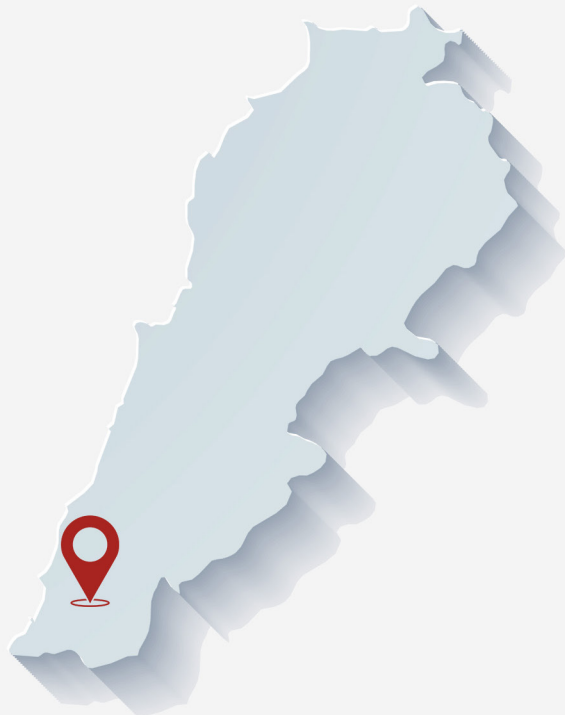




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BURJ SHEMALI CAMP NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2024



Background

Palestinian refugees have been residing in Lebanon since 1948 when the Nakba (catastrophe), an event which saw the violent displacement and dispossession of Palestinians, and the establishment of Israel, forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to flee and seek refuge in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. Following other forced displacements such as the Naksa in 1967, the number of Palestinian refugees currently residing in Lebanon is estimated at 489,292, according to UNRWA; of which almost 90% are living in dire conditions, and deprived from social protection and access to basic rights and services including shelter, water, food, and personal official papers.

According to UNRWA, 53% of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are distributed amongst 12 official refugee camps and almost 150 informal gatherings. Camps in particu-

lar suffer from overcrowding, poor infrastructure, poor housing conditions, high unemployment, and extreme poverty. In addition to poor health and hygiene conditions, camps suffer from salty water and tangled electrical wires which have caused the electrocution of more than 50 residents in the past 6 years. The influx of approximately 30,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria further strained the overstretched infrastructure and limited resources in the camps.

Over the years, Palestinian refugee camps have suffered from atrocities inflicted during the Lebanese war; these include large scale massacres such as Sabra and Shatila (1982) and Tal El Zaatar (1976). In 2007, heavy armed clashes between the Lebanese Army and Fateh Al Islam destroyed 85% of Nahr El Bared camp, in Northern Lebanon, displacing almost all of its 35,000 inhabitants. Generally, the security situation in the camps remains very fragile and highly volatile, with frequent clashes taking place between armed factions and armed individuals.

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are considered one of the most vulnerable populations as they are denied from their most basic rights and continue to be subjected to discrimination, marginalization, and unjust policies. Palestinian refugees are banned from 39 work domains in Lebanon, including medicine, law, engineering, and pharmacy, and are not allowed to work in professions that are governed by syndicates. Their status as Palestinian refugees subjects them to particular discrimination; according to the New York Times (Lebanon hands out and renews hundreds of thousands of work permits every year to people from Africa, Asia and other Arab countries... until now, only a handful have been given to Palestinians), hundreds of thousands of work permits are granted to foreign nationalities each year, compared to only a handful provided to Palestinian refugees. These conditions lead to very high unemployment and poverty rates which are further exacerbated by a complete absence of a social safety net.



Burj Shemali Camp

Burj Shemali Camp is located three kilometers east of the coastal city of Tyre, about 80 km from the Lebanese capital, Beirut, and about 24 km from the Palestinian-Lebanese border. It was established in 1955 on an area of wasteland covered with rocks, balsam plants, leased by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) for 99 years. It is the second largest Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon. It was named after the adjacent Lebanese town of Burj Shemali. This camp. It is bordered to the north by the Shirnai farm and the orchards area, to the west by the Al-Ma'shouq community for Palestinian refugees, to the south by the town of Burj Shemali, and to the north by the Al-Ramali area and citrus orchards. The area of the camp is 13,600 square meters, equivalent to 13.6 dunum.

