



A Referral Information Management System
by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

RIMS ANNUAL REPORT

2022

Amid the backdrop of increasing needs, reduced capacities and resources, humanitarian actors in Lebanon aim to maintain quality and effective response.

PRODUCED AND OPERATED BY
DRC DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY FINDINGS AND DYNAMIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATION
<p>Funding Challenges: Despite growing needs in Lebanon, organizations struggle to refer all identified cases due to limited financial resources, high staff turnover, and capacity constraints.</p>	<p>Embrace Innovative Strategies: Introduce area-based programming and comprehensive community-based approaches that maximize impact within the constraints of limited humanitarian funding.</p>
<p>Empowering Beneficiaries: Continuity of service delivery can be achieved by empowering beneficiaries to refer themselves to the right service providers and access vital information.</p>	<p>Pathway to Empowerment: Enable beneficiaries through targeted support, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to navigate services effectively, creating a self-reliant and resilient community.</p>
<p>Enhanced Coordination: Strengthening coordination, especially within consortia, can optimize collaboration and streamline referral pathways.</p>	<p>Collaborative Synergy: Foster data sharing and consolidation among partners, implementing transparent reporting mechanisms and establishing seamless referral pathways to leverage collective expertise.</p>
<p>Feedback and Responsiveness: Current feedback rates from receiving organizations on referrals remain low, reflecting the need for improved responsiveness to service provision.</p>	<p>Amplify Accountability: Engage humanitarian actors in Lebanon to prioritize responsiveness and feedback mechanisms during working group discussions, utilizing available data like RIMS to drive better service outcomes.</p>
<p>Efficient Referral Channels: Hotline calls exhibit lower closing rates compared to cases identified through NGO frontliners, indicating the need to optimize channels, staff capacity, and feedback processes.</p>	<p>Streamlining Success: Review and refine referral pathways, bolster staff capacity, and provide frequent training to hotline staff, ensuring efficient closure of cases and enhancing beneficiary satisfaction.</p>
<p>Needs-based Prioritization: Referrals should prioritize addressing needs rather than favoring specific channels of origin.</p>	<p>Aligned Assistance: Encourage organizations and inter-agency guidelines to adopt a needs-based approach, ensuring equitable and impactful assistance regardless of referral channels.</p>

INTRODUCTION

For over three tumultuous years, Lebanon has grappled with an economic crisis, thrusting most of its population to the precipice of poverty and triggering a surge in unemployment. The consequences ripple through the very fabric of society, as the provision of essential services such as electricity, public health, and education face severe disruptions. Adding to the complexity, the capacity of public administration has been critically weakened, compounded by a dual governance and displacement crisis that further exposes vulnerabilities across diverse communities throughout the country.

Amidst these pressing challenges, service providers are confronted with a myriad of obstacles. Insufficient and irregular funding leaves them unable to address the acute needs prevalent in Lebanon. High staff turnover and limited implementation capacity compound the situation, hampering their efforts to enact intended activities. Moreover, a lack of coordination and strategic planning hampers collective responses, while social tensions and tightened access restrictions pose additional challenges to field presence.

Drawing from the wealth of referral data extracted from the Referral Information Management System (RIMS), this report serves as a guiding light, unveiling critical findings and groundbreaking recommendations that pave the way towards maintaining a quality response and ensuring access to vital services for vulnerable communities.

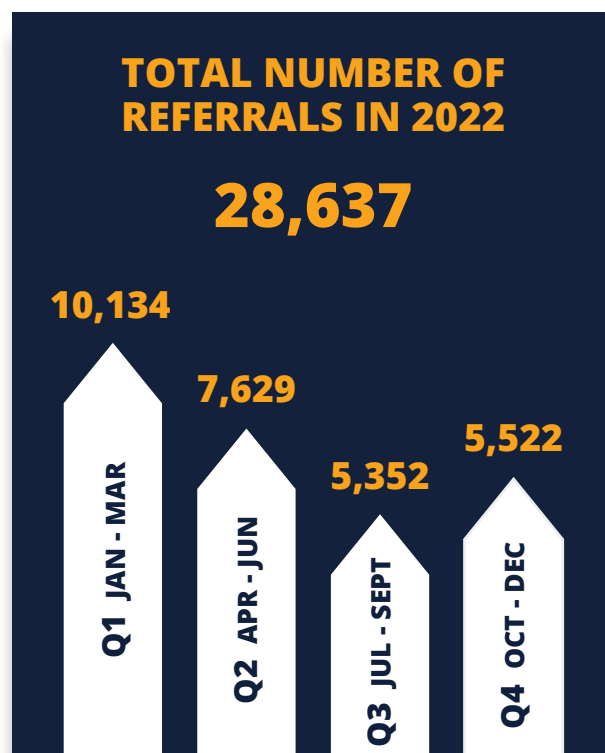
1. OVERVIEW OF REFERRAL TRENDS DURING THE PAST YEAR

