

UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees

Beirut, 9-16 November 2012



Highlights of the week

- The number of Syrians receiving protection and assistance in Lebanon has reached 122,000;
- UNHCR registered some 5,000 refugees this week;
- The World Food Programme (WFP) began the mapping and assessment of local grocery shops in South Lebanon in preparation for the implementation of the food voucher system in the South;
- Over 6,000 people benefited from food vouchers, winterization items, hygiene and baby kits this week through UNHCR, WFP, DRC, World Vision (WVI), Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre (CLMC), Makhzoumi Foundation and UNICEF efforts;
- UNHCR, UN agencies, and local and international NGOs started the review of the fourth Regional Response Plan funding appeal for the Syrian displacement programme;
- The contingency plans of all affected countries including Syria were reviewed at a meeting in Amman this week to ensure greater preparedness among all actors.



Registration and New Arrivals

The number of Syrians receiving protection and assistance in Lebanon through the efforts of the Government of Lebanon and UN and NGO partners has now reached 122,000 persons. Of this number, 88,794 are registered, with an estimated 33,500 people having been in contact with UNHCR to be registered.

No registration activities took place on Thursday 15 November due to the national holiday of the Islamic New Year. UNHCR registered 4,934 refugees this week at its centres in Tripoli, Al Marj, Beirut, and in Ghaziyeh. Registration capacity currently stands at more than 1,000 persons per day across Lebanon.

Current distribution of registered population is as follows:

North Lebanon: 47,116

Bekaa: 36,175

Beirut and South Lebanon: 5,503

This week, the majority of individuals registered have come from Homs, Damascus, Aleppo, Edleb and Hama.

In the Bekaa, the mobile registration team has moved to a center in Al Marj in Central Bekaa, where there are the largest numbers of Syrians to be registered. The team will be in Al Marj for the next 4-5 weeks.

In North Lebanon, registration activities continued in Tripoli where 2,926 people were registered. Following discussions with the authorities in North Lebanon, mobile registration in Wadi Khaled is now set to begin on Monday 19 November, to register those vulnerable individuals who have been unable to reach the center in Tripoli.

Registration in South Lebanon also continued through Caritas' center in Ghazieh and mobile efforts. As of 16 November, 2,432 Syrians were registered in the South, with more than 2,000 Syrians having also contacted UNHCR for appointments.

With the support of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the scheduling strategy has been modified to alleviate the pressure on the available hotlines, and is proving to be very effective. Syrians have been able to approach government Social Development Centers (SDCs) around Lebanon to request registration appointments. The advantages of using the SDCs have been two-fold; it has not only allowed refugees to request appointments closer to their areas of residence without having to rely on the hotline but it has also enabled UNHCR to reach a larger numbers of Syrians in need of registration. As a result, the number of persons pending registration is expected to increase substantially in the short-term. In parallel, registration processing capacity is also being expanded to reduce waiting times.

Protection

The majority of refugees continue to enter Lebanon through official border crossings including Masnaa in east Lebanon and Bekayaa /Aboudieh in north Lebanon. As in previous weeks, some refugees reported facing difficulty in entering Lebanon. The main reasons raised continue to be prohibitive bribes and targeted shootings on the Syrian side hindering refugees' access to Lebanon.

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) established protection monitoring desks at different distribution sites and community centers as this practice has proved successful in identifying persons with specific needs and referring

them to the appropriate partners for services. DRC also conducted home visits to newly arrived families in order to provide them with immediate assistance pending their registration and inclusion in the regular distribution mechanism. As part of these efforts, over 400 people were visited and counseled over the course of the past week.

UNICEF and Arc-en-Ciel rolled-out a plan to provide psycho-social support to 2,390 children from the refugee and host communities in the Bekaa, Wadi Khaled and Akkar. This project is mainly aimed at enhancing the mental health of vulnerable children who have been through traumatic experiences and children with specific needs (e.g. children with disabilities and separated children). UNICEF, Mercy Corps, Al Jana, and the Arab Resource Center for Popular Arts (ARCPA) will also use creative therapeutic techniques to help over 2,000 Syrian and Lebanese children and adolescents cope with displacement or stress. These include interactive theatre workshops, filmmaking workshops, film screenings followed by discussions, and festivals. In addition, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) convened a psychosocial workshop at the Dari recreational and counseling centre for families in Baalbek, with the purpose to promote integration, self-discovery, and tolerance through group games, trust building exercises, and drawing.

