fulfills neither its original intent nor UNHCR's definition of SUR.[36][37] Instead, resettlement programming and refugees more broadly could potentially become **bargaining chips** between governments seeking to advance national foreign policy objectives.

> **"Strategic resettlement can become a slippery slope, where refugees are used as bargaining chips"**
>
> - Key informant, resettlement country government

The existence of multiple, competing articulations of 'strategic' resettlement can also stymie efforts to expand the protection benefits of resettlement programming in Europe and host countries. If any activity can be branded as 'strategic', the potency of SUR as initially conceived will be diluted, and discussion of SUR could have more pitfalls than potential benefits.

> **"Any discussion of SUR in the European context first requires an explanation of how such a strategic use is understood"**
>
> - Key informant, European civil society organization

Example: EU-Turkey Statement as strategic "misuse" of resettlement

One example of strategic misuse is the recent EU-Turkey Statement. Signed in 2016, the statement is an attempt to reduce the number of refugees arriving in Europe from Turkey, via the Aegean Sea. For this purpose, a 1:1 mechanism was developed whereby for every Syrian refugee that Turkey allowed to be returned to its borders from Greece (after March 2016), one Syrian would be resettled from Turkey to an EU member state.[38] While this 1:1 mechanism is linked to a notable reduction in the number of irregular asylum arrivals in Europe, it does not discuss the protection of refugees who remain in Turkey, and is thus at odds with UNHCR's conceptualization of SUR.

33   See Hashimoto, N. (2018). Refugee Resettlement as an Alternative to Asylum. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, *37*(2), 162–186, & Welfens, N. (2018). Setting the Trends for Resettlement in Europe? Germany's New Avenues for Refugee Protection

34   Van Selm, J. (2013). Great Expectations. A review of the strategic use of resettlement. UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES)

35   Examples include the following documents: NGOs call on the EU and its member states to demonstrate leadership on resettlement at the Global Refugee Forum 2019 (22 INGO and civil society organizations); EU leadership on resettlement – the time is now (IRC op-ed)

36   See ECRE (2016). Untying the EU Resettlement Framework. ECRE's Recommendations on Breaking the Link with Migration Control and Preserving the Humanitarian Focus of Resettlement (Policy Note No. 1), & ECRE (2017). EU Resettlement for Protection. ECRE's Analysis of the latest Developments in the Preparation of an EU Resettlement Framework (Policy Note No. 6)

37   See Bamberg, K. (2018). The EU Resettlement Framework: From a humanitarian pathway to a migration management tool?. European Policy Center, & Caritas Europa et al. (2016). European Commission proposal for a Regulation establishing a Union Resettlement Framework and amending Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council.

38   Deutsche Welle. (2018). The EU-Turkey refugee agreement: A review.

B. CHALLENGE 2: CONTRASTING SELECTION CRITERIA LIMITS ACTORS' ABILITIES TO EMPLOY EXISTING RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS IN A STRATEGIC MANNER

Even without misinterpretation, there is no clear strategy for bridging the gap between SUR as a theoretical concept, and one that can be put into practice. One potential problem of implementation, highlighted in several interviews, concerns how resettlement actors would **select refugees** for resettlement within a SUR framework. While the most vulnerable refugees are usually selected, according to agreed-upon vulnerability criteria, the strategic employment of a resettlement program would require the **introduction of additional selection criteria** that is not necessarily linked to vulnerability. Implementing multiple criteria, and finding refugees who meet both, presents a challenge for resettlement actors who are often working on tight deadlines and with limited capacities. It also has the potential to **create a degree of tension** whereby vulnerability and strategic application are weighed against one another when deciding whether a refugee should be offered resettlement.

In the case of European countries who recently entered the resettlement space, selection may become more difficult given that many of these countries have opted for selection criteria that is additional to, and/or different from, the resettlement categories determined by UNCHCR.[39] Choosing who to resettle to these countries on the basis of SUR would thus require the careful balancing of three criteria matrices (vulnerability, national, and SUR). Achieving all three at once would be extremely difficult to achieve, and does not appear to have been attempted to date in Jordan and Lebanon.