UNVEILING REFERRAL TRENDS: Insights into a Shifting Landscape

This section presents a comprehensive overview of referral trends on RIMS, offering insights at both the governorate and sectoral levels.

RISE AND RESHAPING: Navigating Changing Dynamics

In 2022, the number of referrals experienced a notable 19% surge, reaching a staggering 28,637, compared to 24,000 referrals in 2021. Notably, while Syrian refugees comprised the majority of referred beneficiaries on RIMS, there was a remarkable 97% increase in the number of Lebanese beneficiaries referred. Feedback received from focus group discussions shed light on this surge, attributing it to the deepening needs of vulnerable communities amidst Lebanon's complex and multilayered socio-economic crises. Additionally, the increase can be attributed to the growing number of organizations joining RIMS, either influenced by encouragement from other organizations or donors or driven by the ease of sending referrals through a widely adopted platform utilized by their partners. Furthermore, the responsiveness of actors receiving referrals through RIMS has improved, owing to dedicated follow-up by the RIMS team and donor requests to track partner referrals and ensure timely responses.



PEAKS AND VALLEYS:

Unveiling the Referral Dynamics

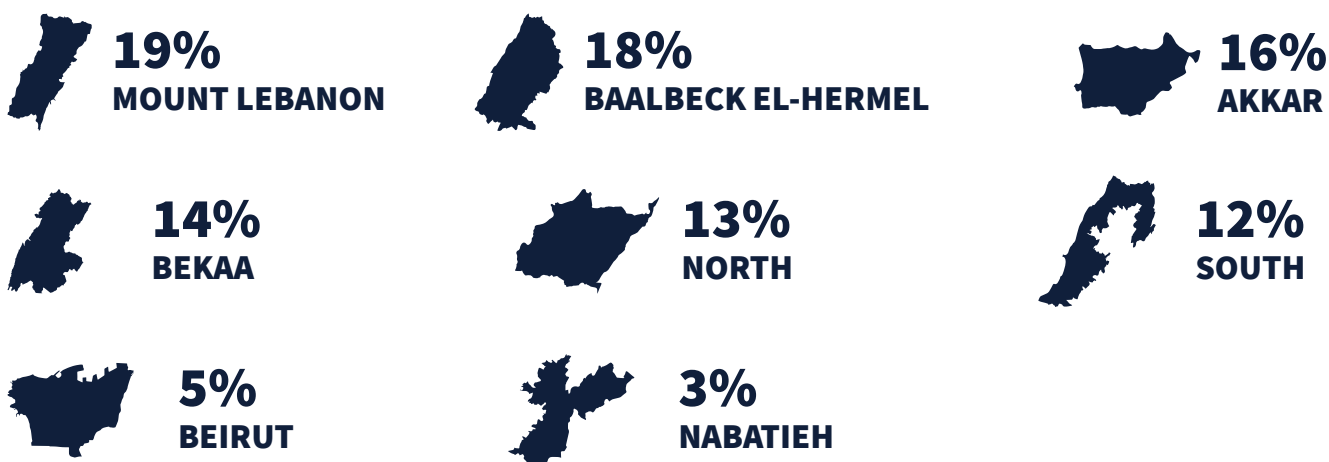
Interestingly, despite the overall increase in referrals compared to 2021, a noticeable decline in referrals occurred throughout the year, culminating in a substantial 45% decrease by year-end. Humanitarian actors attribute this decline to the scarcity of available services, impacted by funding cuts stemming from donor attention shifting towards other conflicts. The global economic crisis, further exacerbating food prices and reducing purchasing power, has hampered humanitarian actors' ability to provide quality services, leading to high staff turnover due to stagnant growth and sometimes ineffective management. Consequently, organizations face challenges in identifying, referring, and responding to cases.