UNRWA's latest statistics note that the camp's population is estimated at 19,500 registered refugees, while some estimates indicate that there are 25,000. The origins of most of the population belong to the villages of northern Palestine, such as (Al-Na'meh, Al-Husayniyyah, Hittin, Hawasa, Al-Khalisa, Al-Khasas, Deir Al-Qasi, Dishum, Al-Zouq Al-Tahtani, Al-Zouq Al-Fawqani, Sa'sa', Sha'ab, Saffurya, Al-Ksayer, Lubyeh). The camp has a single point of access, which is supervised by a Lebanese army checkpoint that monitors the movement of cars entering and leaving. All of the side entrances are closed by the Lebanese army with earthen mounds and cement blocks, which causes confusion for students who attend some private schools near the camp, as well as causing trouble to agricultural workers and residents who shop, whether from the camp or the neighboring Lebanese areas.

The camp is known as the Martyrs' Camp because of the more than 125 martyrs it offered, mostly women and children, during the "Israeli" invasion to Lebanon in 1982. During the invasion, the (Zionist) aircrafts bombed two shelters, Al-Najda, and the shelter of the Jabal Amel Foundation, which led to massacre among the unarmed refugees. In the place of the massacre, the residents erected two memorials bearing the names of the victims. Among the heroic epics witnessed by the Burj Shemali camp was the great battle fought by the local fighting groups, which managed to capture four Israeli soldiers at the southern outskirts of the camp. Two of them were injured during the battle. There are two domestic committees in Burj al-Shamali camp. The Popular Committee: It represents the factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It is concerned with the social, administrative and livelihood affairs of the camp. The Civil Committee: It serves as a parallel committee and civil society framework. This committee includes a group of independent activists as well as representatives of the factions of the Palestinian Coalition. This committee aims to offer various services to households in the camp.

Current Humanitarian Conditions

Currently, UNRWA is providing Palestinian refugees from both, Syria and Lebanon; with cash assistance (\$50 USD per individual every three months). Following the armed clashes in the camp, other local organizations, such as Somoud; provides cash assistance to beneficiaries who are Palestinian refugees from both Syria and Lebanon. Additionally, some local organizations like are providing food assistance to vulnerable groups within the camp.

Humanitarian relief aid provided by local or international organizations do not cover all the needs of the camp residents. Many families are in need for humanitarian relief aid, specifically Palestinian refugees from both, Syria and Lebanon who collectively live in one house or households who have children, elderly, injured, sick, or people with special needs, or residents who do not have identification documents or residency permits.

Livelihood and Food Security

Local associations such as Najdeh provide skills development such as Solar Panel Installation trainings to residents in the camp. However, despite these efforts, the unemployment rate in the camp stands at 75%, with individuals earning between 100 and 200 USD. Primary income sources include cattle farming, simple trading, jobs in the private sector, financial transfers, humanitarian financial aid, and manual labor. Some local organizations offer food assistance to some households. Nonetheless, this support is insufficient to meet the prevailing needs in the camp, as it is intermittent and only distributed on occasions and in limited quantities. On average, households in the camp spend at least \$200 on food alone, which exceeds the income most camp families receive. Around 80% of refugees in Burj Shemali camp are in

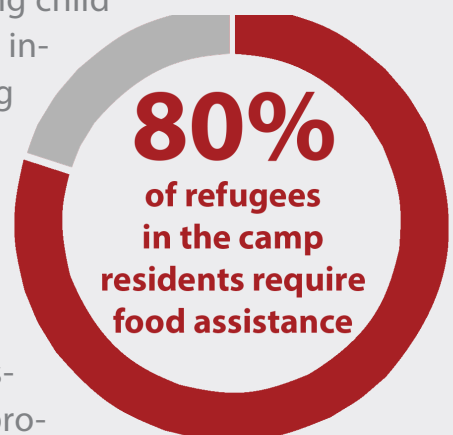


Food Processing for Women inside the Palestinian Camps

urgent need of food assistance, particularly vulnerable groups such as Palestinian and Syrian families living together, households with children, elderly individuals, those who are injured, sick, have special needs, or lack identification documents or residency permits. It is important to highlight that the food aid provided is insufficient compared to the number of individuals in each family. For instance, if the food basket includes a can of beans, that translates to one meal per month of beans as assistance for the entire household. This situation is applicable to all items in the food parcel, highlighting the critical need for comprehensive aid initiatives.

