

UN INTER-AGENCY RESPONSE

MONTHLY OVERVIEW

UNHCR, JULY 2012

Highlights of the month:

- The third week of July witnessed thousands of Syrians crossing the Masna border in the Bekaa valley in response to increased unrest in Damascus.
- While UNHCR initial estimates suggested some 18,000 crossed within two days, the Office of the General Security (GSO) later reported that just over 11,000 crossed with 4,000 Syrians also returning to Syria from Lebanon during the same time period.
- Syrians continued to enter Lebanon in larger numbers than usual but with significant returns also witnessed.
- UNHCR registration centers have not witnessed any significant increase in the number of people asking to be registered. Many of the recent arrivals who were interviewed by protection teams indicated that they were coming to Lebanon for a few weeks until the situation in their home areas became more secure. Some said they were hoping to find work in Tripoli or South Lebanon.
- Meanwhile heavy fighting in Syrian areas close to the northern Lebanese border affected a number of villages and disrupted some humanitarian efforts.
- On July 10, the High Relief Commission (HRC) reported that it was unable to cover secondary health care and was running out of funds for the treatment of wounded people. This has led to an urgent and unanticipated gap in health care. UNHCR and partners are readjusting priorities to meet urgent care needs but more funding is needed.
- The Ministry of Education (MoE) announced that Syrian children without certificates from Syria cannot officially enrol in Lebanese schools. While they can attend, they will not receive accreditation. UN agencies are requesting that this decision be rescinded. Most positively, the Ministry announced that it will facilitate Syrian families' sheltering in abandoned public schools, and submitted a list of such schools to UNHCR and partners for mapping purposes.
- Government engagement on expanded shelter options urgently needed.
- Water assessments revealed troubling levels of water contamination which are to be addressed subject to available funding.
- The Regional Response Plan (RRP) remains insufficiently funded with 33% of the regional inter-agency funding requirement of US\$193 million being covered as of July 15.



Numbers

Over 34,000 displaced Syrians are currently receiving protection and assistance in Lebanon through the efforts of the Government of Lebanon and UN and NGO partners. Of this number, 31,596 are registered. This represents an increase of some 6,000 registered people since the end of June.

Several thousand Syrians crossed into Lebanon on July 18-19 following an escalation of unrest in Damascus. While the numbers have since subsided, people continue to cross in larger numbers than usual. As well Syrians are also returning to Syria on a daily basis.

According to interviews UNHCR carried out with the new arrivals, the majority are expecting to stay in Lebanon for several weeks and return to Syria when calm returns to their home areas. Based on preliminary assessments, relatively few of the most recent new arrivals are in need of humanitarian assistance at this time.

Protection and Security

Fighting in Syria continued to affect border areas in both the North and Bekaa, where many displaced Syrians are present.

In the North, daily shelling from inside Syria and responses from Lebanon involved the Dabbabiyeh, Al-nura, Aamaret El Bikat, Mashta Hammoud, Ouainat, Khirbet and Al Remaneh villages. These increased security incidents have raised tensions in Wadi Khaled. The Lebanese Cabinet approved boosting the Lebanese Army's presence along the northern border to control the area.

North Lebanon

Numbers

The flow of new arrivals into the North remains stable with approximately 500 people (60 -80 families) arriving per week. This regular flow is despite intensified tension along the Lebanese-Syrian border.

Most Syrians entering north Lebanon arrive from Homs, Qusayr and surrounding villages.

Protection

With the security situation along some areas of the Lebanese-Syrian border remaining tense and precarious, protection teams continue to prioritize monitoring the affected border villages, including Akkar, Fraidis, Tikrit, Al-Nura, Debebiyeh, and Aamaret el Bikat. Almost daily shelling from Syria hits these villages, and there are regular reports of casualties, injuries and damage to homes. UNHCR and partner staff are often unable to commute to the field resulting in delays of activities.

Meetings with Syrian families living close to the border are held to assess their physical protection, access to assistance, feeling of safety and willingness to relocate. UNHCR's protection teams also meet with local *mukhtars* and the General Security Office (GSO) officials to ensure and maintain an efficient coordination and information exchange mechanism.

Some 160 registered Syrians (31 families) are living in precarious bordering villages. Local leaders confirmed that Syrian and Lebanese families flee these villages during the night when shelling intensifies before returning to their homes in the morning.

