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Socio-economic conditions and livelihood systems of settled bedouin households in north and east lebanon

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Abstract

Settled Bedouin households in Lebanon face multiple livelihood and economic pressures, yet evidence on their current living conditions remains limited. This cross-sectional study examined the socio-demographic profile, education, livelihood systems, and economic conditions of 361 settled Bedouin households (2,152 household members) in the North (Akkar) and East (Baalbeck-Bekaa) regions of Lebanon. R software was used to generate descriptive statistics, bivariate tests, and multivariable logistic regression models to assess regional differences and household factors associated with livestock rearing and crop farming.

The results revealed marked regional disparities. Households in the North were significantly smaller (mean = 4.96, SD = 1.9) than in the East (mean = 7.03, SD = 3.4) and showed higher educational attainment and literacy outcomes, while the prevalence of stateless Bedouins was higher in the East. Regional differences were also evident in the employment sector, whereby employment was strongly gendered, with men more likely to be employed than women. Livestock rearing was limited to 79 households across the sample and did not differ significantly by region. Yet, important regional differences emerged in herd structure, feed sources, and land tenure. Older household heads were more likely to engage in livestock rearing than younger ones. Crop farming was more common in the North than in the East (16.9 % vs 8.7 %). Land tenure also differed regionally: crop farmers in the East depended almost entirely on rented land, whereas crop farmers in the North cultivated a mix of owned and rented land. The likelihood of crop farming increased with household age and medium education level and household size.

Economic vulnerability was pronounced across the study population. Household-level income was generally low, with 49 % of households reporting less than USD 300 per month. Debt was also highly prevalent, affecting nearly four in five households. Among households engaged in livestock keeping and/or crop farming, agriculture remained the primary source of income despite widespread income diversification. Overall, the findings show that settled Bedouin households in Lebanon face severe socioeconomic challenges, reflected in low educational attainment, constrained livelihood opportunities, low household incomes, and widespread indebtedness, highlighting clear regional differences in education, livelihoods, and access to land.

Keywords: Bedouins, crop farming, Lebanon, livelihoods, livestock rearing, settled pastoralists, socioeconomic vulnerability

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