NAVIGATING A NEW REALITY:

Empowering Strategies for Impactful Interventions

Amidst this landscape of limited humanitarian funding, both local and international humanitarian actors must forge new strategies to deliver impactful interventions. Embracing area-based programming and comprehensive community-based approaches becomes paramount, enabling organizations to navigate the shifting dynamics effectively. Moreover, empowering beneficiaries to self-assess and refer themselves reduces the burden on case workers, allowing them to focus more on service delivery. By placing information within the reach of those in need, especially in emergency settings, timely and efficient access to services can be ensured.

REFERRALS BETWEEN GOVERNORATES



UNVEILING REFERRAL PATTERNS:

Insights from RIMS

Delving into the realm of referrals across different governorates, RIMS data sheds light on intriguing trends. Notably, Mount Lebanon (ML) emerges as the frontrunner, accounting for a significant 19% of the overall referrals sent through RIMS. Following closely, Baalbek-El Hermel area captures 18% of the referrals, while Akkar claims 16%.

MOUNT LEBANON'S SURGE:

A Confluence of Factors

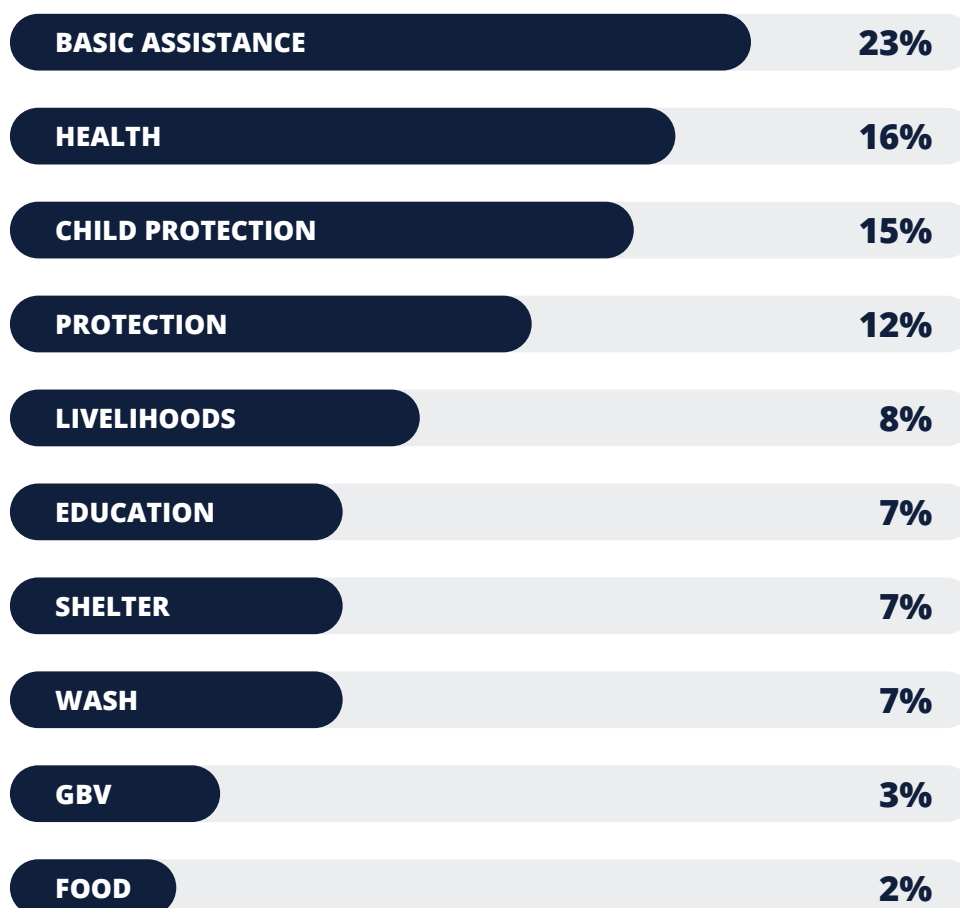
The sustained high number of referrals recorded throughout all four quarters in ML can be attributed to multiple factors. RIMS partners operating in Mount Lebanon report a surge in projects relocating from Beirut, as per donor requests, following the completion of activities related to the tragic 2021 explosion. Moreover, being a densely populated governorate contributes to the heightened demand for services in this region.