The work to improve Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) services continued this week. UNHCR, UNICEF and other agencies working on this portfolio met on Tuesday in the Bekaa to assess current referral and response mechanisms and develop plans to fill present gaps. These will include the provision of technical training to social workers dealing with survivors of SGBV, and the expansion of the referral of vulnerable cases to specialized services including alternative accommodation. Partners have agreed to hold SGBV meetings on a bi-weekly basis to enhance the response mechanism by including a wider group of organizations that have the expertise to provide legal, health and shelter services.

UNHCR continues to follow up with the General Security Office (GSO) on the previously announced commitments to waive renewal fees and to regularise those refugees who crossed through unofficial border crossings.

Security

The security situation in Lebanon remained calm this week. Despite reported security problems in Sidon, UNHCR and partner agencies were able to continue both registration and distribution activities.

Distribution

UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP), DRC, World Vision (WVI) and Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre (CLMC), Makhzoumi Foundation and UNICEF continue to assist Syrian refugees throughout Lebanon through distribution of essential food and non-food items, with a particular focus on winterization items as temperatures continue to drop.

In Tripoli, the first day of the November round of distribution witnessed a much larger number of beneficiaries than those who were informed about the distribution by DRC, causing overcrowding and serious security and protection concerns. The November round of distribution was hence canceled and rescheduled to next Monday November 19. In order to preempt such incidents, DRC will send text messages to all families to clarify the delay and explain the gradual distribution process. DRC will also increase the number of security and crowd-control staff in order to better manage such situations should they reoccur.

In Bar Elias, Saadnayel, Brital and Baalbek in the Bekaa, World Vision and DRC ensured distribution of hygiene kits, blankets and cloths coupons to 6,000 people. IOM liaised with local NGOs to distribute carpets and blankets to 1,101 Lebanese families who recently fled Syria in Fakeha, Hermel, Labwe, Khyara, and Manara.

In Beirut, Makhzoumi Foundation distributed food coupons, hygiene and baby kits to over 100 refugees.

CLMC assisted 2,090 people (418 families) in the Bekaa, Tripoli and Sidon with food kits, hygiene kits and blankets. WFP distributed food vouchers to 6,110 (1,222 families) households throughout Lebanon. WFP ALSO began the mapping and assessment of local grocery shops in South Lebanon in preparation for the implementation of the food voucher system in the area.

Education

The French/English curriculum followed in Lebanese public schools continues to present a challenge for Syrian refugee children. Save the Children International (SCI) and War Child Holland offered remedial classes and extra-curricular support to Syrian refugee children at different Child Friendly Spaces in Akkar and Tripoli. At these same centers, War Child Holland also provided psycho-social support sessions to children between 10 and 15 years old to help them adapt to their new environment. These sessions are offered over a three month cycle and include group therapy through games. Amel Association also offered remedial classes to Syrian refugee children at its community centers in Beirut, Bazourieh and Tyre.



Syrian refugee children participating in recreational activities offered at Child Friendly Space in Baalbek. ©UNHCR E. Lima

A total of 8,470 Syrian refugee children have so far enrolled in Lebanese public schools through the efforts of UNHCR and SCI. UNICEF continues to support refugee children who have not yet registered with UNHCR and assisted 2,600 of them in the Bekaa and the North with the full education grant: school bags, school uniforms, school feels, and stationary.

Additionally, UNICEF has mapped out 33 Lebanese public schools with the highest concentration of Syrian refugee students in north Lebanon and the Bekaa valley. In an effort to increase integration of Syrian refugee children and reduce bullying UNICEF provided both Lebanese and Syrian children in these schools –some 10,461 individuals in total- with education grants.

