

The logo for the Norwegian Refugee Council, consisting of the letters 'NRC' in white on an orange square background.

NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

**INFORMATION,
COUNSELLING AND LEGAL
ASSISTANCE
PROGRAMME (ICLA)**

**MONTHLY LEGAL AND
PROTECTION UPDATES**

MARCH & APRIL 2016



NRC – www.nrc.no

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an independent, international, humanitarian, non-governmental organisation which provides assistance, and protection and contributes to durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced people worldwide. NRC has been working in Lebanon since 2006 providing humanitarian assistance to communities affected by displacement. In early March 2012, NRC commenced its Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) programme in Lebanon, with a focus on assisting refugees and displaced persons to understand and enjoy their rights. All NRC services are free of charge.

For further information about NRC Lebanon's ICLA programme or to find out about making legal referrals or receiving NRC training or awareness sessions on legal issues, please contact Ms. Julia Herzog-Schmidt, ICLA Specialist at julia.herzog-schmidt@nrc.no or 01 366 113.

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The Protection and Legal Context Updates should be duly cited when used as a reference.

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1. Background

The NRC Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) team provides information, counselling and legal assistance to refugees from Syria about access to essential services and legal issues in Lebanon. ICLA provides its services at NRC community centres and through outreach at a number of locations, including UNHCR registration sites, informal tented settlements (ITS), medical centres, community centres and schools. The ICLA team works in Beirut/Mount Lebanon (BML), North Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley and South Lebanon. By regularly following legal developments and through its ICLA programming in the field (ongoing mapping of services, assistance to refugees, its referral and follow-up systems and its case management database), NRC monitors the circumstances for refugee and host communities in Lebanon. Based on this information, NRC has been able to follow changes in the protection situation and identify protection and legal concerns that require specific focus. Throughout its daily work, in close contact with the refugee and host communities affected by displacement, the ICLA team identifies protection trends and issues of concern for humanitarian actors participating in the Syrian response.

During **March and April 2016, the NRC ICLA team provided services to 33,273 refugees** across the country (see Table 1 below for more details).

The following update is based on data from field programmes and covers the months of March and April 2016. It presents protection trends and information on issues identified by NRC ICLA field teams in BML, Bekaa, North and South. All the points mentioned in the update are, as relevant, being followed up by NRC staff.

| Governorate | Caza/district¹ | Refugees who received ICLA services |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Akkar | Akkar | 2,038 |
| Baalbek-EI Hermel | Baalbek | 3,958 |
| | EI Hermel | 1 |
| Beirut | Beirut | 198 |
| Bekaa | Rachaya | 1 |
| | West Bekaa | 2,345 |
| | Zahle | 11,525 |
| EI Nabatieh | Bent Jbeil | 293 |
| | EI Nabatieh | 738 |
| | Marjaayoun | 15 |
| BML | Aley | 547 |
| | Baabda | 4,403 |
| | Chouf | 381 |
| | EI Batroun | 3 |
| | EI Metn | 1,588 |
| | Jbeil | 10 |
| | Keserwane | 16 |
| North | EI Koura | 9 |
| | EI Minieh-Dennie | 480 |
| | Tripoli | 2,084 |
| | Zgharta | 149 |
| South | Hasbaya | 1 |
| | Jezzine | 1 |
| | Saida | 851 |
| | Sour | 1,638 |
| Total | | 33,273 |

Table 1: ICLA beneficiaries during March and April 2016²

¹ In the following tables 2 and 3 some Caza may not be captured because the beneficiaries would have received a set of services not detailed in table 2 and 3.

² Total numbers in tables 2 and 3 will not correlate with the total number of beneficiaries in table 1 as some beneficiaries will have received more than one service.

| Governorate | Caza/district | Refugees who received information about birth registration | Refugees who received information about legal status | Refugees who received information about housing, land and property (HLP) |
|-------------------|------------------|--|--|--|
| Akkar | Akkar | 1,305 | 1,319 | 973 |
| Baalbek-El Hermel | Baalbek | 1,864 | 510 | 450 |
| | Beirut | 134 | 134 | 134 |
| Bekaa | West Bekaa | 2,247 | 644 | 644 |
| | Zahle | 9,213 | 4,239 | 3,840 |
| El Nabatieh | Bent Jbeil | 153 | 106 | 21 |
| | El Nabatieh | 525 | 537 | 44 |
| BML | Aley | 428 | 382 | 382 |
| | Baabda | 4,008 | 3,797 | 3,749 |
| | Chouf | 333 | 183 | 183 |
| | El Metn | 1,482 | 1,513 | 1,420 |
| North | El Minieh-Dennie | 217 | 118 | 74 |
| | Tripoli | 1,844 | 1,931 | 1,299 |
| | Zgharta | 37 | 37 | 0 |
| South | Saida | 550 | 431 | 181 |
| | Sour | 1,297 | 1,334 | 593 |
| TOTAL | | 25,637 | 17,215 | 13,987 |

