

UN INTER-AGENCY UPDATE

UNHCR AUG 17-24, 2012

Highlights of the week:

- *The deteriorating security situation in Lebanon is hampering UNHCR and partners' work to help refugees fleeing Syria's conflict. Registration and assistance activities were particularly affected.*
- *Clashes between the rival neighbourhoods of Bab al Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen which broke out in Tripoli on Monday continue, affecting the pace of registration from UNHCR's new centre which had to be temporarily closed on Friday 24 August.*
- *Security and protection concerns dramatically increased in the wake of recent kidnappings of Syrians. UNHCR Protection team followed up on the situation of a number of persons of concern who expressed fear for their safety.*
- *Of particular concern is the disruption toward efforts to identify and rehabilitate alternative shelters for the growing number of Syrians staying in schools which are due to resume next month.*
- *UNHCR and partners along with the MoEHE met with school directors in the North to reiterate the MoEHE's decision to permit displaced Syrian children to enroll in Lebanese public schools. Similar meetings will take place with school directors in other parts of Lebanon as UNHCR and partners continue to encourage displaced families to register their children for the upcoming academic year.*

Numbers

There are currently 39,506 displaced Syrians registered in Lebanon. They are receiving protection and assistance through the efforts of the Government of Lebanon and UN and NGO partners. An additional 12,584 people have been in contact with UNHCR to be registered.

Protection and Security

Reports of armed clashes in the North and kidnappings throughout Lebanon, particularly in the Bekaa, were of concern to UNHCR this week.

Tripoli witnessed deadly clashes between the rival neighborhoods of Bab al Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen. Sporadic exchanges of gunfire and rocket-

propelled grenades left 15 people dead and 120 injured. Mortar shelling was used for the first time in Tripoli since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. The highway connecting Tripoli to the rest of north Lebanon was closed, preventing a number of UNHCR and partner staff from transporting to work. Distribution in Wadi Khaled continued as normal but registration in Tripoli was limited, working at half its capacity due to UNHCR staff's inability to report to work.

In the Bekaa, registration was suspended and distribution in north and central Bekaa was postponed. Missions to the Bekaa were put on hold, with only exceptional missions approved, such as for the mobile registration of life-saving



cases. UNHCR and partners continue working to assist displaced Syrians despite the security situation.

This week, six wounded Syrians were admitted to hospitals.

North Lebanon

Protection

Clashes between the Tripoli neighbourhoods of Bab al Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen began August 20th and are still on-going. UNHCR has followed up with registered displaced Syrians living in the affected areas to ensure their well-being and safety. No registered Syrians have been reported killed or injured.

UNHCR and DRC are working to enhance the protection monitoring mechanism used during centralized distributions. A questionnaire was developed and will be used by DRC outreach workers to identify people with specific needs and refer them to UNHCR and partners for further assistance.

UNHCR and partners assist vulnerable people in a number of ways. DRC outreach workers provide counselling and information on available services. Families with children that are believed to be at risk are given parental guidance and are referred to the education and summer activities for youth. Psycho-social support is also offered to women at risk and separated children in addition to physical therapy for children with disabilities.

The General Security Office (GSO) recently announced that Syrian nationals are now allowed to renew their return coupons (visas) in Lebanon instead of having to return to Syria and re-enter. UNHCR followed up with GSO in the North to verify the announcement, and found that a fee of 300,000LL is required

per each individual's renewal. While the decision is positive news, it is still problematic as many displaced Syrians do not have the financial means to cover such a renewal fee.

Registration/Numbers

Centralized registration in Tripoli continued this week despite the security situation. However, the restricted movement of a number of staff reduced the centre's capacity. Additionally, a large number of displaced Syrians were unable to reach the registration centre. Their appointments have been rescheduled for a later date. On Friday 24 August due to the deteriorating situation in Tripoli, UNHCR registration centre had to close.

