

Education

• **Highlights :**

NRC continues to respond to the education needs of all those affected by the Syria crisis in Lebanon.

- During December 2013 NRC continued to support back to school (BTS) activities in the North in partnership with UNHCR. This included supporting children's enrollment in both first and second shift schools in T5 areas. NRC managed to enroll 3265 children.
- NRC continues to outreach for more out of school children.
- NRC continued the after school learning support and recreational activities for about 700 children in 8 schools in the Bekaa.
- Through work in 6 NRC community centers, recreational, non-formal education, skills and life skills trainings for children youth and adults continue to be offered targeting more than 4000 beneficiaries.
- Awareness sessions for parents and professional development for teachers were provided to support integration of Syrian children refugees into Lebanese public schools.

Achievements this month:

- The BTS in the North supported 2850 children in 88 first shift schools in the t5 district and 415 children in 11 second shift schools.(UN funded).
- 200 beneficiaries in the NRC community centers (62 UN funding).
- 100 teachers and 1100 parents (UN funded).

Upcoming Events:

- Continue the support to integration of more Syrian children into formal schooling.
- Outreach activities will continue to reach out of school students.
- Coordination meetings with municipalities and other stakeholders.
- Specialised courses and activities are being designed to answer the gender challenges and youth needs.
- NRC will be launching new educational (non-formal, skill and life skills trainings) in its Community Centers as of January 2014.

Challenges:

- Despite the MEHE's circular for integration of Syrian children into public schools, the majority of children still remain out of school and with limited access to education opportunities.
- Security situation continues to affect the implementation rate of activities and attendance in many areas.

Recommendations for Action:

In view of the limited capacity of the public education system to accommodate the high numbers of out of school children, other alternative solutions need to be provided in line with INEE Minimum Standards for provision of quality education to all children.

Highlights (including protection and legal trends)

- All of the newcomer refugees that the ICLA team contacted in Aarsal have entered through unofficial border crossings. According to the Aarsal municipality, approximately 200 families from the new arrivals do not have any identity documentation. Most of the refugees that the ICLA team has met expressed their fear to move outside of Aarsal because of not having valid legal stay in Lebanon. For the same reasons, most of the refugees who were approached by the ICLA team reported that they felt too scared to go to Zahle to register with UNHCR.
- The 20,000 newcomers overwhelmed the available shelter solutions in Aarsal. Many refugees are living in sub-standard shelter conditions, including unfinished buildings, overcrowded rooms, overcrowded large collective shelters and non-winterised tented settlements.
- Lebanese returnees in Aarsal have informed NRC that they feel that no organisation is providing them with basic services.
- Refugees are reportedly not able to renew their legal stay in Lebanon because of the lack of financial resources. Refugees feel forced to be “illegally” (according to Lebanese law) present in Lebanon which is affecting their freedom of movement, access to justice, access to civil documentation and access to services. In addition, based on experiences of some refugees, those with damaged identity documents are reportedly afraid to be arrested while trying to renew their legal stay. Many of them mentioned that they prefer to have an expired stay rather than approaching General Security for renewal.
- Saadnayel municipality in the Bekaa imposed a curfew starting on 1 September. According to this curfew, movement for Syrian refugees is prohibited between 20:00 and 06:00. In addition to that, other municipalities are still imposing curfews in the North, South, Bekaa and Mount Lebanon.
- Some organisations providing assistance for refugees from Syria still do not have functional hotlines for refugees, meaning that refugees are often unable to directly contact the service providers. In many cases, refugees approach local authorities (as municipalities and Mokhtars) to get their names recorded in a list which they understand will be provided to relevant service providers. In addition to concerns related to security of data, this increases refugees’ exposure to exploitation, as it was reported by refugees in multiple locations across Lebanon that they had to pay fees to be included on such lists.

Achievements:

- Birth registration assessment: the ICLA team has conducted 468 interviews about birth registration to further understand the scope of the challenges refugees are facing in Lebanon in registering the birth of their newly born children.
- Training to refugee focal points: to make sure that updated, accurate and consistent information may reach as many refugees as possible, the ICLA team conducted a training session to 25 refugee focal points in Aarsal on provision of information. The refugee focal points were provided with an updated mapping and a list of the service providers’ contact details to be able to share them at the community level so refugees could contact the relevant organisations directly in case any service was needed. After the training, a focus group discussion was conducted with them and many protection and legal issues were identified. The ICLA team and the refugee focal points both agreed that the ICLA team would share any important updates in the mapping of services with all of the focal points.

- ICLA activities in Aarsal: to respond to the information and legal needs as a result of the influx that started on 14 November 2013 in Aarsal, the ICLA team scaled up its activities and provided information and counselling to thousands of refugees. The ICLA activities in Aarsal included training to refugee focal points about provision of information, legal counselling through ICLA lawyer about legal status and other legal issues, referrals of vulnerable cases and updating the mapping of services on a daily basis to make sure that information provided to refugees is accurate and updated.
- Legal assessment on consequences of limited legal status: NRC's report about the legal assessment on the consequences of having limited legal status for Syrian refugees in Lebanon was circulated by NRC. The assessment involved interviews with protection actors and, prior to circulation, key findings and recommendation were presented at Protection Working Groups and a peer review was conducted which involved all protection actors working in each respective location. The report includes qualitative information about the main challenges that refugees with limited legal status are facing, especially in Wadi Khaled and Aarsal, and also includes coping mechanisms adopted and some key recommendations based on the peer-review sessions that were conducted with relevant protection actors.
- ICLA regular activities: the ICLA team conducted regular activities, including provision of information about access to services and legal counselling about birth registration, legal status and different legal issues. Group information sessions were conducted in different locations, including tented settlements across Lebanon, UNHCR registration centres, MSF medical centres, DRC community centres, Amel medical centres, IRC women's centre, etc. The ICLA team conducted information sessions at some gatherings in the South in the framework of the Palestinian Response.