Table 2: Number of individuals receiving ICLA services (on birth registration, legal status and HLP) provided during March and April 2016

| Governorate | Caza/district | Refugees who received information about UNHCR registration | Refugees who received information about shelter | Refugees who received information about education | Refugees who received information about health |
|-------------------|------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Akkar | Akkar | 652 | 816 | 376 | 1,071 |
| Baalbek-El Hermel | Baalbek | 1,927 | 579 | 354 | 2,029 |
| Beirut | Beirut | 91 | 23 | 0 | 90 |
| Bekaa | West Bekaa | 238 | 161 | 156 | 1,211 |
| | Zahle | 8,914 | 1,219 | 1,061 | 8,799 |
| El Nabatieh | Bent Jbeil | 103 | 183 | 174 | 8 |
| | Marjaayoun | 1 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| | El Nabatieh | 178 | 92 | 13 | 87 |
| BML103 | Aley | 271 | 0 | 0 | 388 |
| | Baabda | 3,204 | 295 | 261 | 2,691 |
| | Chouf | 164 | 54 | 46 | 93 |
| | Kesrwane | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | El Metn | 867 | 10 | 47 | 851 |
| North | El Koura | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | El Batroun | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | El Minieh-Dennie | 122 | 150 | 83 | 105 |
| | Tripoli | 748 | 1,738 | 1,409 | 1,647 |
| | Zgharta | 0 | 40 | 0 | 37 |
| South | Saida | 1 | 476 | 428 | 58 |
| | Sour | 373 | 848 | 702 | 688 |
| TOTAL | | 17,857 | 6,686 | 5,111 | 19,861 |

Table 3: Number of individuals receiving ICLA services (on shelter, education and health) provided during March and April 2016

2. Access to territory

Access to Lebanese territory during the month of March and April 2016 remained restricted to Syrians who were able to comply with one of the limited entry categories mentioned in the General Security Office (GSO) circular issued 5 January 2015. During March and April 2016, ICLA

encountered 10 Syrian refugees who were able to enter Lebanon since 5 January 2015. Six of them entered through an official border based on a “pledge of responsibility”.

3. Legal stay and freedom of movement

NRC field observations during March and April 2016 confirm the trends identified in the previous months. The majority of refugees continue to not approach the GSO to renew and/or regularise their legal stay (as demonstrated in figure 1).

During the reporting period, ICLA asked 3,367 beneficiaries³ who received counselling and legal assistance on legal stay, civil documentation and HLP issues, if they had approached the GSO since 5 January 2015. Out of those beneficiaries, only 25% (847 beneficiaries) had approached the GSO since the issuance of the new renewal regulations while the remaining 75% (2,520 beneficiaries) stated that they did not approach the GSO.

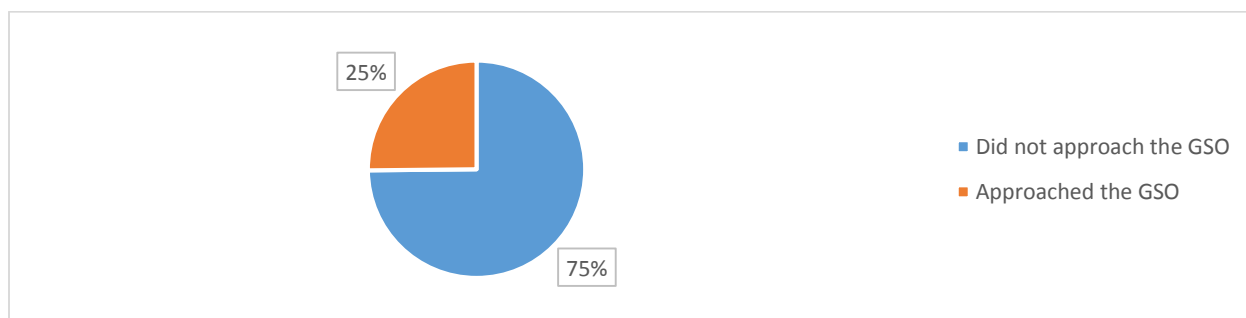


Figure 1: Percentage of refugees who approached or did not approach the GSO to renew or regularise their legal stay since 5 January 2015. March and April 2016, sample size: 3,367

As shown in figure 2, of the 25% (847 beneficiaries) who stated that they approached the GSO to renew and/or regularise their legal stay, 40% expressed their reasoning as a willingness to abide by the law, 27% expressed their reasoning as a willingness to have freedom of movement and 25% to have access to work.

³ It includes Syrian refugees and Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS).

This is in line with NRC’s previous findings, which demonstrate that Syrian refugees with no legal stay may be exposed to further risks and experience restrictions on their freedom of movement, which is key in order to access essential services and livelihood opportunities.

