

UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees

Beirut, January 11 - January 18, 2013



Highlights of the week

- The provision of urgent winterization items to Syrian refugee families affected by last week's storm continued throughout the week;
- Some 60,000 people have benefited from, World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers, winter clothes vouchers, blankets, mattresses, hygiene and baby kits this week;
- A total of 1,245 patients have had access to primary health services, and an additional 267 patients were admitted to hospitals in North, Bekaa and South Lebanon;
- Some 8,000 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR this week, the highest weekly registration figure from the outset of the response;
- UNHCR recruited ten refugee focal points as part of its efforts to reach out to the community and better identify protection needs;
- A dynamite stick hit the rooftop of a house sheltering two registered Syrian refugee families in Sheikh Lar leading to material damages;
- A Syrian family living in Hayzouq was allegedly shot at from behind the main door to their home by unidentified actors;
- The Back to School campaign launched by UNICEF, UNHCR, and Save the Children ended January 15.
- UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Mia Farrow, visited Lebanon to see firsthand the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. As part of her mission, she appealed for additional international support as the needs and numbers of those fleeing Syria continue to rise.



Donor contributions for 2013



Funding is also received in private donations from the following countries: China, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, and Spain.

¹ EU funding is received from DEVCO and ECHO.

Registration and New Arrivals

Over 212,000 Syrian refugees receive protection and assistance from the Government of Lebanon, UN and NGO partners. Of this number, some 147,000 are registered with UNHCR and more than 64,000 are scheduled to be registered.

The pace of refugees entering Lebanon remains steady, with the majority continuing to arrive from Homs, Idleb, Damascus and Aleppo. UNHCR continues to register approximately 1,500 refugees daily through its four registration centres across the country. On Wednesday, registration figures reached just under 1,800 people, the highest daily registration figure since the beginning of the response. To meet growing needs UNHCR is finishing a newly established site in Bekaa, is opening a registration site in Tyre and has identified land for expanded registration in Beirut. These efforts will reduce waiting periods and meet expanded needs.

Current distribution of the registered population is as follows:

North Lebanon: 73,970

Bekaa: 56,284

Beirut and South Lebanon: 17,404

Protection

The heavy winter storm started to abate as of Monday this week, improving humanitarian access to the North, Bekaa, and South. UNHCR and partners maintained close contact with all refugee families affected by last week's severe storm, distributed warm clothing, blankets and much needed fuel for heating, and drained flooded shelters. Tented settlements in the Bekaa were particularly affected. UNHCR and partners are now looking at longer-term solutions including the relocation of settlements to nearby, more appropriate sites in consultation with the government.

UNHCR has doubled efforts to reach out to minority groups in the refugee community through close liaison with municipalities, local unions and religious leaders. In the North, municipalities are helping in referring refugees who have not yet registered to our Office. So far, some 2,000 people belonging to minority groups have been referred for registration. UNHCR is meeting with the Zgharta Union and a number of key municipalities next week to agree on how best to address refugee concerns about registration.

There have also been extensive efforts in Bekaa and Mount Lebanon to encourage minorities groups in those areas to register. In the Bekaa, UNHCR organized several focus group discussions with different groups of Syrian nationals and met with religious leaders to discuss registration modalities, and stress confidentiality. In Mount Lebanon, UNHCR met with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) with close ties to minority groups to sensitize them about registration and assistance.

UNHCR is also working to include refugee focal points as part of its efforts to reach out to the community and better identify protection needs. UNHCR's office in Tripoli held its first meeting with ten newly appointed refugee focal points representing different northern areas (Tripoli, Minnieh, Dinnieh, Beddawi, El Koura, and Mina). Refugee focal points were briefed on UNHCR and partners' work, the importance of confidentiality and neutrality, and ways to identify persons with specific needs and people reluctant to come forward and register in their respective areas. A comprehensive two-day training will be conducted on the 21st and 22nd of January to formally introduce the upcoming outreach strategy. Meanwhile, focal points in additional areas will be identified and trained in the coming weeks.

UNHCR continues to coordinate with the General Security Office (GSO) on the waiving of visa renewal fees and regularization of Syrians who entered Lebanon through unofficial borders.

Security

Two very concerning incidents targeting Syrian refugee families were reported in Akkar this week: a dynamite stick hit the rooftop of a house sheltering two registered Syrian refugee families in Sheikh Lar leading to material damages, while a Syrian family living in Hayzouq was allegedly shot at from behind the main door to their home by unidentified actors. The father and daughter were injured and immediately transported to Tripoli Governmental Hospital. UNHCR counselled both affected families who expressed a strong fear of continuing to live in those villages. The family living in Hayzouq was relocated to another village while UNHCR is currently discussing the possibility of moving with the family from Sheikh Lar. The Internal Security Forces (ISF) is investigating the incidents. The Office is also working with community leaders and refugee focal points to identify and address the reasons behind these incidents.

Distribution

UNHCR, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), UNICEF, Amel Association, Makhzoumi Foundation, and partner agencies continued to prioritize the distribution of extra winterization items to refugee families throughout Lebanon. Some 40,000 people have benefited from winter clothes vouchers, blankets, mattresses, hygiene and baby kits this week. In addition, Over 9,000 fuel coupons and 17,000 World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers were distributed to registered refugees across the country.

UNICEF, Amel Association and partners distributed 11,930 winter clothes vouchers, 8,900 blankets and 5,400 tarpaulins (material waterproofed with tar, paint, or wax) in north and east Lebanon. In Beirut, Makhzoumimi foundation distributed electric heaters, kitchen kits, clothes, food kits and vouchers to some 3,500 people.