Outreach workers regularly provide psycho-social support to all displaced Syrians with specific needs, with the last week of July seeing new cases of separated children, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), women at risk, victims of torture, child labor, disabilities and other psycho-social needs. All vulnerable people are referred to the appropriate counselors and clinics for support.

Registration

The introduction of centralized registration in June expanded in July from Akkar to Bire, Wadi Khaled. This helped reduce the waiting period from two months to one between the time of arrival of displaced Syrians and registering. An estimated 2,500 people are currently awaiting registration in this area.

Centralised registration in Tripolli which was postponed upon request of the HRC, was further postponed by the HRC in favour of conducting an initial rapid assessment. This was then halted at the end of the month, with the HRC announcing that its efforts in this regard would not continue. UNHCR is now with the consent of the government trying to initiate a centralised registration in Tripoli within the coming weeks. This requires government approval of the site selected which UNHCR hopes to receive home.

Registration in Tripolli has been through house to house visits which is considerably more time consuming than centralised registration. The need to move to the latter is critical as it is estimated that several thousand displaced Syrians in Tripoli have yet to be registered. The sooner centralized registration takes place in Tripoli, the better as it provides a faster opportunity

to monitor protection concerns, including vulnerable people with specific needs, as well as serves as a direct way to disseminate information to large numbers of the displaced population.

Logistics, including moving offices and renovations on the Amayer social development center, prevented registration activities from occurring during the last two weeks of July. Nevertheless, UNHCR and partners continued with assistance.

Distribution

Due to the success of the food voucher program in the Bekaa, and by the HRC's request, the World Food Programme (WFP) worked with UNHCR and partners on instilling the same mechanism in the North this month. After assessing over 50 local grocery shops' capacity in Akkar, WFP selected 25 to participate in the voucher system. The program will begin in Akkar in August with centralized distribution continuing in Tripoli until assessments can be made there to facilitate the system.

Additionally, following discussions between the MoE and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), the Halba and Rajm Issa schools were approved as central distribution sites. The MoE also allowed for abandoned schools in Akkar to serve as potential centralized distribution sites. Currently, WFP is providing food kits until the voucher system is in place, with UNHCR, UNFPA, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (CLMC), IOCC/Act Alliance, Muslim Aid and the Alazm Wal Saadeh Association providing and facilitating some food and all non-food item distributions. Some 6,500 people received food, hygiene and baby kits, blankets, sanitary napkins,

diapers, baby milk and mattresses in July.

While the increased amount of distribution sites help in expediting and facilitating distribution efforts, all distribution activities were suspended the last week of July due to a shortage of food kits from WFP. The reason for this is twofold: there was a shortage of warehouse space to store the kits, as well as a delayed delivery of food kits to Lebanon from Jordan. UNHCR is in talks with other suppliers to ensure this doesn't happen again, while shifting to the food voucher program will also relieve the dependency on kits.

Community Services

As displacement continues, many Syrians find opportunities for learning, recreation and fun through the Social Development Centers (SDCs). Everything from English courses and skills training activities, such as hair dressing and sewing, to day care are provided through these centers. UNHCR and partners continue to rehabilitate various centers through the North to ensure each area has a center for the community to utilize. In July, the Women's Charity League center in Halba and the Amayer SDC underwent rehabilitation.

Many activities were organized in July to lift the spirits of the displaced community and unite them with local Lebanese. This is productive as tensions increase in the North due to various security incidents. A soccer match in Mashta Hassan in the presence of the Rama *mukhtar* eased tensions and skills training classes integrate volunteers from the displaced community with Lebanese as they together educate Syrian women on recreational skills.

Education

The MoE confirmed that Syrian children can attend school. Unfortunately, and reportedly pursuant to a Council of Minister's decree, it also announced that Syrian children who came without their Syrian school certificates cannot officially enrol in school or take the final exams. As most children fled to Lebanon urgently they do not have their Syrian documents. UNHCR, UNICEF and UNESCO are seeking to have this decision rescinded.

