

UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees

Beirut, January 18 - January 25, 2013



Highlights of the week

- UNHCR registered 8,000 refugees this week;
- The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the local NGO Beyond, and UNHCR launched a nationwide vaccination campaign that should run until February 4th 2013;
- Some 42,000 refugees received winter clothes vouchers, electric heaters, blankets, pillows, mattresses, hygiene and baby kits this week;
- Over 37,000 World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers and 15,000 fuel coupons were distributed to refugees across the country;
- A total of 1,910 patients were supported with primary health services including consultations, treatments, medication, vaccinations and diagnostic tests this week, while an additional 433 patients were admitted to hospitals;
- IMC's mental health unit provided a total of 428 consultations and 58 mental health awareness sessions this week;
- 548 people benefited from health awareness sessions this week;



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 223,000 Syrian refugees receive protection and assistance from the Government of Lebanon, UN and NGO partners. Out of this number, some 155,000 are registered with UNHCR and more than 67,000 are scheduled to be registered.

The pace of refugees entering Lebanon remains steady, with the majority continuing to arrive from Homs, Idlib, Damascus and Aleppo. UNHCR continues to register approximately 1,500 refugees daily through its four registration centres across the country.

Current distribution of the registered population is as follows:

North Lebanon: 76,803

Bekaa: 59,411

Beirut and South Lebanon: 19,176

In the Bekaa, the number of individuals seeking appointments for registration has slightly increased during the past week to approximately 400 cases per day. This increase might be linked to an overall increase in persons crossing the border into Lebanon. The main areas of settlement for refugees arriving in the Bekaa have been Zahle, Baalbeck and West Bekaa during the last week. A recent survey in north Lebanon showed that out of an average number of 1,900 families arriving every week, about 65 per cent move to Tripoli and its surrounding areas while about 35 per cent settle in Akkar.

Protection

The Refugee Focal Point (RFP) project whereby refugees are trained to assist in outreach visits and needs assessment started this week. Assigned focal points in the Bekaa held focus group discussions with refugees living in tented settlements, while a two-day introductory training was held in Tripoli. UNHCR, the International Medical Corps (IMC), DRC and Save the Children will take part of bi-weekly meetings to facilitate follow-up on RFPs' findings. In the meantime, our Office is working to identify additional RFPs in different areas in the North, Bekaa and soon in the South.

Organizations working on sexual and gender based prevention and response successfully started to use a GBV information-sharing system aiming to better identify people at risk and improve services provided. KAFA organized four awareness sessions on SGBV in Halba and Amayer Community Centres. The sessions aimed to raise awareness among refugee women about the importance of protection/prevention from all kinds of violence, and encourage them to seek assistance when needed.

Security

Following the two security incidents that affected Syrian families in Hayzouk and Sheikh Lar (Akkar) last week, UNHCR's protection team followed up closely with the families to ensure their immediate physical safety. In Hayzouk (where the family was shot at) the family was relocated to Tekrit collective shelter. UNHCR approached six families living in the area to better understand the potential risks in in the Hayzouk village. All people interviewed

said that they did not feel at risk and did not feel any need to relocate from the area. In the meantime, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) investigation of the incident continued.

Investigations into the cause of the grenade which landed on a residence last week in Sheikh Lar have not revealed a cause. Discussions with the two families who live in the house revealed no willingness on their part to relocate to another area. UNHCR protection teams will continue to monitor the situation and liaise with the families and local leaders, in coordination with the ISF. The appropriate measures will be taken according to the findings.

In the meantime, refugees continue to report the risks of shootings, landmines, and harassment from armed elements in Syria in seeking safety in Lebanon. Refugee focal points in Akkar reported that an unidentified young Syrian was injured in a mine explosion while crossing the river into Wadi Khaled. He has been transferred to a hospital in Tripoli where he is currently receiving treatment.

Distribution

Some 42,000 people have benefited from winter clothes vouchers, electric heaters, blankets, pillows, mattresses, hygiene and baby kits this week through the combined efforts of UNHCR, UNICEF, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), UNICEF, Amel Association, Makhzoumi Foundation, Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center. In addition, over 37,000 World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers and 15,000 fuel coupons were distributed to refugees across the country.

Amel Association is distributing clothes, blankets and other relief items to Lebanese returnees. Amel Association also targeted 2,000 female beneficiaries in Tyre, Basourieh and Khiam -south Lebanon- with UNFPA women's kits.

To provide needed support to not yet registered refugees, UNHCR identified Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and municipalities to proceed with distributions of needed items.

