

# UN INTER-AGENCY RESPONSE

## WEEKLY UPDATE

### Highlights of the week:

- *Over 3,500 Syrian refugees registered this week bringing the total number to 46,509 with an additional 18,532 scheduled to be registered.*
- *A new mobile registration centre opened in Baalbeck to accommodate the increasing number of Syrian refugees who are settling in east Lebanon.*
- *Following needs assessments, UNHCR in coordination with Caritas is expanding its programme to reach Syrian refugees in south Lebanon.*
- *UNHCR and education partners continued the education awareness campaign to encourage Syrian parents to enrol their children for the upcoming academic year, and Lebanese public school directors to be inclusive.*
- *WFP completed the training on the food voucher system for grocery shop owners in Tripoli. Food vouchers will be used for the next round of distribution.*
- *UNHCR and its UN and international and national partners are currently working on a revision to the Regional Response Plan (RRP3). This is based on a planning projection (based on current events and past trends) of up to 120,000 Syrian displaced in Lebanon by end of December 2012.*

### Numbers

Over 65,000 Syrians refugees are receiving protection and assistance in Lebanon through the efforts of the Government of Lebanon and UN and NGO partners. Of this number, 46,509 are registered, with an additional 18,532 people having been in contact with UNHCR to be registered. Following assessments, UNHCR expects to register an additional 7,000 Syrians (1,400 families) in south Lebanon in the coming weeks.

### Protection and Security

An increasing number of Syrians are reporting difficulty to leave Syria due to checkpoints on the Syrian side. Several families reported being shot at while crossing the border, while others said

that Syrian authorities are only allowing men to cross, turning away women and children. As a result, many Syrians are resorting to crossing the border illegally.

Tragically a Syrian refugee committed suicide this week in Zahle. UNHCR is following up to determine the circumstances. The incident is a sad and telling illustration of the need for constant outreach to those with specific needs.

This week, four wounded Syrians were admitted to hospitals.

### North Lebanon

#### Protection

The security of refugees living in border areas is a major concern to UNHCR, as

UNHCR 31 AUG-7 SEPT 2012



the villages of Al-Nura and Debbabiyeh continue to be affected by shelling from the Syrian side. More than 80 displaced Syrians live in these two villages and approximately 300 more live nearby along the Lebanese-Syrian border. Shelling used to occur only at night, causing residents to flee but return the following day. Many are now expressing fears as shellings during the day are becoming more frequent. Outreach workers from the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) met with Syrian refugee families living in these villages to assess their safety and willingness to relocate. Unlike previous assessments which found that many families were reluctant to move, the majority are now open to relocation.

Tension between the Lebanese host community, local authorities and displaced Syrians living in the Rama shelter in Wadi Khaled was reported. Local Lebanese, who are poor and have been hosting Syrians for over a year, feel left out of assistance efforts. Syrians reported threats of eviction and harassment from locals. UNHCR and DRC are facilitating dialogue between the communities and developing a strategy to address the issues raised by the host Lebanese in an effort to ease tensions and provide needed support to host families.

DRC outreach workers met with newly arrived Syrian families who described a number of obstacles in crossing into Lebanon, including women and children being turned away at the border, families being shot at while crossing into Wadi Khaled and others being arrested and/or beaten en route. UNHCR and DRC will continue to closely monitor the flow of new arrivals in order to address protection needs.

#### *Registration/Numbers*

Centralized registration in Tripoli is quickly gaining momentum, with large numbers of displaced Syrians travelling across north Lebanon for registration at the centre. A total of 1,606 individuals (357 families) were registered in Tripoli this week bringing the total number of registered Syrian refugees in the North to 25,972. An additional 4,534 individuals are awaiting registration.

UNHCR recently observed a significant number of people not showing up for their appointments, particularly following the unrest in Tripoli. Registration teams are noting the profile of these families and following-up to assess the reasons behind this trend, which may have to do with the cost of travelling to registration sites and/or fear of being arrested at checkpoints while commuting to Tripoli.

#### *Distribution*

Centralized distribution resumed in the North following delays in the delivery of non-food items (NFIs) due to the security situation in Tripoli.

Displaced Syrians in Akkar and Wadi Khaled received World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers, WFP food kits, hygiene and baby kits through distribution exercises at the Rajm Issa and Machta Hamoud schools. A total of 4,480 individuals (896 families) were assisted, with 201 of these families being newly registered. This was the last distribution exercise to take place at these schools as they are operational and will need to reopen for the academic year. UNHCR and partners have identified and are assessing four new potential sites in Wadi Khaled to accommodate distribution once school starts. DRC will also implement a new SMS system informing refugees about

the date, time and location of distribution activities.