This is important because many displaced children flee to Lebanon late in the school year disrupting their studies, and then additionally find difficulties in transferring to the Lebanese curriculum. The UN stresses the importance of continuing education despite displacement as it is important in building the confidence of these children and ensuring a positive future for them. UNHCR, Save the Children (SCS) and UNICEF work hard to provide remedial classes, recreational activities and summer courses to facilitate easy transitions to the Lebanese schools.

As such, summer provides an opportunity to build on the challenge of enrolling Syrian children for the upcoming school year. This month, SCS administered placement tests for children to join the Summer Accelerated Learning Program (SALP) that will benefit some 600 children by filling the gap of time lost from the past academic year due to displacement. SALP courses started the last week in July and will continue for the next two months.

Shelter

Shelter contingency planning to accommodate the displaced Syrian community and a potential influx

remains a top priority for UNHCR and partners.

A challenge is not only to find enough decent shelter options for displaced Syrians in need, but also to ensure that these homes and collective shelters are located in safe areas. Many border villages in Wadi Khaled endured regular shelling from Syria that forced Lebanese to flee to safer areas. For some displaced Syrians, fleeing again within Lebanon is not an option. The Freidis collective shelter, located 1.25 km from the border, is one such shelter that was deemed no longer a safe housing option. UNHCR and partners asked those living in the Freidis school to relocate to the Mounseh collective shelter; the family refused and have now left the school to an unknown location. Situations like this raise protection issues for UNHCR as it is now more difficult to ensure proper assistance and safety for these people.

In July, DRC and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) shelter activities ranging from improving the host community homes to identifying and renovating/building public spaces to host more displaced Syrian families continued.

Lebanese families are still generously hosting Syrians who have fled to the North, despite the already impoverished conditions they live in. NRC targets vulnerable host families in need of shelter support and provides them with payments to rehabilitate their homes. NRC also distributes shelter tool kits that include shovels, electrical wires and wheelbarrows to help families conduct minor rehabilitations on their own.

DRC completed renovations on the Ibra collective shelter, which can host up to 120 people (24 families), and identified

two additional shelters in Tekrit with the capacity to together host some 380 people (56 families) for potential rehabilitation. Renovations include repairing windows and sewage systems, installing doors, roofs, bathrooms and mosquito nets. DRC also conducted needs assessments on a collective shelter at the abandoned Dr. Hussainy Hospital in Tripoli.

Prefabricated houses are also a shelter option, and UNHCR with DRC completed construction on two in the backyard of the Fraidise collective shelter. These houses host provide additional shelter space within secure and renovated structures. Discussions to construct similar prefabricated houses in the Ibra collective shelter are underway.

Government engagement on expanding shelter options is urgently needed.

Water and Sanitation (WASH)

Meeting the WASH needs and gaps provides an additional challenge. ACTED completed a report in July assessing the quality, quantity and access of water for the most vulnerable displaced. Assessments revealed that a number of villages in Akkar, Wadi Khaled and Tripoli have troubling levels of water contamination at the source, tanks and faucets. UNHCR and partner organizations are now devising a WASH action plan to remedy these gaps.

Health

On July 10, the HRC announced it would stop covering the cost of secondary health care due to a lack of funding.

The discontinuation of systematic government support for secondary health care has led to critical gaps which UNHCR, IMC and other agencies are trying to address. A shortage of funding

makes this extremely difficult. UNHCR and the International Medical Corps (IMC) are presently covering the costs of life-saving medical care and hospitalization for registered displaced Syrians. Additionally, some lifesaving cases were referred to the Qatari Red Crescent. Unregistered cases are referred to the Coalition of Charity NGOs working in the North. This is, however, not a durable solution as UNHCR and IMC can only intervene for exceptional and urgent cases. This decision will have a severe impact on UNHCR and partner agencies' ability to assist those displaced with such needs and UNHCR is actively advocating for additional funding sources to fill this gap as soon as possible.

While the issue of secondary health care remains a challenge, the provision of primary health care must continue as many Syrians are in need of consultations, diagnostic tests, medication, and vaccinations. Three centers in the North cover primary health care: the Makassed primary health care center (PHCC), the Machha center and the Karameh center in Tripoli. Since September 2011, over 3,000 consultations and diagnostic tests were administered by UNHCR and IMC supported centers.

