

UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees

Beirut, December 7-14, 2012



Highlights of the week

- Some 6,600 Syrian refugees have been registered with UNHCR this week;
- Over 45,000 (8,000 families) people received winterization items, as well as World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers, food parcels for newly arrived families, hygiene and baby kits this week;
- UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson visited the UNHCR registration centre in Ghaziyeh, south Lebanon and praised Lebanon for maintaining open borders for refugees;



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Registration and New Arrivals

Over 156,000 Syrian refugees receive protection and assistance from the Government of Lebanon, UN and NGO partners. Of this number, some 115,000 have been registered by UNHCR and 41,000 are scheduled to be registered.

Through registration centers in Tripoli, Beirut, the Bekaa and south Lebanon, UNHCR registers approximately 1,500 refugees daily. The majority come from Homs, Aleppo and Damascus.

Current distribution of the registered population is as follows:

North Lebanon: 59,020
Bekaa: 45,969
Beirut and South: 10,223

Protection

Following the formal launch of the government's Syrian refugee response plan in early December, the donor community held technical meetings with government representatives to exchange feedback and comments. As previously agreed, the Prime Minister will convene a follow-up meeting next week to move forward with the plan.

New arrivals continue to come from Damascus, Homs and Aleppo mainly as a result of insecurity in those areas. Reports of bribes, harassment and targeted shootings on the Syrian side continue to hinder access into Lebanon. This has resulted in a decreased number of people flowing into Wadi Khaled and Akroum. However numbers of new arrivals remain stable coming from the Bekaa. Several families are settling in border areas due to their proximity to Syria and because of acquaintances or family members already residing there. In Mashari al Qaa, one of the border areas in the Bekaa, 86% of refugees reported feeling insecure due to the intermittent violence spilling over into Lebanon and stray bullets and shelling. Border villages in the North also succumb to regular shelling.

UNHCR and partner agencies are working to launch a birth registration awareness campaign aimed at alerting refugee parents of the urgent need to register their children at birth. This will ensure that children are eligible for the Syrian nationality, and will help facilitate their registration with UNHCR for assistance. Information campaigns will follow in the coming months to warn refugees on the risks of not officially registering their children.

Security

The security situation in north Lebanon returned to normal following deadly clashes in Tripoli last week. This enabled the Northern International Highway connecting Tripoli to the rest of north Lebanon to re-open, allowing staff to better access and more efficiently assist refugees. Shelling from Syria, however, unfortunately continues to affect border villages. This week, Debbabiyeh was subjected to shelling, but no casualties were reported.

The Mashari al Qaa area in the Bekaa was reportedly fired on from the Syrian side of the border and Syrian troops reportedly entered Lebanon. The shooting reportedly targetted a Lebanese home that reportedly blocked the Syrian Army's view, no casualties or injuries were reported.

Distribution

Distribution of winter blankets, warm clothing, fuel coupons and stoves remains a priority, as UNHCR and partners prepare refugees for the cold months to come.

Some 45,000 people (over 8,000 families) received winterization items, as well as World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers, food parcels for newly arrived families, hygiene and baby kits this week.

UNHCR works with WFP, ECHO, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), World Vision (WVI) and Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (CLMC) to facilitate distribution in the North and Bekaa. In the South, CLMC and Sheild distribute to families in Tyre, Nabatiye and Bint Jbeil.

Education

There are approximately 10,000 Syrian refugee children enrolled in the Lebanese public school system, benefitting from UNHCR and partners' education support.

UNHCR is working with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) as well as other education partners to coordinate and harmonize the education response. Issues include providing access to school classrooms for the Accelerated Learning Programme (ACLP), discussing ways to monitor children for protection issues during school hours and coordinating standard and informative teachers' trainings.