The main obstruction that affects access of families to food supply is the lack of sustainable economic resources to buy food items. Mainly, fostering mothers depend on their milk or baby milk products to feed their babies. Unfortunately, most pregnant and fostering mothers receive inadequate food and nutrients, adversely impacting child nutrition, especially those under 6 months. Furthermore, the inadequate intake of essential food and nutrients is contributing to the high prevalence of Anemia within the camp.

A holistic approach is needed to ensure the provision of adequate and consistent food aid to these vulnerable populations. Jafra is committed to a sustainable approach in skills development, aiming to empower these vulnerable groups with skills that enable them to generate income and access essential needs. Establishing agricultural initiatives and food processing activities with cash for work modality not only contribute to addressing the immediate food security challenges faced by residents but also foster long-term sustainability. By incorporating farming practices, the camp can become more self-sufficient, reducing its reliance on external aid. This approach not only ensures a more consistent and reliable food supply but also empowers individuals within the camp by providing them with valuable skills and resources for sustainable livelihoods.



Education

Burj Shemali camp relies on three schools to deliver educational services, including one elementary school inside the camp, one intermediate school inside the camp and another intermediate school outside with no secondary school inside the camp. UNRWA schools provide free education for Palestinians from Lebanon and Syria, while for Syrian refugees, their education is in Lebanese public schools in the afternoon on a part-time shift outside the camp.



Education is a concrete challenge for the people living in Burj Shemali camp, especially after the security problems and the armed clashes. In addition to the security and financial barriers to educational attainment, there are further challenges that exist when it comes to education in Burj Shemali, including the overcrowding of classes, the lack of academic and psychological support programs that meet all educational and psychological needs, and the burden of providing stationery, transportation, and daily expenses for children. Currently, Consequently, the enrollment rate for elementary schools is for intermediate schools is 600 students and for intermediate schools is 1300 students.



"Palestine" school inside the Camp

The lack of access to education in the camp has far-reaching consequences for children, impacting various aspects of their lives. Beyond limiting personal and intellectual development opportunities, the lack of education leads to economic disadvantages, hindering the potential for secure and well-paying employment in the future. Moreover, the vulnerability to exploitation and various forms of abuse increases when children lack access to education.

Efforts to improve access to quality education are not only essential for individual development but also for the broader well-being and progress of the entire community. Support for education in the camp should include financial assistance for families to meet school expenses, proactive measures to prevent dropouts, and an expansion of educational support programs. Jafra objective is to grant children and young people the opportunity to receive quality education, enabling them to carve a path towards a brighter future. Education serves as a safeguard, empowering children and youth, as well as their families and communities, to rebound from crises and enhance their resilience.

There are no secondary schools inside the camp

Water and Sanitation

In Burj Shemali camp, the water situation in the camp is generally good, and residents primarily access water through UNRWA services. Waste collection services in the camp are efficiently carried out by the Environmental Health Department managed by UNRWA. These services are sufficient to meet the camp's waste removal needs, ensuring cleanliness and hygiene in the streets and surroundings.

The camp is encountering challenges related to the potential hold on UNRWA funding, which will result in waste accumulation. This situation highlights the urgency of addressing waste management issues within the camp. It underscores the need for proactive measures to mitigate waste accumulation, such as implementing alternative waste collection strategies or seeking temporary funding solutions.

Despite these challenges, public health issues related to waste accumulation and environmental pollution occasionally arise, highlighting the need for more effective waste management strategies.

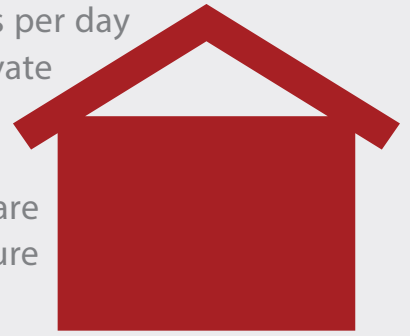
Efforts to improve the waste situation inside the camp is essential. Jafra holistic approach imposes a dual waste collection initiative with a cash for work modality, such initiatives play a pivotal role in raising awareness regarding environmental health, provide youth with the opportunity to generate income, and contributing to the overarching goal of achieving a clean and well-maintained camp.



Water Purification Facility inside the Camp

Shelter and Infrastructure

Electricity in the camp is available for approximately 4 to 6 hours per day through the Lebanese state, and the rest of the day through private generators that charge for their services. Electricity is provided through private generators or generators for distributing electricity to houses, and water is pumped from wells. Electrical cables are installed by the camp's electricity maintenance committee to ensure safety and avoid accidents.