C. CHALLENGE 3: THERE REMAINS A LACK OF EVIDENCE TO DEMONSTRATE THAT EMPLOYING SUR WOULD RESULT IN AN IMPROVEMENT OF PROTECTION CONDITIONS IN HOST COUNTRIES

In 2013, UNHCR commissioned an evaluation to assess the origins, intended objectives, and claims of SUR being made by the agency as well as other resettlement stakeholders. The evaluation also assessed whether SUR had in fact been successfully implemented in cases where this was claimed. This evaluation identified "more than 30 situations in which actors can see an attempt at SUR having been undertaken since the concept was defined, as well as some five to ten from before that time".[40]

Cases identified by UNHCR as successful instances of SUR include the example of Afghan and Myanmar refugees in India (see page 3), as well as the strategic resettlement of:

- Bhutanese refugees from Nepal (2007 onwards);
- Burmese refugees in Thailand and Malaysia (2005 onwards);
- Burundian refugees in Tanzania (1972); and
- Iraqi refugees in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon (2007)[41]

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39   Beirens, H., & Fratzke, S. (2017). Taking Stock of Refugee Resettlement: Policy Objectives, Practical Tradeoffs, and the Evidence Base. Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe.

40   van Selm, J. (2013). Great Expectations. A review of the strategic use of resettlement. UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES), p. 33

41   Intended outcomes for SUR in the listed cases were also varied, ranging from burden sharing and regional protection benefits to camp decongestion and fostering community cohesion (ibid.).

Several key informants also made reference to the case of Burundian refugees in Tanzania as a historical example of SUR. More recent examples cited by key informants included the resettlement of:

- Eritrean and Sudanese refugees from Israel (2018); and
- Syrian refugee resettlement from neighboring countries; [42]

> ### Example from Key Informant: The resettlement of Eritrean and Sudanese refugees from Israel
>
> In 2018, an agreement between UNHCR and the Government of Israel stipulated that around 16,000 Eritrean and Sudanese refugees would be admitted to third countries through resettlement and complementary programs such as sponsorship, family reunification, and labor migration schemes, while others would receive legal status in Israel.[43]

Even with a concerted effort, it would be extremely difficult to produce evidence that SUR has directly contributed to positive change, particularly at the larger scale. The fact that, more than 15 years on, SUR's impact remains largely anecdotal presents a challenge for those who wish to base advocacy and policymaking on the concept.

"Why should resettlement stakeholders fight about semantic differences when SUR does not exist in reality?"

- Key Informant, European civil society organization

D. CHALLENGE 4: SUR IS NOT MAINSTREAMED THROUGHOUT UNHCR AND OTHER ACTOR'S FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS ON FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT

SUR continues to play an important role in current UNHCR resettlement literature. For instance, it is referenced throughout the Global Resettlement Needs Report, which states that "whenever possible, UNHCR will use resettlement strategically to ensure that international solidarity and responsibility sharing with host States is realized".[44] This report also indicates that SUR is being employed in several countries, such as Turkey, but does not provide details on the methods of application. Without such details, the mention of SUR remains a largely rhetorical device.

As previously stated, in some cases UNHCR has chosen to omit mention of SUR, including in its Three-Year Strategy (2019-2021) and the Global Compact on Refugees.[45][46] According to key informants from UNHCR and an INGO resettlement specialist, the decision to abstain from mention was a result of consultations with INGOs and civil society organizations and an attempt to avoid misinterpretations of the concept. Nevertheless, as an organization UNHCR will not abandon the concept of SUR entirely, in part to prevent the term from being co-opted and misused, thus leaving its future and potential for implementation unclear.

"To keep momentum around the UNHCR interpretation, we won't let SUR go"

- Key Informant, UNHCR

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42   It is important to note that the degree to which these examples are indeed representative of SUR, and resulted in positive change in host countries, has been contested by other resettlement stakeholders.

43   UNHCR (2018). UNHCR and Israel sign agreement to find solutions for Eritreans and Sudanese.

44   UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2020. 25th Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement, 1-2 July 2019, p. 11

45   Report of the United High Commissioner for Refugees. Part II. Global Compact on Refugees, 2018

46   The Global Compact on Refugees mention the strategic use of resettlement once, but does not go further into details either (see p. 18 of the Global Compact on Refugees).