UNHCR and UNICEF conducted assessments in north Lebanon to map needs, monitor the learning environment and address any protection issues. Many registered Syrian children are choosing to attend schools offering the Syrian curriculum instead of enrolling in the formal Lebanese public school system. UNHCR is exploring ways to monitor and support these schools, and is hoping to enroll these children in remedial classes or the ACLP so to eventually integrate them into the formal education system.

Remedial classes remain an important component of the education strategy, helping Syrian students adjust to the English and French language curricula used in Lebanese schools. Caritas and Mouvement Social offer remedial classes through six schools in Tripoli, helping over 120 children. In south Lebanon, Sheild commenced English courses in Tyre, Nabatiyeh and Bint Jbeil for children aged 6-13 while Amel supports some 200 students with English, Arabic and math classes in Tyre, Bazourieh and Haret Hareik.

Recent assessments revealed that in some areas in south Lebanon, especially Bazourieh, Syrian parents are still hesitant to send their children to school. This is in part because they do not feel comfortable enrolling their children in gender-mixed classes at the Lebanese schools, and also because they fear their children will be bullied or discriminated against. UNHCR and partners continue to stress the importance of maintaining their children's education during displacement. Remedial classes offer a smaller and more friendly setting for parents unwilling to enroll their children in the public school system.

Health

Over 1,500 consultations, referrals, vaccinations, diagnostic tests and medications were provided to Syrian refugees this week through UNHCR and the International Medical Corps (IMC).

Daily visits to the Primary Health Care centres (PHC) and hospitals ensure refugees receive the necessary medical assistance. Simultaneously, to improve refugees' livelihood, IMC is conducting health education courses through the PHCs, educating over 460 refugees this week on a variety of health and hygiene topics. This is especially important as the number of hospital admissions is increasing with the arrival of cold weather, mainly due to an increase in respiratory tract infections. Proper personal health care will help people stay healthy during winter.

Some 270 refugee patients were admitted to hospitals this week across the country, including the first patients in south Lebanon, mainly in Tyre and Nabatiyeh.

The mental health of refugees remains a concern. Many refugees are traumatized. Mental health outreach activities being conducted through the PHCs are well-received, offering exercises that help refugees feel safer and more secure. For those who are unable to reach centers due to the security situation or physical disabilities, UNHCR and partners send teams to visit these vulnerable people.

Shelter

This week saw heavy rains, highlighting the urgent need to speed-up preparation of refugee shelters for winter.

Winter rehabilitation efforts focus on 'sealing off' shelters by adding plastic sheeting, covering up holes where water can seep in, and ensuring doors and windows provide protection from strong, cold winds. So far, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has covered 50% of their target of 500 homes in Akkar and Wadi Khaled through winterization renovations. DRC is working to prepare collective shelters for winter by fixing leaks, providing heating stoves, cleaning out exhaust systems and sealing off any holes. Families living in collective shelters in Wadi Khaled are being relocated to shelter boxes in order to provide more space to receive newly arrived families during the winter.

In a pilot test, 400 households in Tripoli will receive cash assistance over a course four months to assist in paying rental fees. UNHCR is currently discussing the details of distribution and logistics, as well as finalizing bank arrangements to commence the programme in January.

In the Bekaa, Caritas and Medair distributed winterization materials for 137 tents in a settlement in Dalhamiye, giving families better protection against rain and snow. Host family homes in Majdal Anjar and Bar Elias are also being rehabilitated.

UNHCR, NRC, DRC, Handicap International (HI) and Save the Children (SCI) are coordinating the winterization response to ensure all areas of the Bekaa are covered.

Water and Sanitation

Efforts to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conditions in refugee shelters continued this week. UNHCR and Premiere Urgenc (PU-AMI) distributed water filters to 120 refugee families in Sidon, and conducted hygiene awareness sessions among over 600 registered refugees in the area. In the Bekaa, Action Contre La Faim (ACF) constructed five shared latrines at Dalhamiye tented settlements and another 20 latrines at the Jeb Jenin tented settlements.

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.