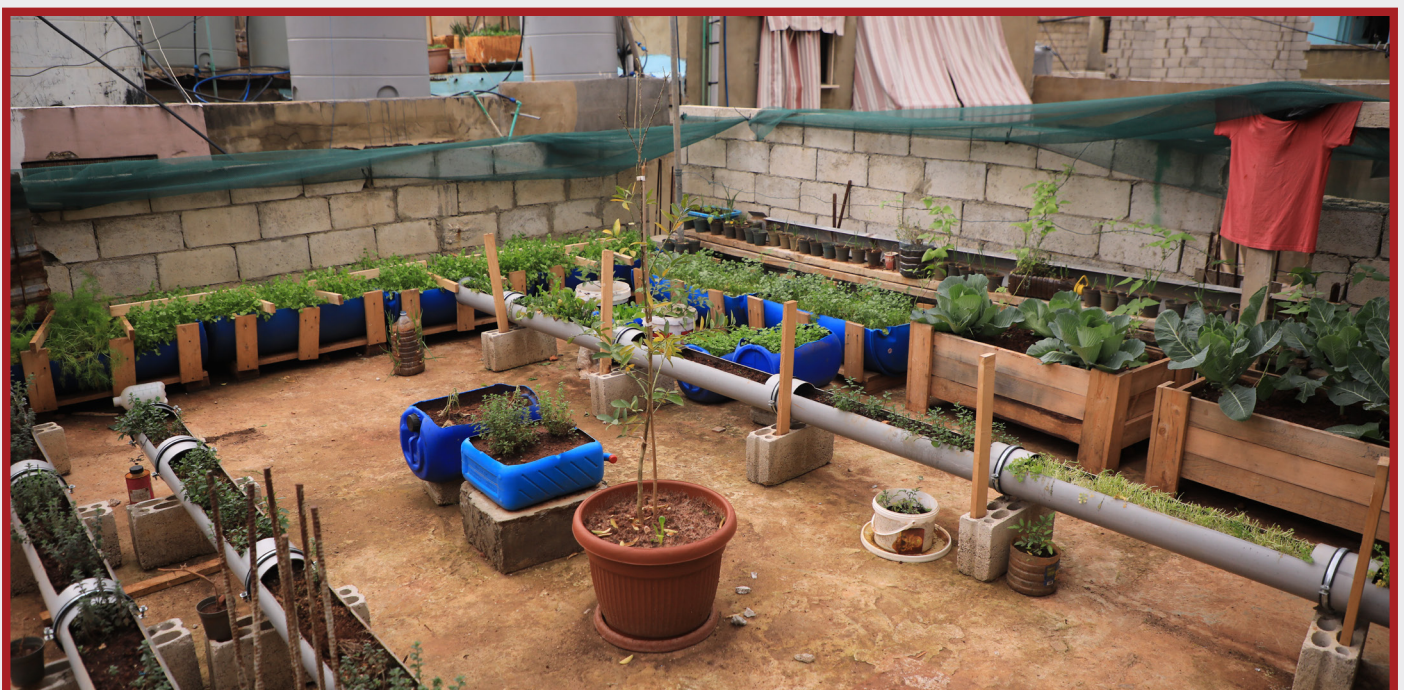
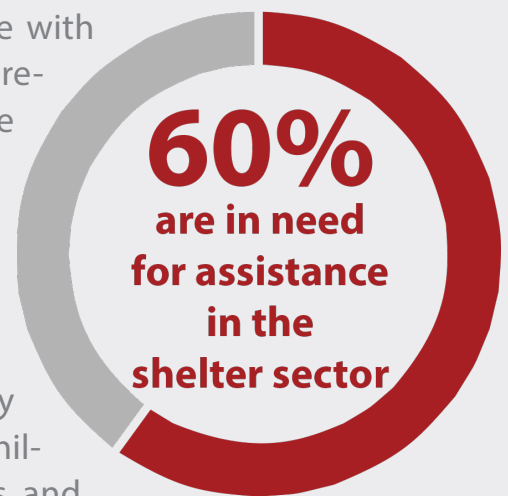


Many families in the camp live in difficult housing conditions due to various factors, including weather conditions, lack of privacy, overcrowding, high rental prices, deteriorating infrastructure, instability, and insufficient economic resources to afford rent.

The most vulnerable cases in these families include those with only one breadwinner, refugees without steady economic resources, children, and the injured. While institutions provide aids in the housing sector, they are not sufficient to meet the needs of families in the camp.