A SOUTHERN CONUNDRUM:

Unveiling Referral Disparities

Conversely, partners working in the southern governorates of Lebanon express an interesting discrepancy between the significant number of referrals they handle and the comparatively low number reflected in RIMS data. This enigmatic situation can be attributed, in part, to the limited presence of RIMS partners providing services in the southern governorates. With fewer entities participating in the platform within these regions, the resultant lower volume of reported cases on RIMS is understandable. However, to fully grasp the extent and underlying causes of this discrepancy, a deeper analysis becomes imperative.

PROPORTION OF REFERRALS RECEIVED BY SECTORS



STEADFAST SUPPORT IN TIMES OF CRISIS:

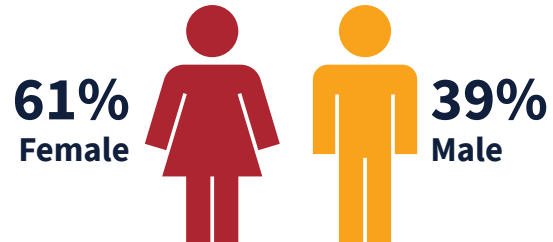
The Vital Role of Humanitarian Actors

In Lebanon, vulnerable rural and urban communities heavily rely on non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, civil society, and other humanitarian actors as their lifeline to essential services. With the collapse of public institutions amid the country's deteriorating economic situation, these entities become the primary source of support for countless individuals. The ramifications of this situation are evident in RIMS data, which showcases communities increasingly at risk of losing access to basic assistance, thus intensifying their reliance on humanitarian actors. This explains the overall surge in referrals sent through RIMS, particularly the marked increase in requests for basic assistance services, constituting a significant 23% of the total referrals. While basic assistance held dominance as a priority need in both Beirut and Mount Lebanon (BML), it remained among the top three essential services in all governorates across Lebanon.

Health service requests accounted for 16% of the total referrals, emerging as the second most prioritized request facilitated through the platform. This can be attributed, in part, to the Cholera outbreak experienced in June and July 2022, affecting areas in Bekaa and the North. Additionally, financial constraints among beneficiaries, along with the disruption of social support programs and public investments, further contributed to the heightened demand for health services. Alarming difficulties in accessing basic assistance led to concerning consequences, such as an increase in child labor, particularly in agricultural fields and street vending, exposing children to a greater risk of abuse and various protection hazards. Consequently, the percentage of child protection referrals sent through RIMS reached a significant 15%. This trend was particularly pronounced in the North and Akkar governorates, where protection, including child protection services, topped the priority list. In the Southern governorates, the critical needs encompassed protection, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), and health services.

REFERRALS BY AGE GROUP AND GENDER

Looking at gender differences, during 2022, and although as per VASYR data, 83% of the Head-of-households are males, RIMS data have shown that women (61%) tend to request more frequently services than men (39%), which could possibly be due the bigger challenges male beneficiaries face when it comes to access to services, as well as due the roles they hold within the household, and the fact that women are disproportionately affected by different shocks and require more tailored support to suit their needs. The above number are also in line with VASYR 2022 data that highlights that the more women are referred to services than males.