Health

Primary health care (PHC) services -including doctor consultations, diagnostic tests, vaccinations, family planning, medication prescription (acute and chronic) and treatments- continue to be provided to Syrian refugees at reduced

rates through local PHC centres in east, south and north Lebanon. Additionally, over the past week, mobile medical units rotated in Wadi Khaled and Akroum and provided free consultations, treatment and referral to PHC centres.

UNHCR health experts visited Wadi Khaled where they assessed some of the PHC centres and hospitals such as the Makased PHC centre, Notre Dame de la Paix Hospital, and the Machha Medical center. The assessment aimed to review the various health services provided to the refugees, the problems refugees encounter in terms of accessibility and availability of the medical services and the challenges faced by the health centres. Some of the challenges include the difficulty for refugees to commute to health centres. Pregnant refugee women who present themselves for deliveries also often had a poor antenatal care record prior to fleeing their home country in Syria. Health actors are now exerting every effort to provide health services in various specialties including obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, otolaryngology, family medicine, dermatology, cardiology, orthopaedics, urology, ophthalmology, rheumatology, neonatology, and physiotherapy. Additionally, clinics stay open till fairly late hours of the day (21h00). Meanwhile, vaccinations/immunizations continue to be provided by the Ministry of Public Health.

As winter is approaching, health professionals reported an increased number of cases with respiratory diseases and the flu. IMC worked to raise awareness among the refugee community about the disease, means of transmission, prevention and treatment in order to prevent the exacerbation of the situation.

In parallel, IMC and partners referred people in need of hospitalization to different hospitals in the North or Bekaa. UNHCR and IMC continued to cover 85% of the hospitalization cost for refugees. Patients who are unable to cover the remaining 15% of the cost are referred to other agencies such as the Coalition of NGOs, Arab Medical Union (AMU), and Islamic Relief.

Shelter

The most pressing priority for UNHCR, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), DRC, Premiere Urgence-Aide Medicale Internationale (PU-AMI) and other partners working on shelter is the provision of immediate shelter renovations to protect refugees from the cold weather.

NRC continued to seal off unfinished houses using plastic sheeting and wooden frames, namely in Aarsal and Akkar where the weather conditions have already become particularly severe. Additionally, as a considerable number of refugee families are hosted by the local community, NRC continued to rehabilitate Lebanese families' homes in Aarsal, Saadnayel and Fakeha as a means to support both the refugee and host communities.

A shelter option also meant to benefit both refugees as well as host communities in the long term is the pre-fabricated houses (shelter boxes). DRC and NRC are working to identify appropriate vacant pieces of land where these quickly-built single family dwellings can be constructed and kept for the benefit of locals when Syrians are able to return home. Some 15 boxes have been built in Akkar, Wadi Khaled, and Saadnayel.

UNHCR has also started a two-month rent assistance pilot project targeting a hundred of the most vulnerable families in Tripoli and its surroundings. A range of 150-300USD will be provided to families depending on their size. In the meantime, the provision of cash to landlords to accommodate refugee families who cannot afford to pay the rent continued. DRC assessed the rent needs of 1,000 people between Kab Elias in the Bekaa, Tripoli and Koura. Over the course of the past week, 100 people benefited from cash for rent while assessment continues to determine other families entitled for this service.

Water and Sanitation

The implementation of the different water, sanitation and hygiene activities started in north and east Lebanon. Action Contre la Faim (ACF) constructed latrines for five of the seven newly built temporary shelters (T-shelter) as a pilot project that will later inform further similar efforts. NRC is also coordinating with the Italian organization CISP to construct latrines for recently built T-shelters in Wadi Khaled. Next steps include the distribution of water filters, the establishment of water tanks and pipelines and the launch of hygiene awareness campaigns among the refugee community in the North, Bekaa, Beirut and the South. These projects are scheduled to begin within the coming weeks in areas where there are concentrations of refugees.

For more information on Syrian displacement in Lebanon, please visit the Lebanon page on the webportal: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>. There you will find facts, figures, and 'who does what', as well as updates on food and non-food items distributed per area and by agency.