For example, during March and April 2016 there have been increasing security measures in Nabatieh governorate further limiting Syrian refugees’ freedom of movement, such as restrictions to move freely during nights and/or to access public places.

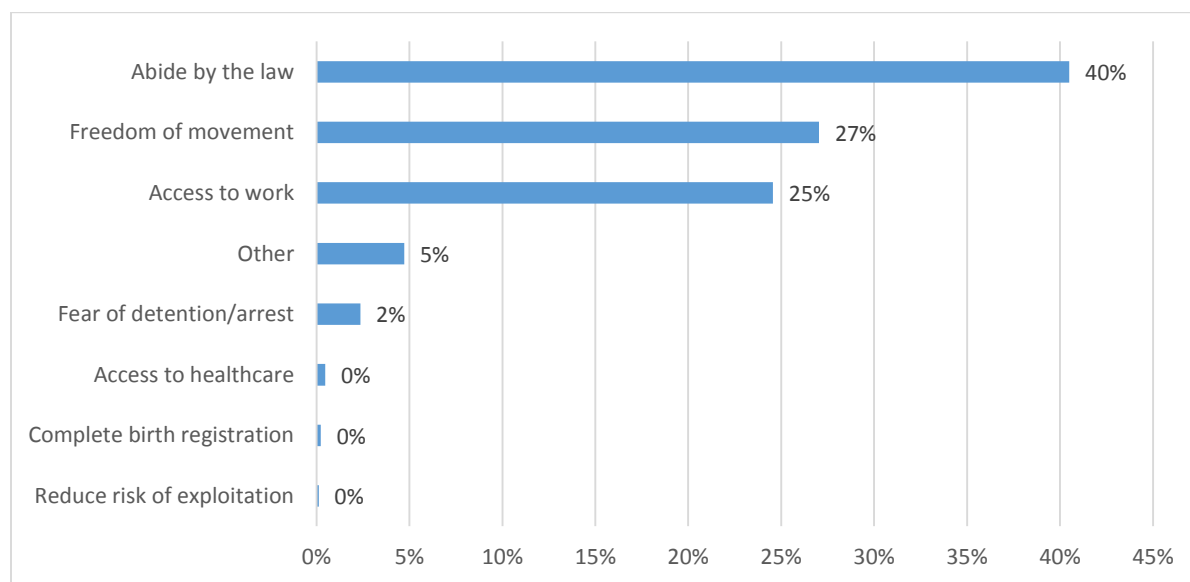


Figure 2: Reported reasons for approaching the GSO to renew or to regularise legal stay since 5 January 2015. March and April 2016, sample size: 847

Out of the 75% (2,520 beneficiaries) who stated not approaching the GSO to renew and/or regularise their legal stay since 5 January 2015, 47% cited a lack of documents as a main reason, in particular the “pledge of responsibility”, as the main obstacle to renew and/or regularise their legal stay, 33% cited the financial costs.

Several beneficiaries that approached NRC have also reported that they were requested by Lebanese nationals to pay an extra amount of money in exchange of signing a “pledge of responsibility”. In Akkar for example it was reported that this amount would vary between USD 400 and USD 800.