Education

The Back to School campaign launched by UNICEF, UNHCR, and Save the Children and Amel Association ended January 15, the last date for enrolment in the public system. This date had been extended by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). Over 10,000 children received schoolbags, stationary, clothes and tuition fee vouchers. Parents wishing to enroll their children in the formal education system after this date will need to write a letter to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) explaining their reasons for not previously enrolling, such as being a newly arrived refugee. UNICEF and Caritas have agreed to facilitate the process and assist families who find themselves in this situation by helping them draft, send the letter, and enrol in the nearest school.

Remedial classes and the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) resumed following their suspension last week due to weather conditions. UNHCR, UNICEF, Save the Children International (SCI) distributed 1,369 clothes vouchers to refugee students' parents, and fuel vouchers to 42 schools in Akkar, and 45 schools in the Bekaa.

Additionally, schools offering the Syrian curriculum are reportedly facing increased funding constraints and are hence at heightened risk of closing down. In Akkar alone, some 1,000 Syrian refugee children are enrolled in these schools. UNHCR, UNICEF and partners are gearing up the ALP as a contingency means, and are looking at additional alternative education systems as a matter of priority.

Health

A total of 1,245 patients have had access to primary health services including consultations, treatments, medication, vaccinations and diagnostic tests this week, while an additional 267 patients were admitted to hospitals in North, Bekaa and South Lebanon through UNHCR, the International Medical Corps (IMC), Caritas, Amel Association and Makhzoumi Foundation (MF).

UNHCR and the International Medical Corps (IMC) worked to raise health awareness through primary health care centers and home visits in Beirut, North and East Lebanon. Awareness sessions focused on respiratory infection precaution and management especially with the considerable drop in temperatures in mountainous areas in the North and the increased risk of respiratory infections, namely bronchiolitis. In addition, refugees were counseled about how best to store food and manage a family's diet as a number of food poisoning cases were detected and referred for treatment over the past week. Some 300 people benefited from these awareness sessions this week.

Health actors are keeping a close eye on Tuberculosis (TB) among refugees especially following reports of the few cases who had been referred to the national TB programme a few weeks back. Through close monitoring, two TB cases were identified and immediately transferred to hospitals in the North and Bekaa through the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH).

Assessments reveal that the main cause behind the lack in proper and timely vaccination among refugees was high transportation costs. In light of these findings, IMC is working to increase the number of mobile medical visits in remote areas and devote a whole day every week to vaccinations and awareness raising.

With the provision of consistent mental health awareness sessions in the Bekaa, North and South, refugees now seem more open to receiving psychosocial counseling and support. Refugees counseled by mental health professionals were mostly diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, which typically intensify in instances of forced displacement. Over 380 refugees benefited from consultations this week be it through outreach home visits or at the different health care centers throughout Lebanon. Of concern is the relative increase in the number of patients suffering from high stress levels due to the drastic change in their lifestyle and their worries about providing a decent life to their families. Agencies are working to alleviate stress levels by providing material assistance, rent cash, health care services, education, and psychosocial support.

In the following weeks, health actors will focus on counseling adolescents under 18 years old. IMC will be recruiting child psychologists to address the needs of traumatized children. To date, a total of 11,696 children have had access to psychosocial support services through UNICEF efforts, an increase of 1,378 from last week's figure. Psychosocial support is being delivered through a variety of facilities including 37 Child Friendly Spaces, as well as mobile teams.

On a separate note, UNHCR's public health team held a two-day regional strategic meeting which discussed the ongoing health issues with a special focus on mental and reproductive health, as well as how to better provide access to health care services. It was agreed that immunization of measles and nutrition of infant and young child feeding should be prioritized in the coming period in light of limited awareness on these issues. UNICEF and UNHCR are now planning a national campaign on measles vaccination that should be launched in Spring 2013.

Shelter

Most recently, shelter conditions were exacerbated by the harsh storm of last week, and by a notable increase in the cost of rented accommodation throughout areas with known concentrations of refugees. This has prompted a number of municipalities in Tripoli to work on the identification of alternative sites in the area in preparation for growing needs and limited refugee hosting capacity. In addition, and as part of contingency planning, UNHCR is working alongside the Government of Lebanon to identify two transit sites to accommodate refugees temporarily

until appropriate accommodation can be found. These will help ensure newly arrived refugees are safe and warm until other accommodation is identified. Meanwhile, the cash for shelter project continues to target refugees who are no longer able to pay their own rent, and work on the identification of vacant buildings is ongoing.

UNHCR selected some 200 vulnerable families to benefit from its cash assistance pilot project in north Lebanon. The project is aimed to provide financial support to extremely vulnerable families who are no longer able to provide for themselves and their families. Upon the successful completion of the pilot project, the cash programme is aimed to target some 500 families in need in the North.

Water and Sanitation (WASH)

Efforts to improve Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) conditions at refugee homes or tented settlements continued following last week's floodings and increased risk of water-borne diseases. UNHCR and Premiere Urgence (PU-AMI) began rehabilitation works of latrines and showers in the homes of 360 refugees in Sidon, Chouf and Beirut. PU-AMI also conducted hygiene awareness sessions benefiting some 700 people in the area. In addition, water samples were collected from different refugee families for bacteriological testing, following which concerned families will be advised and assisted with an adequate response. In the Bekaa, UNICEF, UNHCR and Action Contre la Faim (ACF) constructed 25 latrines in the Dalhamiye and Saadnayel tented settlements, distributed water tanks and filters, and established 20 handwashing points in Taibe tented settlements where over 480 Syrian refugees currently live.