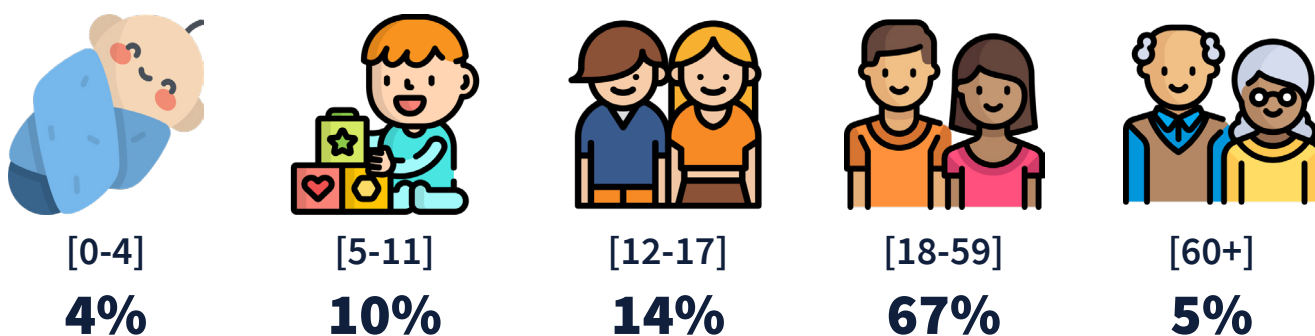


Moreover, the numbers indicated that 27% of females were referred to Basic assistance services, while males were mostly referred to child protection services, which is likely due to the increase of child labor cases, due the fact that males have a greater tendency of leaving school in search of job opportunities, which exposes them to more abuse and exploitation at the workplace, as well as cultural gender norms, where it is recognized that males are the breadwinner and should seek income as per the global report on boys' disengagement from education-UNESCWA-2022.

However, both females and males were referred to health services, implying that health services is a cross cutting need for both.

Also, looking at the different age groups, it is interesting to note that only 5% of the referred beneficiaries were above 60 years old, due to the limited number of actors providing services for older persons, which is an ongoing discussion in the national protection working Groups. But adding to that the lack of focused outreach and information among the elderly community about available services because of elderly communities' illiteracy, limited access to technology, and limited engagement with the broader community. And finally, the inaccessibility of infrastructure and actors' premises limiting them from reaching out and requesting needed services.

REFERRALS BY AGE GROUPS



2. RIMS EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS

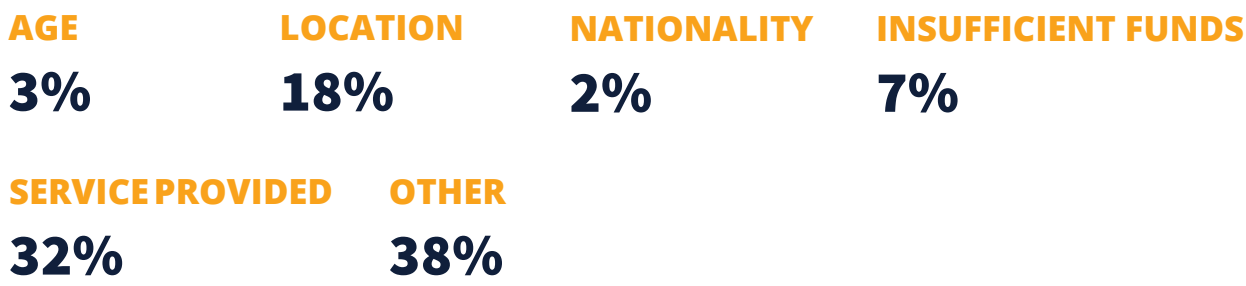
This section provides an overview of the referral management practices employed by humanitarian actors, revealing areas for organizational restructuring and improved responsiveness to referrals, as well as enhancing beneficiaries' access to information and services.

The data from RIMS demonstrates a concerning level of response, speed, and timeliness of referrals. Non-governmental organizations struggled to address nearly half of the referrals received on RIMS during 2022 (48%). Shockingly, only 38% of the referred beneficiaries received final feedback from service providers, leaving the remaining 14% acknowledged but uncertain about the status of their cases. This lack of closure can be distressing for beneficiaries, leading to feelings of powerlessness and increased stress. Moreover, the timeliness of referrals showed room for improvement, as only 38% of cases receiving feedback did so within 14 days or less. This extended timeframe frustrates beneficiaries and erodes their confidence in the efficiency of the humanitarian response, as organizations struggle to meet their expectations and urgent needs.

Discussions with organizations revealed challenges in providing timely responses to referrals, particularly in the context of case management. Unclear eligibility criteria made it difficult to determine the appropriate agency for referral, delaying the decision-making process for both sending and receiving organizations. Inadequate service mapping and limited follow-up on referral statuses further contributed to reduced responsiveness and prolonged response times. The existence of multiple referral platforms and specific agencies/donors requiring email responses instead of utilizing RIMS also hindered the efficiency of the referral process.

Analysis of the data also highlighted reasons for cases being rejected. Approximately 32% of cases were not accepted due to prior service provision, indicating that beneficiaries had already received the requested assistance. Additionally, 23% of cases were rejected due to unmet eligibility requirements, such as geographical location, age, or nationality. These findings underscore the need to streamline eligibility criteria, clarify guidelines, and enhance coordination among humanitarian actors to ensure a more effective and efficient referral process.