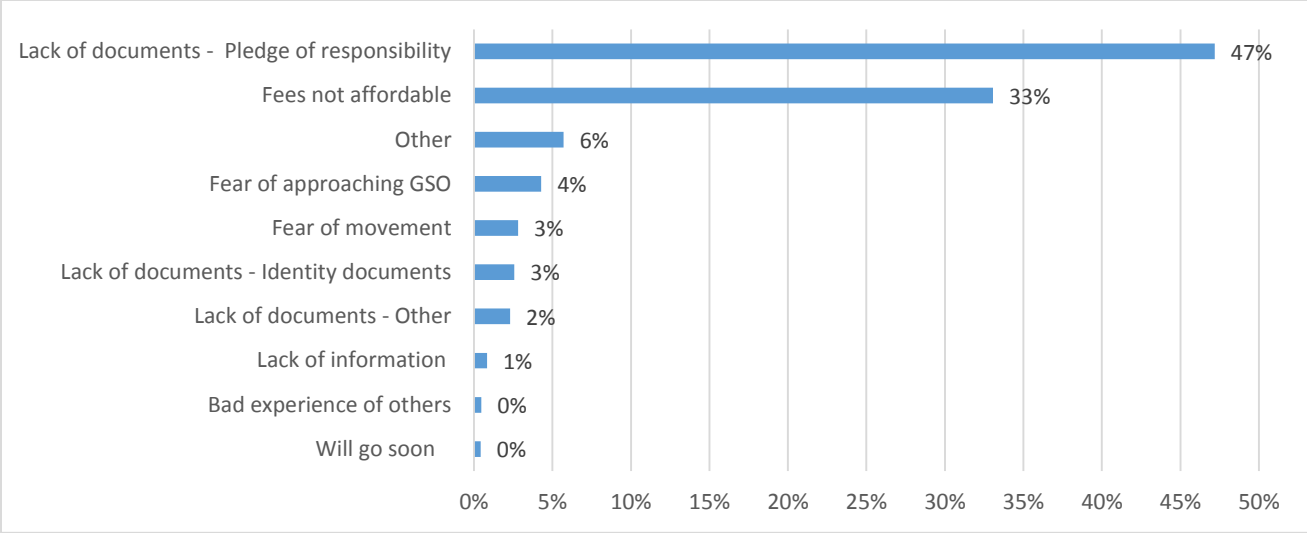


Figure 3: Reported reasons for not approaching the GSOs to renew or to regularise legal stay since 5 January 2015. March and April 2016, sample size: 2,520

a. Legal stay for Syrian refugees

During the reporting period, ICLA interviewed among counselling and legal assistance beneficiaries, 181 out of the 847 beneficiaries who have approached the GSO to renew and/or regularise their legal stay. As illustrated in figure 4, out of these 181, 78% were granted residency visa for a period between 6 to 12 months and 6% were granted residency visa for less than six months.

5% were denied renewal and/or regularisation, in two cases the beneficiary’s entry card was stamped “To return to Syria”.

The remainder of the renewal and regularisation applications 11% were still pending at the time of the interview.

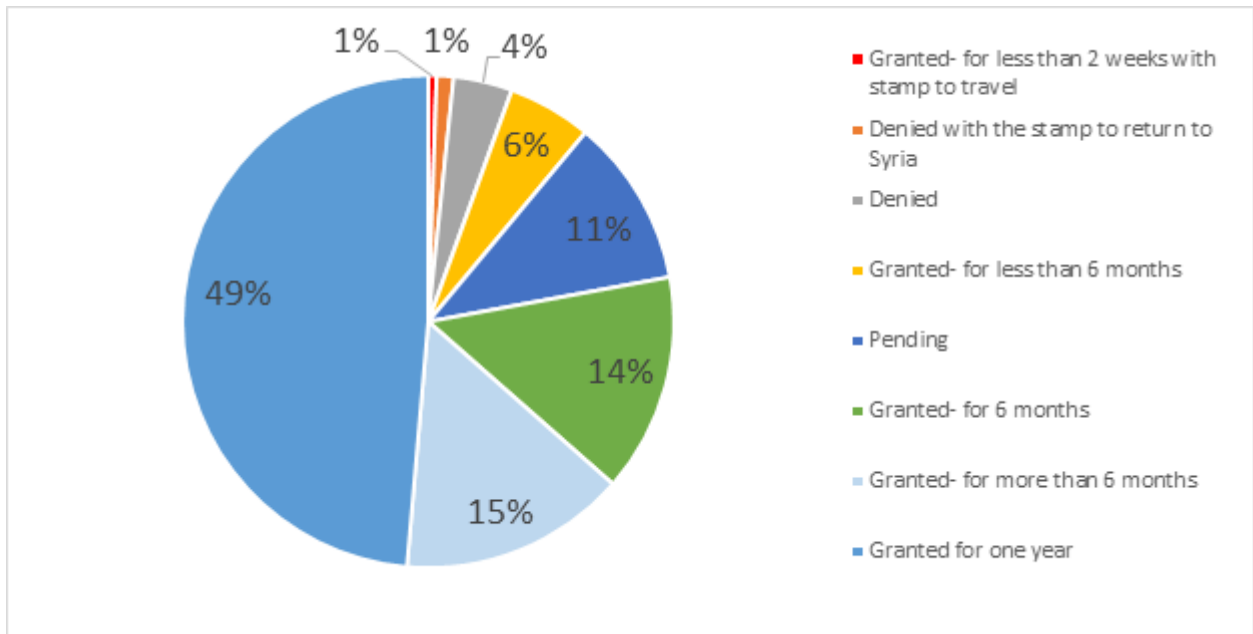


Figure 4: Outcomes of the renewal and regularisation applications for Syrian refugees. March and April 2016, sample size: 181

Among the 152 cases that succeeded in renewing their legal stay, 97% (147 beneficiaries) managed to do so based on a pledge of responsibility (71% pledge of responsibility with the work and 26% pledge of responsibility without work).

Figure 5 shows that refugees are less likely to succeed in renewing their legal stay based on their UNHCR registration certificate, with only 3% (5 beneficiaries) across the nation who were able to do so.