7. CASE STUDY: THE RESETTLEMENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN AND LEBANON

Since expanding the protection space in host countries is of primary concern when seeking to implement SUR, an in-depth exploration of the concept in a contemporary refugee context presents an opportunity to examine the ways in which SUR is impacting refugee responses today. For this purpose, the DSP chose to focus its analysis on Jordan and Lebanon, two countries that have been at the center of receiving Syrian refugees (among other refugee nationalities), and are priority countries for the resettlement of Syrians elsewhere.

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF JORDAN AND LEBANON IN THE SYRIAN CONTEXT

Jordan and Lebanon host some of the highest numbers of Syrian refugees. In 2019, Lebanon continued to host the largest number of refugees relative to its native population (914,648 registered Syrians as well as Palestinians and other nationalities, with many more are unregistered). Jordan, meanwhile, ranked second (680,000 Syrians as well as Palestinians, Iraqis, and other nationalities).[47] These large numbers of refugees have impacted both countries' economies.[48]

In both countries, Syrians are faced with many barriers to living their lives in dignity and peace. Challenges include insecure legal statuses, extremely limited labor market access, and restricted and often poor-quality education and medical services. As a result, refugee standards of living have generally decreased over time, while the pressure for them to return to Syria is increasing.[49] At the same time, both countries are among UNHCR's largest resettlement operations: in 2018, Lebanon ranked second with 8,393 resettlement submissions, while Jordan ranked fourth with 6,387 resettlement submissions.[50] Both countries are also considered priority situations for SUR,[51] as defined in the UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs Report for 2020. Consequently, there are a range of areas in which resettlement could be strategically leveraged to improve conditions for both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians or Lebanese civilians.

A Syrian refugee family living in East Amman, Jordan. December 2019. Photo by: Mais Salman/DRC

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47   UNHCR. (2019). Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2018.

48   See World Bank. (2019). The World Bank in Jordan—Overview & World Bank. (2019b). The World Bank In Lebanon—Overview

49   ee for instance Enders, D. (2018, August 20). Pressure to return builds on Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The New Humanitarian & Jordan INGO Forum. (2018). Syrian refugees in Jordan, a protection overview.

50   UNHCR. (2019). Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2018.

51   The focus on priority situations had been introduced in 2011 in order to make it more feasible for the resettlement community to utilize "its limited resources to move decidedly forward in supporting selected refugee situations" (UNHCR Discussion Paper. Implementation of the Strategic Use of Resettlement. Working Group on Resettlement. Geneva, 11-12 October 2011, p. 1)

B. DID RESETTLEMENT IMPACT ASYLUM CONDITIONS IN JORDAN AND LEBANON?

Key informants with knowledge of these country contexts were asked **if resettlement had made a difference in the asylum conditions in Jordan and Lebanon – regardless of whether this was strategically planned or not.** They were particularly asked to identify whether there had been **missed opportunities to leverage SUR during the peak of Syrian resettlement from these countries in 2016**. As evidenced by the chart below, resettlement submissions rose sharply in that year, only to drop considerably in following years.