Education

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) reported that some 32,000 Syrian students are currently registered in Lebanese public schools across Lebanon. UNHCR and UNICEF have assisted 24,000 of those with school bags, stationary, clothes and tuition fee vouchers. With the Back to School campaign having come to an end, UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children, and Amel Association are now doing their best to optimize the number of children who attend remedial classes and vocational training.

UNHCR and NRC-ICLA (Norwegian Refugee Council-Information Counselling and Legal Action) met to discuss the opening of a second NRC Community Centre in Akkar. The centre will offer remedial classes in addition to legal counselling and information on available services. This center will be the third in the area, adding to two community centers offering vocational training such as sewing classes to refugee women. Vocational training in community centres have offered both professional and personal liberation to refugees. The vocational training classes which started in September 2012 will conclude at the end of the month. An evaluation of the course and instructors started this week to look at ways of improving the classes for the coming year. Approximately 110 women (50 in Amayer and 60 in Halba) will graduate in either sewing, beauty and aesthetics (make-up and hair dressing), handcraft or English.

The soon to be graduates reported that the classes provided an escape from the harsh reality of being a refugee. Most said they now feel more confident to seek employment and be more independent. Advanced training for graduates will start next month. In addition, most were offered internships in sewing factories and private salons in their areas.

In addition, Lego has donated lego boxes to refugee children. Amel Association distributed the toys to refugee children in Tyre, a much needed initiative that left a very positive impact in their lives.

Health

A total of 1,910 patients have had access to primary health services including consultations, treatments, medication, vaccinations and diagnostic tests this week, while an additional 433 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) continued to raise health awareness about family planning, prenatal/postnatal care and other topics through primary health care centers and home visits in Beirut, North and East Lebanon with the aim to improve refugees' lifestyle. A total of 548 people benefited from these awareness sessions this week.

The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the local NGO Beyond, and UNHCR launched a nationwide vaccination campaign that should run until February 4th 2013. The campaign targets all children between the ages of 0-18 including Syrian refugees. As part of this initiative, children in schools, tented settlements, and collective shelters will be vaccinated against measles and polio and receive vitamin A supplements. Flyers about vaccination were made available at all UNHCR registration centers to help better inform refugees about the issue.

On the mental health front, IMC's mental health unit provided a total of 428 consultations and 58 awareness sessions this week through its outreach and center-based services. In the Bekaa, a child psychologist was recruited by IMC to properly service all beneficiaries under 18 years old. IMC will now recruit an outreach psychologist who will counsel refugees through home visits and conduct awareness sessions in the field.

As part of an effort to improve outreach workers' expertise and response, IMC health actors working in Beirut and Tyre attended the Early Childhood Development-Training of trainers. After completion of the training, trainers will be able to offer workshops for mothers who have children between 0 and 3 years old. The training includes topics like nutrition for women and the child, the importance of breastfeeding, hygiene, and sleeping habits of babies, in addition to toilet training, vaccination and immunization.

Shelter

Throughout the past week, UNHCR and partner agencies scaled up outreach efforts to refugees in order to assess their shelter/winter needs and avoid hardship that could result from winter storms. Heaters, mattresses, blankets, latrine renovations and plastic sheeting were distributed. NRC also continued to seal-off houses across the North, and Bekaa, employing additional teams of workers in order to accelerate the process. In the meantime, UNHCR-Government efforts to identify two transit sites to accommodate refugees temporarily continued this week.

An assessment of seventeen tented settlements was also carried out where partners ensured that refugees there receive winter items (blankets, mattresses, clothes, etc) and shelter improvements as necessary. Those living in substandard conditions were offered alternative shelter in nearby areas.

Though these settlements' sizes vary from one site to another, UNHCR teams noted an increase in the size of each camp by three to five tents in comparison with last month. Many in the camps are seasonal migrant workers who in the past would return to Syria during winter. This year this has been impossible because of the conflict in their home areas. The camps also house more recently arrived Syrian refugees.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Efforts to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conditions in homes and tented settlements continued this week. UNHCR and Premiere Urgence (PU-AMI) completed rehabilitation works of 61 latrines and showers in the homes of 485 refugees in Sidon, Chouf and Beirut. PU-AMI also conducted 6 hygiene awareness sessions benefiting some 370 people in the area. In addition, water samples were collected in these areas for bacteriological testing, following which communities will be advised and assisted with an adequate response. In the Bekaa, UNHCR and Action Contre la Faim (ACF) constructed 17 shared latrines in the Fayda and Saadnayel tented settlements. ACF also formed hygiene committees in Terbol and Laboue tented settlements in the Bekaa to help report and address water, hygiene or sanitation issues.