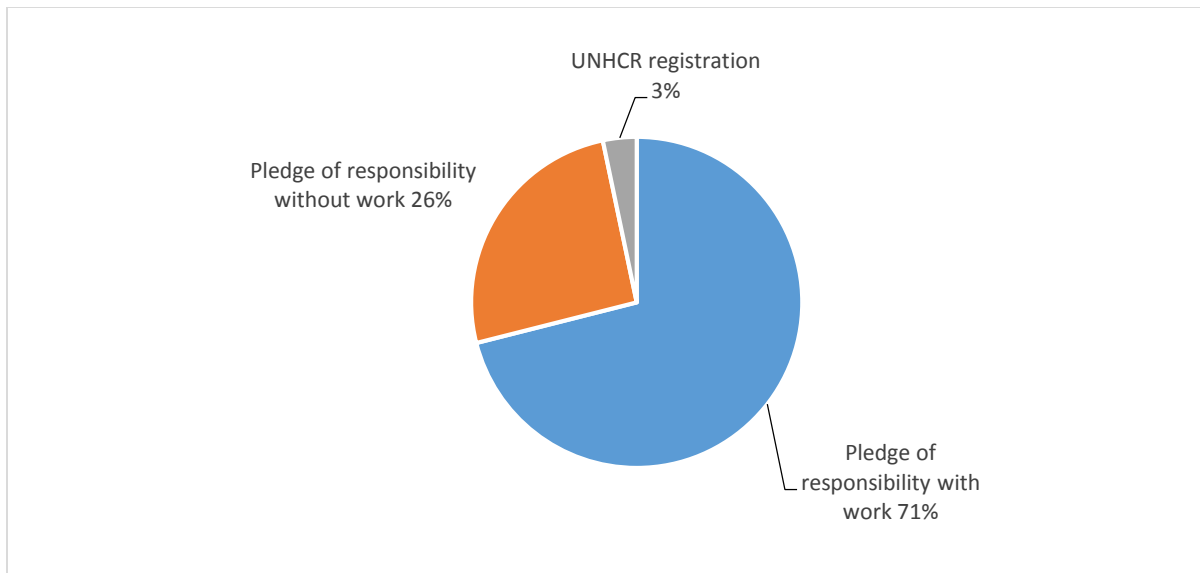


Figure 5: The basis for granting and/or regularising legal stay. March and April 2016, sample size: 152.

b. Legal stay for Palestinian refugees from Syria

The internal memo allowing Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) to renew and regularise their legal stay and exempting them from paying the applicable fees was first extended until the end of March 2016 and then until the end of April 2016.

During the reporting period, ICLA interviewed among ICLA counselling and legal assistance beneficiaries, 42 PRS who have approached the GSO to renew and/or regularise their legal stay. Among these beneficiaries, 59% were successful and were granted a visa for less than 6 months, 10% of the interviewed did not succeed in renewing. The rest of applications (31%) were still pending at the time of the interview (figure 6).

As per NRC field observations, PRS who have entered through unofficial borders and those who have overstayed a 24H or 48H transit visa do not benefit from this internal memo. In addition, in most cases PRS who have previously received a “departure order” or those who have an entry card stamped with “To return to Syria” are also excluded from the internal memo.

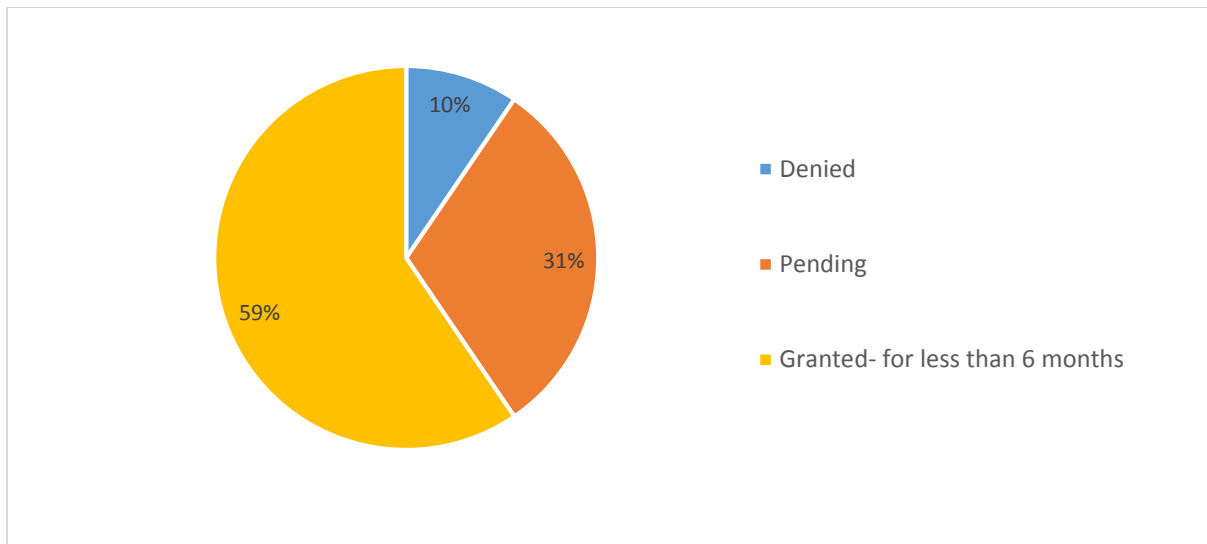


Figure 6: Outcomes of the renewal and regularisation applications for PRS. March and April 2016, sample size: 42

4. Civil documentation

a. Birth registration

The below graphs are representative of the status of 906 beneficiaries' progress across Lebanon in relation to registering the birth of their child in Lebanon prior to receiving counselling from NRC.