Health education is a vital need among the displaced community as well. In July, IMC regularly conducted health awareness sessions on subjects including personal hygiene, diarrhea and food safety, child health, nutrition for pregnant women, breastfeeding, safe motherhood, immunization and oral health. Medical Mobile Units travel around the North to facilitate these sessions. UNFPA also conducted discussions this month on reproductive

health and gender-based violence among Syrian women and girls.

Also of note in July were IMC's efforts to integrate mental health into the primary health care program. Primary health care workers began training on Gender-based Violence management and other psychological first aid in order to identify and provide psycho-social support to those in need. This, in conjunction with the regularly monitoring visits that protection teams conduct during registration, distribution and outreach visits, will enable UNHCR and partner agencies to more extensively and thoroughly assist the displaced population.

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)

QIPs are proving more and more successful in the North as they are helping displaced Syrians better integrate with the Lebanese community, and are offering job opportunities for youth from both communities.

One project, a fish stand in Bebnine, began initial rehabilitations this month, including installing windows, washing sinks and repairing plumbing so to ensure clean and sanitary conditions for fisherman to sell their fish. DRC recruited Lebanese community members to assist in the renovations.

The purchase and installation of generators at the Tal Abbas agricultural cooperative and the Qarha social development center were finalized in July.

Furthermore, significant progress was made on the Al Rama playground; the project will be completed by the end of the month.

Assistance in the Bekaa Valley

Protection

UNHCR and partners agencies invested particular efforts in monitoring new arrivals, assessing needs and urgently responding to vulnerable cases, such as victims of torture, SGBV, unaccompanied minors and arrest/detention cases. Additionally, following the large influx of Syrians arriving on July 18 and 19, protection teams conducted daily border monitoring to record and analyze movement across the borders.

Two other significant challenges facing UNHCR, DRC and partner organizations in the Bekaa: the inability to access all families due to security (especially in north Bekaa), and the need to improve the referral mechanism regarding protection-related cases. Identifying and following-up on protection needs through registration, distribution, and post-distribution exercises is one way UNHCR and partners tried to maintain thorough assistance in July.

Handicap International held training sessions with service providers on the best ways to deal with people with special needs.

Numbers

Unrest in Damascus prompted several thousand Syrians to cross into Lebanon since July 18. The majority of new arrivals reported to be staying in Lebanon for several weeks with the desire of returning home when calm is restored. Preliminary assessments revealed that most of the newcomers are not in need of humanitarian assistance at this time with many media reporting the new influx to include middle and upper class Damascenes fleeing to Beirut and surrounding village resorts. Many civil conflicts have seen wealthy displaced reduced to poverty

after prolonged violence, and temporary trips have the potential of turning into an extended relocation. As border movement continued following the 18,000 influx, field teams noted a profile shift from the more affluent population to families arriving in taxis and vans. UNHCR works on contingency plans for all scenarios and situations to accommodate the potential needs and numbers of future displacement. Numbers of cross-border flow have returned to a normal rate.

Since the influx, UNHCR field teams maintained regular monitoring of the borders. The incoming cars, carrying a few hundred people per hour, were matched with the same amount of cars returning to Syria.

Registration

The total number of registered Syrians in the Bekaa stands at 11,002; this is an increase of over 3,000 people since June.

On average 200-400 people (40-80 families) arrive per week, with the exception of last week's large influx, where some 1,500 arrived and remained in the Bekaa.

In July, registration was conducted in Hermel, Baalbeck, west Bekaa and Zahle. UNHCR and partner organizations continuously disseminate information to the displaced population about where registration is taking place and the assistance provided. Centralized registration has helped reach displaced Syrians dispersed across the expanse of the Bekaa.

Distribution

July's distribution efforts in the Bekaa reached both registered and unregistered displaced Syrians as well as displaced Lebanese. UNHCR, DRC, WFP,

World Vision, UNFPA and Action Contre la Faim, IOCC/ActAlliance assisted 8,125 Syrians (1,625 displaced) and 1,735 Lebanese returnees (347 families) this month. Among the items distributed were food kits (Baalbeck, Hermel and Qaa), food vouchers (Aarsal, Al Sahel and central Bekaa), hygiene and baby kits, and sanitary napkins.