A total of 2,085 displaced Syrians (417 families) were assisted with WFP food kits, UNHCR hygiene and baby kits and UNFPA sanitary napkins in Tripoli. WFP and DRC completed the assessments for establishing the food voucher system in Tripoli, which will commence during the next round of distributions.

UNHCR is searching for a new Tripoli distribution location as the current site is located in an area often affected by clashes. Five new locations were identified and are being assessed for capacity and safety.

#### *Education*

Returning to school for the new academic year presents an opportunity for Syrian refugee children to regain a sense of normalcy in their lives.

UNHCR, UNICEF and Save the Children International (SCI) launched an information campaign to help increase the enrolment rate.. The campaign informs families that UNHCR and partners' will cover school fees and provide children with the necessary supplies and uniforms. UNHCR and SCI also started distributing information leaflets at centralized distribution and registration sites, outlining the available educational services in the North.

Families in Akkar and Tripoli, however, are still hesitant to enroll their children, expressing concerns over the French curriculum used in Lebanese public schools. UNHCR, DRC and MoSA outreach workers met with 108 displaced families, assuring them that with the help of local NGOs, remedial classes will continue in the North to help

Syrian children adapt to the different curriculum.

#### *Health*

UNHCR and the International Medical Corps (IMC) continued to seek alternative means for covering the cost of secondary health care. IMC remains the focal point for all hospital admissions, with urgent cases being referred to the Qatari Red Crescent (QRC), Arab Medical Doctors and the Islamic Coalition of NGOs.

This week, 39 cases in need of life saving treatment were admitted to hospitals in the North under QRC coverage. Islamic Relief (IR) also started covering medical bills up to 500,000 LL for both registered and unregistered Syrians at the Makased Primary Health Care Centre in Wadi Khaled.

Ensuring the mental health of displaced Syrians also remains an important component of the health care programme. IMC social workers conducted a mental health awareness session for Syrians waiting to register at the Tripoli centre. The session discussed various causes of stress and the factors affecting psychological well-being. Among the chief reported causes of stress are difficulty in adapting to life in Lebanon, dealing with the loss of family members in Syria, worrying about those left behind as well as fears over an uncertain future and unemployment. Counseling includes stress prevention tips. Mental health awareness sessions will continue once a week in Tripoli.

The issue of unemployment was also reported to be affecting family cohesion, leading to changing dynamics within the household. Displaced Syrian men, unable to find employment opportunities, are frustrated that they can no longer

provide for their families. This frustration is leading to domestic violence and was observed as a way of reinstating their authority as head of the house. UNHCR and partners are identifying cases requiring further assistance, referring them to the specialized partners for help and pursuing protection and prevention interventions.

### *Shelter*

Providing shelter for the growing number of refugees in north Lebanon continues to pose a challenge for UNHCR and partners.

Rehabilitation started on the Tekrit School, which has a hosting capacity for 47 families and will accommodate displaced Syrians currently living in operational schools. Renovations will be completed by next week and include fixing the plumbing and electrical systems as well as providing solar heaters, refrigerators, gas cookers and a washing machine.

The availability of local families to host refugees is dwindling as the displacement lengthens and the number of refugees increase. DRC identified four new abandoned buildings in Akroum, Kherbet Daoud, Halba and Hayzouk to help provide collective shelter for up to 380 people (76 families). DRC is also conducting a mapping exercise in Wadi Khaled and Akroum to identify locations that can accommodate prefabricated boxes, each capable of hosting one family. Three boxes are currently being installed in the backyard of the Quachlak community centre.

### **Assistance in the Bekaa Valley**

#### *Registration/Numbers*

A total of 19,179 displaced Syrians are registered in the Bekaa, with an

additional 11,090 having been in contact with UNHCR for registration.

A new mobile registration centre opened in Baalbeck to accommodate the increasing number of Syrian refugees who are settling in east Lebanon, many of whom come from Damascus, Daraa and Aleppo. The centre will register some 700 families from Baalbeck, Aarsal and surrounding areas in the coming weeks.

#### *Distribution*

UNHCR, DRC and World Vision commenced September distribution with 230 people (46 families) receiving food, hygiene and baby kits as well as mattresses. UNFPA also provided sanitary napkins and the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) distributed infant kits to Lebanese returnees.

#### *Education*

UNHCR and partners continued the 'Back to School' campaign, meeting with public school directors in Zahle and Baalbeck to inform them about the admission of Syrian children in Lebanese public schools for the upcoming academic year.