Resettlement Statistics Query – Bar chart
UNHCR resettlement departures
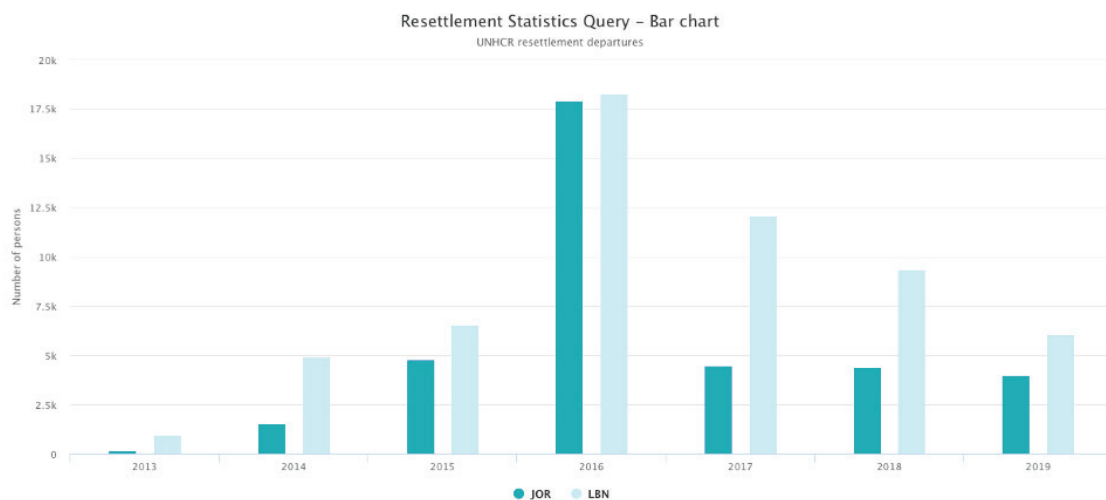
This 2016 peak was primarily due to an increase in resettlement spaces for Syrians offered by Canada and the United States: that year, Canada resettled 13,585 refugees (5,571 from Jordan and 8,014 from Lebanon) while the United States resettled 11,204 (10,725 from Jordan and 479 from Lebanon).[52] This short-lived increase was due in large part to groundswells in pro-refugee sentiment in these countries, which was tied closely to stories coming out of the Eastern Mediterranean, such at the death of three-year old Alan Kurdi. As such, it did not represent a "strategic" move aimed at resettling certain Syrians in an effort to enhance asylum conditions, but rather was tied to national politics and public relations in the resettlement countries themselves.

The two government stakeholders interviewed for this research both acknowledged that resettlement was an important component of the broader refugee response, stressing that every resettled refugee meant one less person was straining Jordan or Lebanon's infrastructure. The Jordanian interviewee stressed that this was a particular concern in Jordan, which has a shortage of water resources. However, both these interviewees and other key informants were **generally skeptical of resettlement's impact on broader country dynamics**. Moreover, hopes that the Canadian government's vocal commitment to resettlement would prompt other countries to follow its lead never materialized.

> **"Yes, Canada made a strong commitment to resettlement in 2016, but it was only a one-time project and a very political response to the death of Alan Kurdi"**[53]
>
> - Key Informant, resettlement country government

Of particular note is that, although resettlement from Jordan and Lebanon in 2016 was large in comparison to *other resettlement operations* around the world, it made only a small dent in the *total number of refugees hosted by the two countries*. As such, even at its most concerted, the resettlement of Syrian refugees represented just a 'drop in the ocean', a challenge that was highlighted by many key informants with a range of institutional affiliations. According to both the Jordanian and Lebanese government interviewees, this frustration was exacerbated by the perception, widely shared by members of both governments, that resettlement countries are 'picking and choosing' refugees not only on the basis of vulnerability, but also on their skills and ability to

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52   UNHCR Resettlement Data Finder, 2019

53   Alan Kurdi, the two-year-old Syrian boy who was found dead on a Turkish beach in 2015, had family in Canada (see Stories of 2015: how Alan Kurdi's death changed the world from the Guardian, 2015)

integrate upon resettlement.[54] The Lebanese official added that the Government of Lebanon is not involved in the resettlement process at all, and therefore there has been no coordination between Lebanon on resettlement countries as to strategically leveraging resettlement programs.

> **"Resettlement might contribute to positive change if there were large scale resettlement efforts. But with the great number of Syrians it would even be difficult with large numbers to convince the Jordanian government to improve protection benefits."**
>
> - Key informant, IOM Jordan

> **"It would be misleading to say that Lebanon ever witnessed large waves of resettlement. Given the number of refugees, the number of resettled persons is too small to have any observable effect on the ground"**
>
> – Key informant, Government of Lebanon

> **"Resettlement numbers are not high enough to free up enough resources in Jordan. Resettlement cannot make a difference like this."**
>
> - Key informant, civil society in Jordan

The comparatively small number of resettlement places compared to Jordan and Lebanon's overall refugee population and its associated burdens (real or perceived) is a key reason why **many key informants doubted that resettlement had contributed to improved protection conditions in host countries themselves**. Any attempt to use resettlement programming as leverage or justification for lobbying governments to change their domestic response was liable to be ineffective or, as suggested by one key informant, possibly immoral. At the same time, other key informants argued that, at a minimum, Jordan and Lebanon kept their borders open to Syrian refugees for a long period of time, which suggests that on at least this point, the international community may have been successful in its advocacy.