ICLA Beneficiaries between 1 and 15 December 2013	Total number of ICLA beneficiaries	Number of group information sessions held	Beneficiaries receiving information and counselling about legal issues, including birth registration and legal status
North	1153	42	737
Bekaa	3398	149	2313
South	1752	68	711
Total	6303	259	3761

The above mentioned numbers were reached through ICLA projects funded by UNHCR, ECHO, DFID and NMFA.

Developments and future plans

- The NRC ICLA team is conducting a quantitative assessment about the consequences of limited legal status for refugees from Syria in Lebanon that would complement the qualitative assessment that was conducted between May and October 2013.
- The NRC ICLA team will keep conducting workshops for Mokhtars to discuss the challenges faced and how different stakeholders can participate in making the birth registration procedure more manageable.

- The NRC ICLA team will expand its activities starting January to Beirut and Mount Lebanon. As initial activities, NRC is providing legal counselling in the NRC Iraqi Community Centre in Metn and is conducting initial mapping meetings with services providers to understand what services are provided to refugees from Syria.
- The NRC ICLA team is increasingly focusing on housing, land and property issues affecting refugees from Syria. As such a large number of refugees are organising their own shelter, there are increasing reports of disputes with landlords, forced evictions, exploitation of tenants and other HLP matters, which NRC will continue to work on through its ICLA programme.
- As part of the NRC Legal Aid Network, NRC currently has 8 lawyers providing legal aid to beneficiaries through mobile legal clinics (two lawyers in the North; three lawyers in the Bekaa; two lawyers in the South and one lawyer in Beirut). NRC will hire more lawyers in 2014 as the need for legal advice increases, especially on matters that ICLA has expertise, including legal status, legal documentation and housing, land and property issues.
- The NRC ICLA team will continue to provide services to Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) and increase outreach within refugee camps and gatherings. Also essential will be monitoring the particular challenges with limited legal status that PRS face, including the limited access at official borders to Lebanon.

Challenges

- The snowy weather in Lebanon made movement to some remote areas very challenging.
- Limited shelter options for refugees, as shown by the influx of refugees in Aarsal, makes it difficult to meet the shelter needs of the increasing refugee population.
- Forced evictions are increasing and
- The limited freedom of movement that refugees from Syria have and the cost of transportation are both making refugees’ access to humanitarian organisations more challenging. To overcome this challenge, the ICLA team is conducting extensive outreach activities (as well as activities throughout the seven NRC Community Centres in Lebanon).

Shelter

Highlights

- The t-shelter design presented to MoSA by NRC was the only design that gained approval from GoL among those presented by INGOs; this design was piloted in Aarsal in the last week of Dec. 2013.
- Positive feedback has been reflected from the field teams on beneficiary hosting in the overwhelming majority of unfinished buildings that have been upgraded across 4 NRC projects
- NRC has established a new winter cash disbursement system in collaboration with Liban Post, this was rolled-out in the final week of Dec.
- Post distribution monitoring exercise on sealing off kit distribution performed in Aarsal



T-shelters in Aarsal

Achievements

Bekaa:

- Successful replacement of 63 tents with a more durable option (t-shelter) in the UNHCR managed Aarsal camp site was completed by Jan 1, 2014. Pictures are available at https://picasaweb.google.com/rogeralexanderdean/201312PicsNRCLebanonTShelterInAarsal?authuser=0&authkey=Gv1sRgCKrLuO6ty4uO_gE&feat=directlink
- 300 SOKs were delivered to an estimated 1500 beneficiaries in December.
- 12 new housing units have been contracted and work on these unfinished buildings has begun in Bekaa.
- 95 technical assessments have been carried out for potential WASH upgrades.

North (Akkar and Tripoli):

- 925 beneficiaries have successfully gained access to their winter cash disbursements through the Liban Post payment system which has streamlined cash disbursement in an effective manner that allows for close monitoring of who receives payment and if and when cash is collected with the ability to respond quickly to amend any discrepancies.

Developments

- Social and technical shelter field teams assess the selected housing units and beneficiaries initially upon selection, and continue to monitor that beneficiaries are successfully housed and that housing units are up to standard. Any indication of anticipated obstacles is flagged up and addressed early on.

Challenges

- Deteriorated security situation in the 3rd week of December resulted in the delay of some activity in the village of Sawiri and its vicinity in the Bekaa valley; LAF restricted access to these areas. However, our teams managed to adjust implementation schedules and plans to accommodate this delay and the restrictions are gradually being lifted

Challenges:

Lack of approval for large scale sites for tent / t-shelter deployment