DRC continues to support local actors in the Bekaa by providing logistical support for all distribution centers and through covering the rental fees of warehouses in Saadnayel and Kab Elias. Increasing the capacity of local actors is a strategy to ensure quick, efficient and thorough distribution activities. This will be increasingly important should the numbers of new arrivals rise, posing a challenge for UNHCR and partner organizations to reach everyone.

Education

One of the main focuses this month with agencies contributing to the education sector in the Bekaa was identifying new families with children and ensuring enrolment into the appropriate classes and educational activities. As part of this initiative, SCS conducted awareness sessions for parents to disseminate information about relevant activities in each village and also held a coordination meeting with the MoE to discuss reinforce the budget and capacity of partner organizations. Furthermore, SCS mapped the Bekaa in July for operational schools with a capacity of enrolling Syrian students in the upcoming school year.

Additional preparations for the academic year include educational summer camps provided by UNICEF and the SALP administered by SCS. As in the North, UNHCR and partners are working to assist children in adapting to the

Lebanese school curriculum and in filling education gaps from displacement.

The Bekaa is also affected by the MoE's decision to not provide accreditation for Syrian students completing the school year in Lebanon, and prohibiting them from sitting for official exams.

While children up to grade 7 are not affected by this decision, UNHCR is still advocating with the MoE to provide accreditation and additionally developed an information campaign among local school principals briefing them on the efforts needed from their end to facilitate the Syrian children's enrolment.

Health

In the Bekka the humanitarian community has covered primary and secondary health care.

Primary health care services continued in July through eight centers that provide consultations, lab and radiology tests, medications and vaccinations.

Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center (CLMC) also provides similar services via medical mobile clinics that visit villages across the Bekaa. Assistance is provided mostly to children and many diseases that are detected are treatable but in need of assistance so to prevent severe damages. Such diseases include anemia, dyspnea, gastrointestinal disease and hyperthermia.

Another accomplishment in July was IMC's efforts to distribute health information brochures through UNHCR's registration; DRC and NRC outreach workers and hospitals. The brochures are updated every two months and provide information on health care providers and services. With the

vastness of the Bekaa posing a challenge to properly assist and reach out to displaced Syrians, such campaigns assure information flow between agencies and beneficiaries.

In parallel to the direct assistance provided to Syrians, IOCC/ACTAlliance worked in July to train Lebanese health workers in the Bekaa with the theoretical and practical knowledge of nutrition in emergencies. Trainings were conducted in cooperation with the American University of Beirut and aim to preserve the health and nutritional status of vulnerable groups by building the capacity of Lebanese health workers.

As in the north, there is a serious shortage of funds to sufficiently address secondary health care needs.

Shelter

Identifying shelter solutions has been a priority from the onset, but in light of the recent influx of thousands of Syrians to the Bekaa it became a pressing priority in July.

UNHCR, DRC and NRC thoroughly mapped and assessed the region in order to locate public structures with the potential of hosting large numbers of displaced people. Following such exercises, UNHCR and partners then contact the appropriate government authorities for rehabilitation approval. DRC selected two possible collective shelters in July, one in Marj al-Zohor and one in Majdal Anjar with the overall capacity of hosting 110 people (22 families). Three large collective shelters in Aarsal and Al Fakiha also began in July hosting up to 175 people (35 families) each.

The MoE submitted a list of abandoned schools to be assessed by NGOs in the

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.

Bekaa. Additionally, while teams are ready now to assess the abandoned schools it remains necessary to receive approval from the MoE to access the schools for assessment purposes; this will delay mapping activities. Another challenge faced in July is the need to move displaced families living in the Al Makassed school in Bar Elias before the start of the upcoming school year.

Renovating host family homes is an additional measure NRC has undertaken to provide shelter solutions. Homes in Aarsal and Baalbeck were assessed in July.

Again, as in the north, government engagement of current shelter needs and contingency planning is critically required.

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)

Two new QIPs were selected in July for the Bekaa: the maintenance of a children play space at the Ras El Ain/Baalbeck public garden and the rehabilitation of toilets in the Al Makassed school in Bar Elias. QIPs continue to be a successful venture for UNHCR and partners, assisting and uniting both the displaced and host communities.

Rehabilitation started on a mobile theater in Baalbeck and the Sawa Association trained ‘animateurs’ to

facilitate recreational activities. Furthermore, custom-made garbage bins were procured for Aarsal as part of a QIP proposed by the Municipality.