Schools in some areas, such as Aarsal and Al Ain, are already at full capacity and unable to host additional Syrian children. UNHCR and specialized education partners are exploring alternative options, such as transporting children to schools in different villages, enrolling them in semi-private schools and organizing afternoon school shifts for Syrian children. Due to protection and economic reasons, the option of conducting afternoon programmes in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) is the most favorable option at this time. The programme would follow

the Lebanese curriculum, being taught by Lebanese teachers and possibly assisted by Syrian teachers from the displaced community. Further assessments will be made after UNHCR and partners know the total numbers of Syrian children enrolled.

#### *Health*

Gaps remain in secondary health care coverage for Syrians refugees in the Bekaa. Up to 85% of secondary health costs are being met by the Qatari Red Crescent, with Dar al Fatwa assisting in the remaining 15%, up to 700,000LL on a case-by-case basis. The costs of health care are high and despite the efforts of partners to meet as many needs as possible, there are gaps due to funding constraints. This is especially true for cases involving babies in neo-natal intensive care and complicated surgeries. UNHCR and IMC are connecting with other local NGOs to see who can help with these fees in order to resolve this gap.

UNHCR, IMC, Medecins du Monde (MDM), Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Caritas, AMEL and Handicap International are updating the health services brochure, which includes information on available health services, specialized NGOs, hospitals and medical coverage in the Bekaa. The brochures will be finalized and distributed next week. Communication campaigns remain a key component in ensuring that as many people as possible in need of health care are properly assisted.

#### *Shelter/ Water and Sanitation (WASH)*

Finding solutions for displaced families living in operational schools remains the most urgent issue in east Lebanon.

There are 111 families living in six operational schools in east Bekaa and 25 families living in four schools in north Bekaa. Fifteen families were relocated on 4 September from the al-Marj school, to the Ain Ata school in west Bekaa. Upon arrival, however, many families decided not to remain. For some it may have seemed too far from the border, for others it could have been because they did not have close ties to the community. Some refugee families from the al-Marj school found shelter with host families and relatives, reported to be renting or are finding their own solution.

UNHCR and partners continue to advocate for approval to renovate the 11 abandoned schools that have been identified to host Syrian families, as only two schools (Ain Ata and Al Aqaba) from these 11 are suitable for immediate use.. As further solutions are sought, UNHCR and MoSA have agreed to an organized process of relocation to ensure no displaced families are evicted without having another shelter option.

UNICEF and Action Contre la Faim (ACF) expanded their WASH programme to cover urgent needs for water in Saadnayel and Baalbeck. Conditions improved for women and children who received water for cooking, washing and personal hygiene in Aarsal through a water trucking system. Through this system, families use redeemable water vouchers to request water when needed. A similar WASH strategy is being considered for the North.

#### **Assistance in Beirut and South Lebanon**

Following needs assessments, UNHCR is expanding its programme to those wishing to register in south Lebanon. UNHCR with local organizations, including Caritas, will be developing a

communication strategy to inform families about registration and assistance, as well as setting up services in health, education and distribution. Some families have already approached the Beirut office for registration and assistance.

Initial assessments suggest that there are at least 7,000 Syrian refugees (1,400 families) in the South, mainly in Sidon and surrounding villages, including Iklim al Kharroub . The majority have arrived from Homs Qusayr and Aleppo..

Primary health care assistance is currently being provided through local primary health care centres, however there is a chronic shortage of medications, equipment and specialized staff. Secondary health care will be covered by Caritas, and programmes will change based on needs identified in future assessments.

UNHCR and UNICEF, with the Municipality in Sidon and local NGOs, will be assisting Syrian refugee children in enrolling for the upcoming school year. UNICEF also started mapping partners in Sidon and around the South in order to plan for other education interventions.

Additional ad-hoc assistance is being provided through the local community, NGOs, municipalities, and Dar al Fatwa Charity Funds.

In Beirut, there are currently 1,358 registered Syrians (601 families) with an additional 2,908 awaiting registration.

Displaced Syrians in Beirut receive medical assistance through local primary health care centres that are supported by UNHCR and IMC. Secondary health

care is covered by Makhzoumi Foundation.

Syrian refugee children enrolling in school receive the same assistance as those in the North and in the Bekaa, with UNHCR covering tuition fees and providing school supplies and uniforms. Remedial classes provided by AMEL help Syrian children adjust to the Lebanese curriculum.

Furthermore, food and non-food assistance is being provided to vulnerable families in need.

*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.*