Out of the 906 beneficiaries, 5% (44 beneficiaries) had no birth notification. The reasons for this differ from one case to another and include lack of information, delivery at home without the presence of a certified midwife or the hospital's refusal to provide the birth notification document because the couple does not have a proof of marriage.

Of the 95% (862 beneficiaries) who have a birth notification, 58% (529 beneficiaries), completed the second step of the process by approaching a *Mukhtar* and managed to get a birth certificate.

Based on ICLA fieldwork, the third step of the birth registration process is where refugees report encountering the most problems. While 22% (203 beneficiaries) completed the *Nofous* step, only 4% (34 beneficiaries) succeeded in completing the Foreigner's Register step.

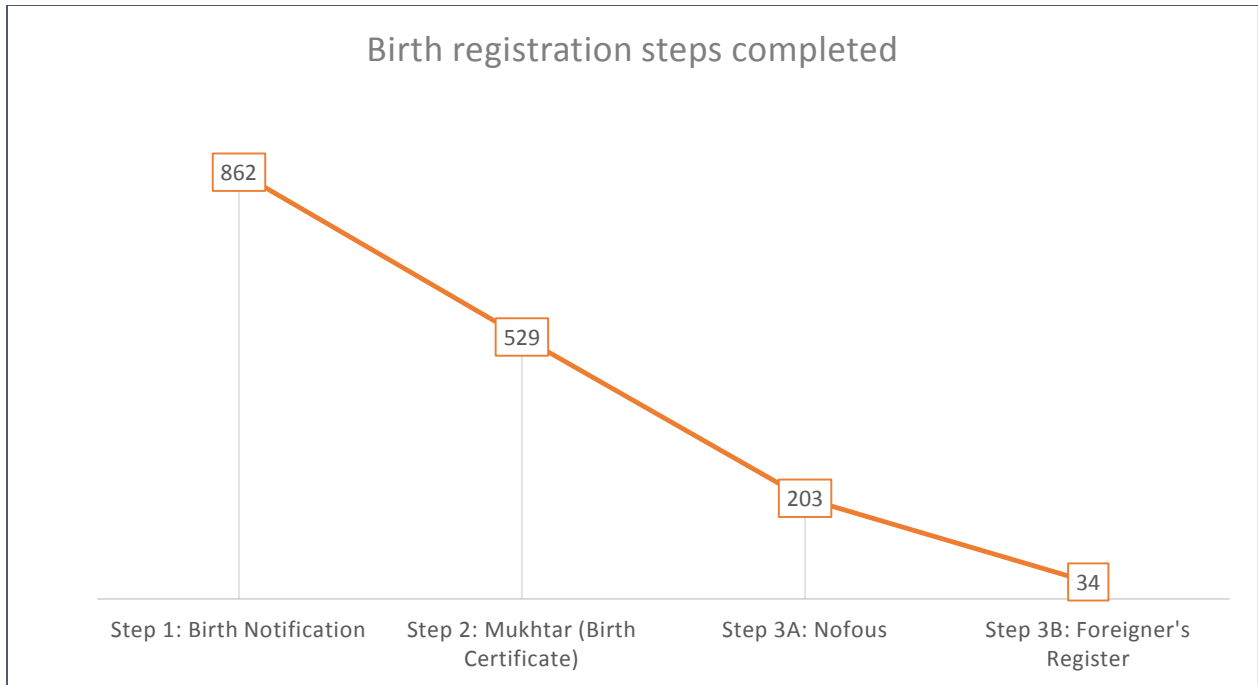


Figure 7: Birth registration steps completed. March and April 2016, sample size: 906

As illustrated in figure 8, across the nation, the most frequent reasons given by interviewed beneficiaries for not completing the birth registration procedure were as follows: lack of information (37%); lack of legal stay (22%) and birth over one year (18%). In these cases where the baby was over one year, a court process is required in addition to having the required documents to complete the birth registration.