A total of 783 people (176 cases) were registered this week in Tripoli bringing the total number of displaced Syrians registered in the North to 21,782. Since registration exercises commenced in Tripoli, 1,906 people (430 cases) have been registered.

Distribution

Distribution in the North assisted 6,135 people (1,227 families) with food, hygiene and baby kits this week. UNFPA also provided sanitary napkins. Families living in the villages of Halba, Bire, Tal Abbas, Al Noura, Al Kawachra, Kirbet Daoud and Dibbabiye were assisted.

World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers were distributed to displaced Syrians living in Akkar and Wadi Khaled, allowing them to purchase food items of their choice from pre-selected grocery shops. Shop assessments in Tripoli are ongoing, with eight additional shops assessed this week.

Education

UNHCR, Save the Children International (SCI), UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) met with school directors from 140 public schools in Akkar and Wadi Khaled to discuss the enrolment of Syrian children in the upcoming academic year. Directors were informed of the MoEHE's decision to permit displaced Syrian children to enroll in any public school in the North. UNHCR and specialized education partners are assessing the capacity of public schools to ensure that all Syrian children can be accommodated. Alternatives, such as semi-private schools and transportation to public schools outside the areas where displaced children are living, are being considered should the capacity be full.

UNHCR and SCI will cover school fees for all registered youth and each child will be provided with a school bag, books, stationary and a uniform.

Lebanese public schools will begin enrolling students September 1, so UNHCR and partners are increasing efforts to encourage displaced families to register their children. UNHCR, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), UNICEF, SCI and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) are organizing various outreach activities to inform families about the education services available to them. Outreach workers will also counsel families while conducting home visits. Similar discussions are taking place with NGOs from Akkar to increase enrolment in that area and keep displaced families aware of the education opportunities for their children.

Health

Displaced Syrians in the North continue to face a number of challenges in

accessing medical care. UNHCR and the International Medical Corps (IMC) cover the costs of primary health care for the displaced. However, there is a gap in secondary health care considering the cost of hospitalization.

The Qatari Red Crescent (QRC) is contributing with the coverage of fees for those in need of secondary health care. IMC referred 32 critical cases and six wounded cases to the QRC this week. UNHCR and IMC are pursuing additional solutions to cover this gap.

Primary health care coverage continues with the support of UNHCR and IMC. Since September, 3,351 consultations and diagnostic tests were provided through primary health care centres.

In addition to addressing the physical health needs of the displaced population, UNHCR and IMC are integrating mental health into the primary health care programme. Primary health care and social workers in Tripoli received training on how to screen and refer mental health cases. Doctors and nurses in Karame, Dar al Zahraa and Hariri hospitals are receiving similar training from psychologists and psychiatrists. This initiative will also be implemented in Akkar starting in September.

Shelter

Identifying and renovating suitable shelters for displaced Syrians remains a pressing priority for UNHCR, DRC and NRC.

The majority of displaced Syrians in the North are residing with Lebanese host families, however there are significant numbers of people also renting private homes. This will not be sustainable as many people no longer have the

financial means to rent. Through a number of rehabilitation initiatives, NRC assisted in the minor renovations of seven Lebanese host homes this week. In total, 90 houses in Akkar are undergoing minor rehabilitations work. NRC also aims to rehabilitate 12 unfinished houses in Akkar with the capacity to host 300 displaced Syrians (60 families).

Assistance in the Bekaa Valley

Protection

The continued reports of Syrians being kidnapped in the Bekaa are of serious concern to UNHCR. Assistance activities were modified this week to ensure the safety of the displaced. Centralized registration and some distributions were cancelled in order to avoid gathering large groups of Syrians. UNHCR and partners will continue to prioritize the safety of the displaced community during times of heightened security concern.

DRC visited 23 new displaced families, ensuring that any unaccompanied minors, victims of torture or Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and arrest/detention cases were identified and referred to the appropriate partners for assistance.