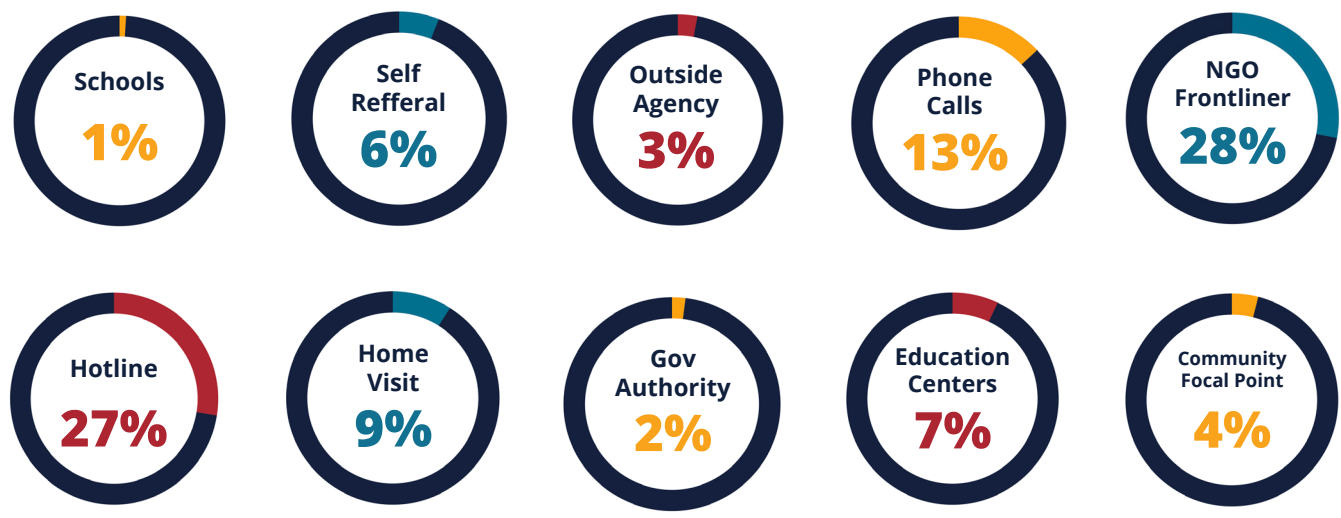
REASONS FOR NOT ACCEPTING REFERRALS



LEVEL OF RESPONSE



IDENTIFICATION CHANNELS



During 2022, the data from RIMS revealed the two primary channels used for identifying referrals: face-to-face identification by NGO frontliners (28%) and hotline calls (27%). These findings were corroborated by participants in the focus group discussions, who emphasized that frontliners working directly in the field had easier access and direct contact with vulnerable communities, enabling them to identify individuals in need more effectively. However, the number of cases identified by frontliners decreased due to the rising cost of fuel, which resulted in beneficiaries preferring to utilize hotline numbers or make WhatsApp calls instead of incurring transportation expenses or facing higher telecommunication costs. It is important to note that hotline calls, while cost-efficient, may not guarantee the same level of safety and confidentiality.

Although hotline calls offer a more affordable alternative to transportation expenses, RIMS data shows that out of the total number of calls received, only 16% of these cases received final feedback and were closed by the receiving agency. Conversely, cases identified through NGO frontliners had a higher closing rate of 43%. Furthermore, not only are more cases closed when identified by frontliners, but more cases are also accepted (47% accepted compared to only 17% accepted through hotline calls).

This suggests that while hotline calls may be the preferred identification channel for beneficiaries due to their cost-effectiveness, organizations face challenges in ensuring timely responses to all requests received through this channel, including proper channeling or reassignment to the appropriate staff for follow-up and action.

CONCLUSION

Overall, these findings emphasize the need for organizational restructuring, enhanced coordination among humanitarian actors, and streamlined eligibility criteria to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of referral management. By addressing these issues, humanitarian actors can better support beneficiaries' access to services and provide a more responsive and impactful humanitarian response.

METHODOLOGY

This report provides an analysis of national referral data gathered through RIMS from January to December 2022 of 110 RIMS partners, up from 80 from the last annual review report done in 2021.