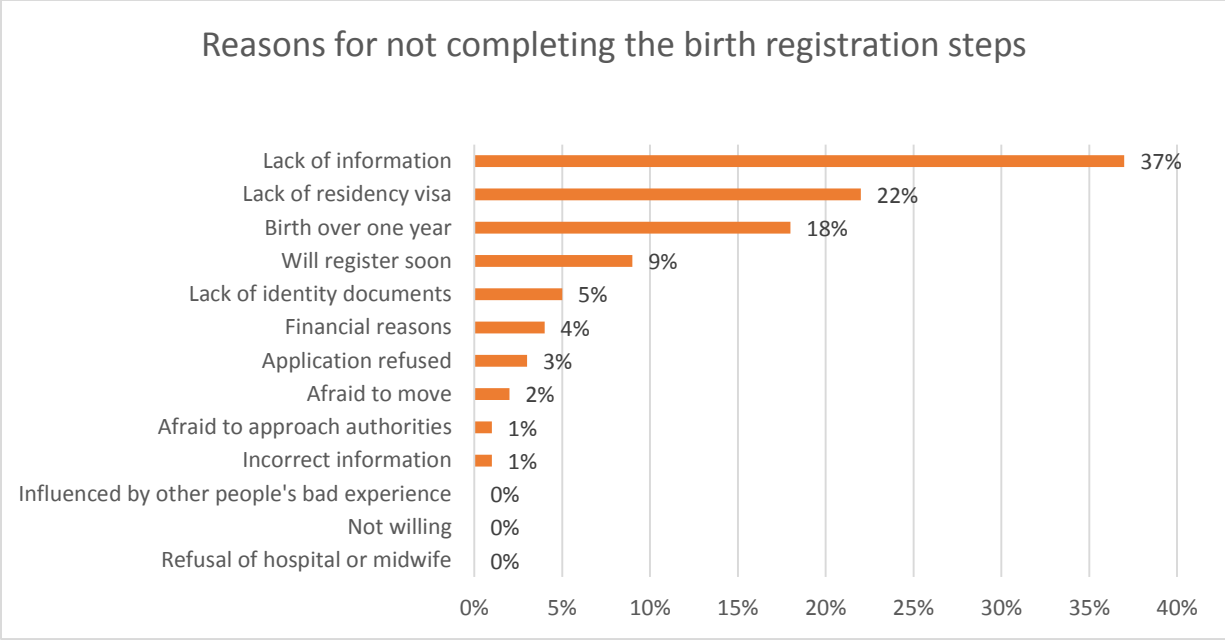


Figure 5: Reasons for not completing the birth registration steps. March and April 2016, sample size: 906

Two months after receiving counselling from NRC, 93% of the refugees counselled were able to explain clearly the process of birth registration procedures and 79% tried to act based on NRC’s advice. Among those who acted, 80% succeeded to achieve at least one additional birth registration step, as a result of NRC’s assistance. These are the results of 269 outcome monitoring interviews conducted by NRC, two months after the beneficiaries received counselling.

b. Marriage registration

Below (figure 9) is representative of the status of 433 beneficiaries’ progress across Lebanon in relation to their registration of marriage contracted in Lebanon prior to counselling from NRC.

While all the 433 beneficiaries had a kind of written marriage contract, in only 39 cases was it duly contracted by a relevant authority i.e. authorised *Sheikhs* or at the *Sharia* court. This complicates further the marriage registration procedure for the other 394 cases which have to go through the “proof of marriage” case in front of the *Sharia* court before being able to continue their marriage registration procedure.

Of the 433 beneficiaries, only approximately 7% (29 beneficiaries) approached a *Mukhtar* and succeeded in getting a marriage certificate. All of these had a marriage contract concluded at

Sharia court and/or by an authorised *Sheikh*. While only approximately 2% (8 beneficiaries) completed the *Nofous* step and less than 1% (2 beneficiaries) the Foreigner's Register step.

The most frequent reasons (figure 10) given by interviewed beneficiaries for not completing the marriage registration procedure were as follows: lack of information (48%); lack of financial means (17%); lack of residency visa (11%) and lack of relevant identification documents (4%).

During the reporting period, NRC field teams have observed in all field locations an increasing number of requests for registration of early marriage cases. In these cases NRC continues, together with other protection actors, to try to mitigate the protection risks faced by the child spouses by providing relevant legal support and/or referring to specialised child protection or gender based violence actors. In the south for example, 15 cases of early marriage were identified and referred to protection actors: seven cases included child spouses over 15 years while the other eight cases included child spouses of 15 years and below.