Registration/Numbers

Due to the security situation in the Bekaa, some registration activities were cancelled this week. Registration is currently taking place in central Bekaa and will continue throughout August. There are 16,424 people (3,557 families) registered with UNHCR in the Bekaa.

Many displaced remain fearful of registering. There is an apprehension in giving personal information as well as concern that registering means committing to being a refugee in Lebanon and will prevent returning

home to Syria in the future. UNHCR continues community mobilization activities to explain the registration process as well as the protection and assistance offered to those who register. This week, Syrians in Zahle were targeted with this information campaign.

Distribution

Families in Al Qaa, Aarsal, Al Ain, Al Fakiha and Al Hermel benefited from distribution efforts this week. Three hundred and thirty people (66 families), both registered and pending registration, received food and hygiene kits, food vouchers, baby kits and sanitary napkins. Distribution for an additional 750 people (150 families) was postponed in central Bekaa due to security. UNHCR, DRC, WFP World Vision International (WVI) and UNFPA work together to facilitate distribution efforts in the Bekaa.

UNHCR and DRC also began distributing food kits to Lebanese returnees in El Ain and Al Fakiha.

Education

The 'back to school' campaign aimed at encouraging youth to enrol in school continues throughout the Bekaa, with the endorsement of MoSA and the MoEHE.

The MoEHE and MoSA are also committed to registering Syrian children at Lebanese public schools. However, there are concerns that there will not be enough capacity to absorb all school-age children. UNHCR, SCI, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Terre des Hommes (TdH) are mapping semi-private schools in the Bekaa as a back-up plan.

UNICEF and Sawa Group are preparing to begin mobile education and psycho-social outreach activities targeting children in the remote rural areas of

Baalbeck. UNICEF and its implementing partners currently provide educational support to 2,050 Syrian and Lebanese children.

Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs) also continue to engage children in recreational activities while simultaneously serving as an important child protection tool to identify vulnerable youth. UNICEF is supporting 20 CFSs in the Bekaa and north Lebanon, including two new centres implemented by Amel in Al Ain and Kamed El Loz. Furthermore, Mercy Corps is currently selecting staff and training psychology graduates from the University of Lebanon to work in three CFSs expecting to open in mid-September.

Health

Primary health care services continue in the Bekaa through three IMC supported clinics in Aarsal, Baalbeck and Tanayel. Services include family planning, pre and post-natal care, vaccinations, and treatment for various acute and chronic diseases, such as gastroenteritis, back pain, fever, diabetes and hypertension. Acute and chronic medication is provided free of charge to all registered displaced Syrians.

There still remains a gap in the provision of secondary health care. Currently, UNHCR/IMC and the Qatari Red Crescent are covering 85% of fees, however this leaves 15% to be covered by the patient. IMC is collaborating with local organizations such as Dar Al Fatwa and Ishrak Al Nour to assist with the patient's share.

IMC is also commencing mental health care services in the Bekaa by setting up case management teams in the primary health care centres (PHCs). These teams include a social worker, psychologist and

psychiatrist and while based in the PHCs, they will also conduct outreach activities at homes, shelters and hospitals.

Shelter/ Water and Sanitation (WASH)

Providing suitable shelter options is still a top priority and challenge in the Bekaa. UNHCR, DRC, NRC, UNICEF, SCI and Action Contre La Faim (ACF) identified 11 abandoned schools for potential shelter. After further assessments, only three were found to be suitable for sheltering displaced Syrians in the Bekaa. Approval from the MoEHE to rehabilitate these buildings has been sought. Other solutions continue to be actively sought out as well.

An action plan is also being developed to relocate approximately 100 families living in operational schools.

UNICEF and ACF are developing plans to expand the current WASH response, covering more areas in the Bekaa where newly arrived Syrians are residing. Currently 800,000 liters of potable water are reaching 4,133 children and 2,006 women each week. A redeemable water voucher system will be introduced next week to more efficiently pay water suppliers and ensure that families are only charged for the water delivered to their households.

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.

August 17-24, 2012