RIMS is an inclusive, cross-sectoral Referral Information Management System that assists humanitarians in safely sending, receiving and monitoring their referrals. The main aim is to connect humanitarian actors to support crisis affected populations in meeting their needs by accessing services in a timely and effective manner. As a response to the challenges identified in Lebanon which included duplication of services, whilst key gaps in response remained, alongside multiple referrals and databases, RIMS was developed in 2017 with initial seed funding from ECHO. With no other system, RIMS is currently acting as a common platform to send/receive/monitor referrals across the response in Lebanon. Essentially, it is a national level system set up to ensure effective and accountable referral pathways whilst strengthening access to multi-sector services to all vulnerable populations (regardless of status) across all locations in Lebanon.

Findings in this report are based on a quantitative analysis of RIMS data, with findings being triangulated by secondary data sources: 1) quantitative data analysis of RIMS referral data e.g. indicators to assess the effectiveness of referrals are used to analyze the impact of the fuel crisis on access to services more broadly, 2) secondary data resources and 3) Focus Group discussion that was conducted with several RIMS partners from different sectors and governorates to understand the main trends and/or gaps that we identified after analyzing RIMS 2022 referral data. 14 focal points from 10 different local and international organizations attended the discussion. These organizations were: DRC, IOCC, ACF, Al Fayhaa, WCH, TDH-IT, Al Majmoua, Intersos, Save the Children, and IRC. The discussion took about 2 hours and below are the subjects we discussed during it.

EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS

The DRC RIMS Team developed four indicators to assess the effectiveness and accountability of service providers:



SPEED

Speed refers to the time that it takes for the receiving agency or internal focal point to acknowledge receipt of the referral. It is measured by the number of days from when the referral was sent, to when it was received by the receiving agency or internal focal point. Referrals considered on time are referrals responded to within 24 hours for fast-track-referrals, as per the Referrals Minimum Standards.



TIMELINESS

Timeliness refers to the total time that it takes to complete the referral process. It is measured by the number of days from when the referral was sent, to when it received a final status (i.e. Accepted/ Rejected). Referrals considered on time are referrals receiving a last status within 24 hours for Fast Track Referrals, and 14 days for Normal Referrals.



ACCURACY

Accuracy refers to the volume of “Not-Eligible” referrals. It is measured by the percentage of referrals with a “Not-Eligible” final status.



RESPONSE

Response refers to the level of response and follow up of the receiving agency on the referrals they receive. Response is measured by the percentage of “No Feedback Received” referrals, compared to “Received”, “Not Eligible”, “No Service Delivered”, “Accepted”, and “Successfully Closed” referrals.

DATA ANALYSIS

All interviews were recorded, and the interviewer took detailed notes. The researchers met online to discuss emerging themes to adjust data collection on themes requiring further exploration.

KEY LIMITATIONS

Data quality:

Despite continuous training on data quality on RIMS, data entry errors continued to be a challenge during 2022 on RIMS, affecting effective and consistent data entry and information management practices.

The RIMS team has observed this challenge across humanitarian organizations, and it was necessary for some data to be discarded.

The new version of RIMS comes with several enhancements. Firstly, the data entry process has been standardized and simplified, eliminating the need for users to search for person of concern each time a case is referred. Instead, they only need to enter basic fields and the system will automatically check for similarities, thus reducing the number of duplicated people of concern.

Secondly, the database remains centralized, and access permissions are provided based on the specific needs of organizations.



To increase accountability, cases are automatically locked for editing once referred, and only a few fields can be updated based on the actions provided by the focal point. Additionally, the system logs each action automatically, including who provided the action and the time it was taken.

On a technical level, a workflow module has been developed to systemize actions and allow external focal points to access RIMS with limited external access to the case only, rather than sending them to RIMS users via email.

Furthermore, a clean service mapping has been established, and the RIMS team has been provided access to monitor the data entered and verified on it. This decreases errors and ensures that the data is up to date. Data validation restrictions are also enforced for certain fields, such as phone numbers, dates, and various other scenarios, across the platform.

Lastly, newly introduced customized data extraction and monitoring screens have increased the follow-up in each organization, allowing them to keep their data updated and accurate.



A Referral Information Management System
by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

DRC DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL

[FOR MORE INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

RIMS is funded by



MINISTRY OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK
Danida



Funded by
European Union
Civil Protection and
Humanitarian Aid



Lebanon
Humanitarian
Fund

Copyrights, DRC; Click below

