

UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees

Beirut, January 31 - February 8, 2013



Highlights of the week

- UNHCR registered more than 9,000 Syrian refugees this week;
- Severe clashes erupted in Aarsal on February 1st between Lebanese Army patrol members and unidentified gunmen resulting in the death of two army Officers, and the wounding of eight military personnel;
- Some 32,850 people have benefited from winter clothes vouchers, electric heaters, blankets, pillows, mattresses, hygiene and baby kits this week;
- Over 12,000 World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers were distributed to refugees across the country;
- A total of 2,044 patients have had access to primary health services including consultations, treatments, medication, and diagnostic tests;
- A total of 371 patients were admitted to hospitals in North, Bekaa and South Lebanon through UNHCR and IMC.



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

More than 265,308 Syrian refugees receive protection and assistance from the Government of Lebanon, UN and NGO partners. Out of this number, some 174,000 are registered with UNHCR and more than 90,000 are scheduled to be registered. Since last week, UNHCR registered more than 9,000 Syrian refugees.

The pace of refugees entering Lebanon remains relatively steady, with the majority continuing to arrive from Homs, Idleb, Damascus and Aleppo.

Current distribution of the registered population is as follows:

North Lebanon: 84,482

Bekaa: 66,601

Beirut and South Lebanon: 23,379

UNHCR currently registers approximately 2,000 refugees daily through its four registration centres across the country. This figure compares to 1,500 people registered daily in early January. In fact, registration capacity has increased by over 250% since September 2012. New registration centres open in the Bekaa and Tyre this month. In Beirut, where waiting periods are longest, UNHCR will be introducing evening shifts and weekend registration pending the identification of an additional registration site in the city. In the meantime, UNHCR and partners are doing their best to assist refugees waiting to be registered under different programmes.

Protection

UNHCR and partners are working to encourage women overcome cultural constraints and share their problems with specialized social workers, namely when it comes to physical assault and emotional abuse. As part of its effort to improve the reporting and referral mechanism in that sector, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has hired a specialized doctor to provide care to gender-based violence survivors. In addition, ABAAD and IMC are now organizing training to health workers on clinical management of gender-based violence survivors.

Partners have also focused on identifying and assisting persons with specific needs including unaccompanied children, children at risk of dropping out of school, and people with physical disabilities. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) established counselling services at the community centers in Halba and Amayer. Ten unaccompanied children and six refugee orphans identified by partners in Akkar were fast-tracked for registration and were provided with immediate assistance. In the meantime, partner agencies continued to conduct home visits to check on refugees, and ensure their most basic needs are met.

The issuance of birth certificates to newly born Syrian refugee children remains of high concern to UNHCR. Information leaflets on birth registration are now distributed to Syrian refugees across Lebanon. This comes as part of a larger UNHCR initiative to combat statelessness. UNHCR teams visited stateless families in Akkar this week in order to listen to their stories, understand the reasons behind their status, provide support and in turn improve the current response.

Security

The 1st of February was marked by severe clashes in Aarsal between Lebanese Army patrol members and unidentified gunmen resulting in the death of two army Officers, and the wounding of eight military personnel. These tragic incidents also impacted north Lebanon whereby residents in Batroun, Tripoli, Abdeh and Akkar staged road blocks in support of the late Lebanese Officers. UNHCR teams remained in contact with refugees in Aarsal to ensure they are safe. Despite the tense security situation, refugees were still able to come forward to register and receive assistance without any major impediments.

Distribution

Some 22,850 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, World Vision, Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center. In addition, over 12,000 World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers and 10,000 fuel coupons were distributed to refugees across the country.

UNHCR is expanding its partnerships with municipalities and local charities to extend assistance to those who have not yet had a chance to register. Most often, these refugees arrive in Lebanon with very few belongings and are in pressing need of guidance and immediate support. Local municipalities are now receiving them and referring them to the proper health, shelter, winterization, and education services. From the outset, UNICEF has helped unregistered refugee parents register their kids in schools and enrol them in remedial classes, while the WFP has provided new comers with food parcels pending their formal registration with our Office. In addition, DRC distributed hygiene kits and baby kits to over 2,000 newly arrived refugees this week.

Education

With the end of the Back to School campaign, UNICEF, UNHCR and partners have focused on providing children in school with remedial classes to help them adapt to the Lebanese curriculum. Remedial classes have also prepared those out of school to reintegrate into the formal school system. UNHCR, UNICEF and partners are now setting up afternoon shifts during which an Accelerated Learning Programme will be provided.