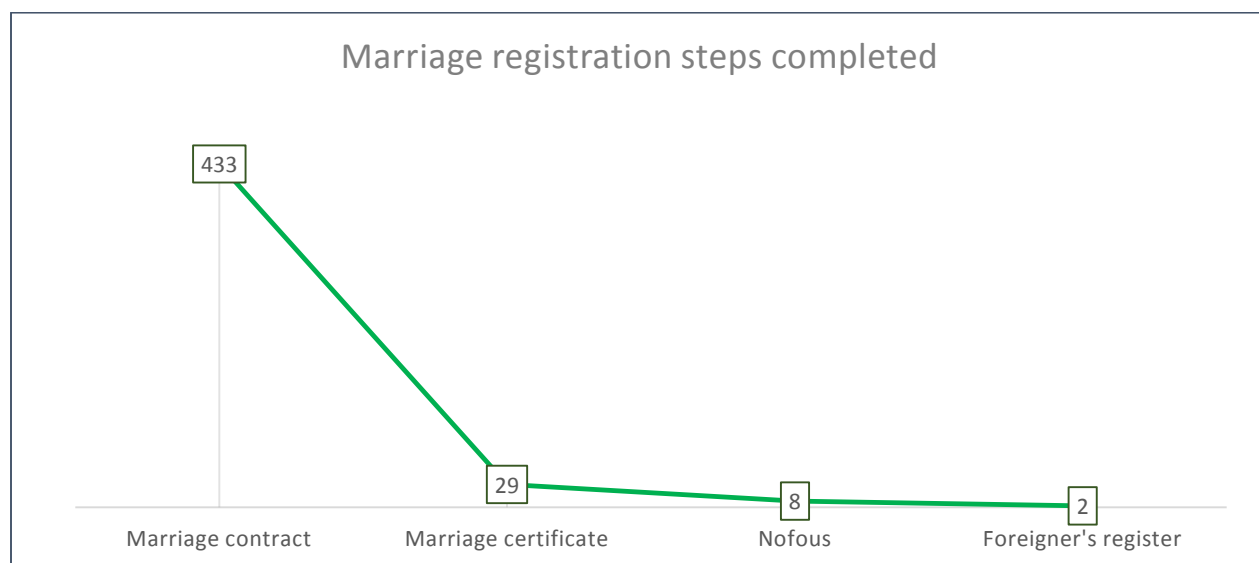


Figure 9: Marriage registration steps completed. March and April 2016, sample size: 433

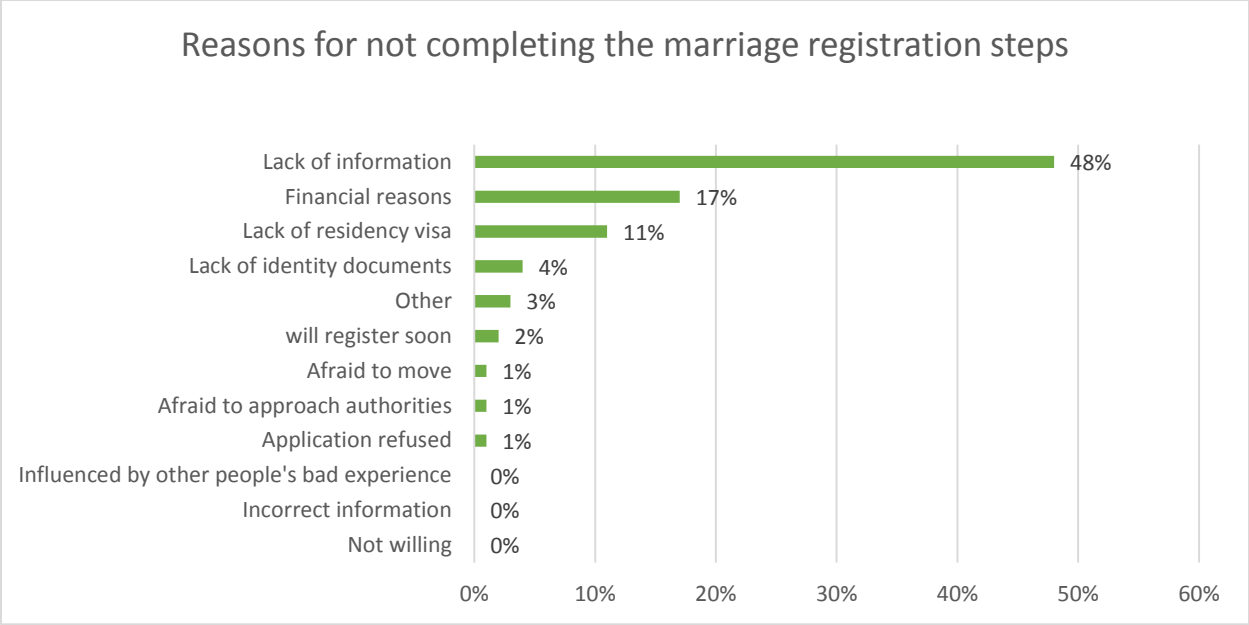


Figure 10: Reasons for not completing marriage registration steps. March and April 2016, sample size: 433

Two months after receiving counselling from NRC, 97% of the refugees counselled were able to explain clearly the process of marriage registration procedures and 73% tried to act based on NRC’s advice. Among those who acted, 61% succeeded to achieve at least one additional marriage registration step as a result of NRC’s assistance. These are the results of 433 outcome monitoring interviews conducted by NRC, two months after the beneficiaries received counselling.



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