Approximately, 30% of the residents require comprehensive home maintenance, while another 30% need assistance with covering their rent costs, but there are no empty spaces in the camp for reconstruction or play areas for children. The camp's infrastructure, including buildings, houses, and the electrical network, requires maintenance.

Prioritizing infrastructure maintenance is an essential proactive measure to prevent the deterioration of essential services, ensuring a sustainable living environment for the residents within the camp.



Rooftop Gardening inside the Camps

Medical Services

One UNRWA clinic and six private clinics, along with one private health center, are providing the camp residents with intermediate healthcare services. There are six private pharmacies providing medicines for residents in the camp, but medication costs are relatively high due to a lack of regulation. Prevalent diseases include psychological trauma, disabilities, malnutrition, fever, leishmaniasis, chronic diseases, skin and respiratory diseases, waterborne diseases like diarrhea, kidney diseases, and reproductive diseases. Medical services available in the camp include general health, dental clinics, and children's general health.

There are no hospitals inside the camp, instead; only private clinics are providing services for more than 22,000 individuals inside the camp. Around 30% of the residents in the camp who have chronic illnesses. The Palestinian Red Crescent and Burj Medical Center, which are private clinics; are providing basic medical care for the camp population. The camp requires urgent interventions to support the health sector, including providing necessary medications for free, equipping medical centers, and providing financial assistance for critical cases.

The health sector situation in Burj Shemali camp is threatening, with no hospitals serving resident. The entire population, including refugees with no income, those suffering from chronic and severe illnesses, injuries, the elderly, people with disabilities, children, and pregnant or nursing mothers, are in need of medical services. Common health issues in the camp include psychological trauma, disabilities, chronic diseases, skin and respiratory conditions (such as asthma), and kidney diseases (such as stones and sand).

**There are
no hospital
inside the
camp**

Urgent interventions are needed to support the health sector in the camp encompassing provision of free necessary medicines, equipping medical centers with the needed medical supplies, and provision of financial aids to cover medical costs of critical cases.



Al Shifaa clinic inside the Camps

Localization

The camp includes various associations, scouts, alongside numerous clubs such as Sports club, social groups, and student associations. In addition to Palestinian factions, there are committees such as the Popular Committee, and Security Committee. Also, the Palestinian Civil Defense, operates in the Burj Shemali camp. The PCD is a local organization in which it provides first aid medical services through its First Aid Clinic as well as leads firefighting missions inside and outside of the camps. In the past, the PCD has provided assistance to the Lebanese Civil Defense in firefighting assignments across Lebanon and the PCD was one of the main organizations that managed the COVID-19 crisis in the Palestinian camps.



Given the pivotal role of the Palestinian Civil Defense within the Palestinian camps, Jafra is actively collaborating with the PCD to strengthen the skills and management capabilities of its staff. Jafra is committed to equipping PCD with the essential tools to navigate future financial challenges, fostering the sustainability of PCD as an autonomous entity capable of effectively meeting the diverse needs of the community.

This strategic approach underscores the significance of transforming PCD into a sustainable entity model. It is crucial to emphasize that the presence of PCD in the camp is indispensable, and Jafra engagement aims to fortify PCD's role in contributing to the well-being and development of the camp.

Moreover, Jafra embeds a holistic strategy of fostering localization and providing support to local community actors and institutions, enabling a more effective response to the specific needs of targeted camps. Jafra is committed to making long-term investments in the development of local leadership capable of addressing local issues and priorities through innovative solutions and programs. The overarching goal is to enhance localization for local civil society actors, fostering institutional and organizational growth and development, ultimately increasing their capacity to address the needs of affected populations.

Consequently, Jafra has established subcommittees at a camp level, with one dedicated to each camp. In Burj Shemali camp, the subcommittee includes the PCD, Diyarouna Association, ElHoule Association, and the Palestine Red Crescent which are convening monthly meetings. These meetings serve as platforms to comprehensively grasp localized concerns and gather community input on potential resolutions for these issues. Each year, the subcommittee alongside their team members attend tailored trainings aimed to enhance their capabilities, following the trainings, an initiative is implemented with an objective that solve key community grievances and empower marginalized men and women.

Who We Are

Jafra Foundation for Relief and Youth Development is a non-governmental organization working to serve vulnerable groups in Palestinian refugee camps and gatherings in Syria and Lebanon. It was established in 2002 by the grass-roots efforts of young Palestinian in Yarmouk Camp – Damascus City.

Check our platforms



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