Support for enrolment in secondary schools as well as vocational training and tertiary education is also being made available. The Education Working Group (EWG) is currently preparing for a Joint Education Needs Assessment that will target 60 schools across the country. In addition, the EWG is working with relevant academic institutes to develop and standardize an Accelerated Curriculum for children who have dropped out of school. In coordination with public schools, World Vision Lebanon is currently identifying beneficiaries for remedial classes and the Accelerated Learning Programme.

NRC has also offered educational activities in north Lebanon (Akkar) and the Bekaa (Saadnayel and Aarsal) this

week. These included classes in English, French, Arabic, computer skills, first aid, tailoring and hairdressing benefitting 582 Syrian refugees. In addition, 230 refugees participated in recreational activities which offer much needed relief from the dire living conditions and traumatic experiences many refugees have been through. Recreational activities have also started in Baalbek where children between the age of 6-13 have started to participate.

UNICEF has started the distribution of fuel for heating school classrooms which in total will benefit over 21,000 children at 63 schools, safe-guarding children's well-being and health and encouraging their attendance during the cold months.

Health

A total of 2,044 patients have had access to primary health services including consultations, treatments, medication, and diagnostic tests through the efforts of the International Medical Corps and Amel Association this week. Pregnant women and children under five continue to receive 100 per cent coverage under UNHCR and IMC. Secondary health care is provided to refugees in need of emergency care at 85 per cent coverage, in line with the national health care programme. A network of outreach volunteers, NGOs and healthcare workers help to identify the most vulnerable refugees who are not able to cover the outstanding 15 per cent and refer them to additional partners for full financial support. This week, 371 patients were admitted to hospitals in North, Bekaa and South Lebanon through UNHCR and IMC.

Unregistered Syrian refugees in need of urgent medical care were referred for fast-track registration and provided with the necessary assistance. Out of 200 refugees admitted for medical treatment in Bekaa in the first week of February, approximately 25% were unregistered. These refugees were referred for fast-track registration. Currently IMC refers over 20 pregnant women for fast-track registration each day.

Following the detection of Hepatitis A cases amongst refugees in north Lebanon, IMC initiated health awareness sessions on prevention and transmission of the disease. These sessions are part of UNHCR and IMC's Health Education Programme aimed at promoting a healthier lifestyle amongst Syrian refugees. This week, 352 individuals benefited from these sessions.

To date, some 107,000 children between the ages 0-18 years have been vaccinated against measles and polio and have received Vitamin A supplements. This is part of the nationwide vaccination campaign launched by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), UNICEF and World Health organization. To ensure that the maximum number of Syrian refugees benefit from this initiative, UNHCR and UNICEF collaborated to ensure the presence of vaccination teams at the registration centres in the North and Bekaa. Approximately 1,700 Syrian refugee children were vaccinated at the registration centers last week. An additional 100,000 measles vaccines were distributed to health authorities in Qada to cover the increasing demand.

Shelter

Shelter remains a priority as numbers rise and affordable shelters become increasingly scarce. Amel Association reported that the prices of rent are now also increasing in south Lebanon as well where the concentration of refugees is significantly lower than in north Lebanon and the Bekaa and that Syrian families currently pay approximately \$USD200-300 per month for an apartment shared by three to four families. This corresponds to observations made by CLMC based on regular home visits showing that many families are unable to pay their rent and therefore squeeze into overcrowded apartments, sometimes up to six families in a single apartment.

UNHCR provided cash assistance to refugees who are not able to pay their own rent. The unconditional pilot cash programme launched in February in Tripoli will also provide solid support to vulnerable refugees.

Throughout the past week, UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) carried out sealing off interventions in the Bekaa and identified additional collective shelters for rehabilitation in the area. In north Lebanon, NRC started rehabilitation works at five host family houses, while another 12 have signed agreements and will receive the payments to start renovations shortly. The latter programme has proved very useful in assisting Lebanese families complete their unfinished houses while generously agreeing to host Syrian refugee families in return.

Also this week, UNHCR and DRC deployed a generator to provide electricity to 13 refugee families in a collective shelter in Qobayat which until then faced a serious shortage of water supply as a result of persistent electricity cuts.

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 19 sanitation facilities (latrines/showers) in Saida area. PU-AMI also conducted 10 hygiene awareness sessions benefiting some 150 persons in Beirut, Mount Lebanon and Saida area. In the Bekaa, UNHCR and Action Contre la Faim (ACF) constructed 9 latrines in the Dalhamiye and Addous tented settlements. UNICEF also started implementing WASH activities in Tripoli whereby 60 water tanks will be installed and nearly 1,000 persons will be provided with access to appropriate WASH facilities.