> **"Opportunities were not missed in 2016: the objective to resettle as many people as possible was achieved and the international community was able to demonstrate support for the Jordanian and Lebanese government through resettlement numbers."**
>
> - Key informant, UNHCR MENA

However, the general consensus of key informants was that at present, **the comparatively small number of refugees when compared to host countries' refugee burdens, coupled with the low visibility of resettlement programming overall, meant that resettlement actors lacked the bargaining power necessary to enact policies that would fall under the umbrella of SUR.**

Although this observation primarily concerns large-scale benefits of SUR, **key informants also considered smaller-scale benefits to be highly limited**. Although resettlement may free up some resources to help targeted groups of vulnerable Syrians, Jordanians, Lebanese, and other refugees such as Palestinians, the **needs of refugees have been steadily increasing in recent years**. This is in part due to funding cuts and depleted resources dedicated to Syrian refugees, which can have a stronger and more immediate impact on the protection space that cancels out resettlement efforts in this regard.

> **"Resettlement helps because the numbers are relatively large but there's a lot of pressure from the Lebanese government on refugees to return which is only increasing. Also medical needs are increasing because people have depleted all their resources."**
>
> - Key informant, IOM Lebanon

The impact of resettlement in Jordan and Lebanon is thus assessed to have been low, and potentially nonexistent. Dramatically increasing the number of resettlement spaces would be the primary way to ensure that resettlement programming is responding to host country calls for burden-sharing, and thus could be used as a tool for encouraging local protection gains.

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54   In contrast to many immigration programs, resettlement criteria does not take into account refugee work experience, language skills, or other indicators related to adaptability.

8. CONCLUSION

Facing the acute and expansive protection needs of Syrian and other refugees in the MENA region, this research sought to explore the extent to which resettlement could, through SUR, be used to catalyze improved protection conditions in host countries such as Jordan and Lebanon. In doing so, one aim of the research was to clearly articulate the development and current state of SUR as a concept.

Concerning the development of SUR, it is noted that UNHCR's conceptualization has been consistent since its introduction of the term in 2003. Since then, various resettlement countries, particularly more established resettlement countries, have adopted the concept as articulated by the agency. However, there is a demonstrated tendency for some actors (e.g. the EU) to strategically 'misuse' resettlement and to conflate 'strategic resettlement' with goals that diverge and at times run counter to UNHCR's definition. Relying on SUR for advocacy purposes can thus become problematic, with one stakeholder (such as UNHCR) referencing SUR for protection benefits, while others (such as some EU member states) recharacterizing the term as supporting migration management initiatives.

Moreover, evidence of SUR – both of its implementation and its implications for protection in host countries – remains extremely limited. While it is possible that other refugee contexts hold examples of SUR that have not yet been brought to light, an extensive literature as well as dedicated analysis of Jordan and Lebanon were not able to generate strong examples of this concept.

Although the implementation of SUR to date has been challenging, there remain a number of possible ways to carry the concept forward, as described in the recommendations section from pages 7 to 9.

At present, it remains to be seen if SUR can add value to advocacy and protection for vulnerable refugees. While a strong concept on paper, a clear path to its operationalization remains elusive. However, if implemented in a concerted manner, the benefits of SUR are manifold and could represent life-changing gains for refugees and host communities around the world. Doing so would, however, require a level of financial commitment, long-term planning, and global responsibility sharing currently lacking in a world where states are acting according to increasingly shortsighted national objectives.

9. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In many ways, this report is a stock-taking exercise whereby key stakeholders reflected of SUR and its applicability in one large refugee context. In doing so, it provides a working model for understanding SUR and its relevancy in today's political and operational climates. Additional areas of research could provide further field-level evidence of resettlement impacts, including:

- **Identifying the small-scale benefits of resettlement** by capturing refugee and host community stories and experiences, as well as the experiences of practitioners;

- **Highlighting the unexpected or unintended (positive) impacts of resettlement,** which may include small-scale improvements or larger-scale shifts in dialogue or coordination related to resettlement

- **Exploring the economic linkages between resettled refugees and refugee communities,** such as the degree to which resettled refugees are able to send remittances to communities in host countries or countries of origin.