

UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees

Beirut, November 30-December 7, 2012



Highlights of the week

- The Government of Lebanon launched its Syrian refugee response plan in a first meeting with the donor community on December 3. The plan sets out areas of government engagement and totals \$178 million USD based on a planning figure of 130,000 refugees;
- UNHCR registered over 6,000 people this week;
- Agencies distributed fuel coupons, mattresses, blankets, sanitary napkins, hygiene kits, food vouchers and food kits to over 20,000 registered refugees in Beirut, the north, east and south Lebanon;
- UNICEF supported Lebanese public schools with the necessary supplies, quadrupling the number of schools assisted since last month.



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Registration and New Arrivals

Some 150,000 Syrian refugees receive protection and assistance from the Government of Lebanon, UN and NGO partners. Over 109,000 have been registered by UNHCR, and 41,000 are scheduled to be registered.

Registration with UNHCR continues through the centralized registration premises in Tripoli and Beirut, and through mobile centers in the Bekaa and South Lebanon. UNHCR teams register some 1,500 refugees daily.

In the Bekaa, UNHCR teams are preparing for the opening of a fixed registration centre in Zahle at the turn of the new year.

Over 6,000 refugees were registered over the course of the past week. Current distribution of the registered population is as follows:

North Lebanon: 55,872

Bekaa: 44,178

Beirut and South: 9,031

Protection

The Government launched its Syrian refugee response plan in a first meeting with the donor community on December 3, setting out areas of government engagement totalling \$178 million USD based on a planning figure of 130,000 refugees. The plan was warmly welcomed by the donor community. Technical meetings continued this week to further discuss the plan and are ongoing next week. In the meantime, the Prime Minister announced his intention to convene a follow-up meeting on the week of the 17th of December to move forward with the plan. This follows the recent formation of an inter-ministerial committee assigned to work hand-in-hand with UNHCR and coordinate the roles and responsibilities of government bodies involved in the humanitarian response.

UNHCR and partner agencies continue to focus on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) response and the response children's specific needs. An inter-agency SGBV regional adviser on mission in Lebanon visited partners involved in the SGBV response in the Bekaa and the North and provided training to UNHCR's Protection and Community Services' staff in providing counseling and support for vulnerable women. In addition, UNFPA led a mapping of SGBV service providers to ensure that those seeking help know where to seek help if needed.

As capacity of child protection partners is increasing and more services are being set up, further information is becoming available on child protection issues faced by refugee children. UNICEF is providing psychosocial support through 32 locations (either center-based or mobile) throughout the country. Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs), areas that can facilitate interactive workshops, remedial classes and other recreational activities, are simultaneously used as a tool to provide psychosocial support to children.

Legal documentation and freedom of movement remain a concern for Syrian refugees, particularly in the North. UNHCR has a meeting with the General Security Office (GSO) next week on means to move forward on the previously announced commitments to waive renewal fees and to regularize those refugees who crossed through unofficial border crossings.

Security

North Lebanon witnessed deadly clashes yet again between the Tripoli neighborhoods of Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen. Approximately 10 people were killed and 80 injured, while the Northern International Highway connecting Tripoli to the rest of north Lebanon was blocked due to sniping activities and ongoing clashes. Further north, the Lebanese border villages of El Noura and Debebeyeh were subject to shelling from the Syrian territories. Fortunately, no casualties or material damages were reported. UNHCR is liaising closely with the U.N. Security Information Operations Center (UNSIOC) to ensure the safety of both refugees and humanitarian workers in the delivery of services.

Distribution

Winter has arrived in Lebanon, and refugees are relying heavily on UNHCR and partners for their monthly distribution of winterization items as well as food vouchers and other non-food items.

Since many refugees fled Syria with not much more than the clothing on their backs, the provision of warm winter blankets, clothing, fuel vouchers for heating and rugs is of utmost importance to keep people warm during the colder months.

UNHCR works alongside the World Food Programme (WFP) to distribute food vouchers to Syrian refugees. In addition, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Migration Organization (IOM) and Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (CLMC) to ensure refugees received necessities, such as hygiene kits, kitchen sets, mattresses, sanitary napkins, baby diapers and milk, and cooking gas. This week, some 27,000 items were distributed to over 20,000 people (4,155 families) in the North, Bekaa and South. In the Bekaa, registered refugees received fuel vouchers and in the South, Premiere-Urgence- Aide Medicale Internationale (PU-AMI) and Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP) will commence distribution of winterization items starting next week. Distribution was interrupted in Wadi Khaled due to a disturbance and was re-scheduled for this weekend.

Education

Close to 10,000 refugee children have registered in Lebanese public schools from the beginning of the school year through UNHCR, UNICEF and Save the Children (SCI) efforts.

UNHCR and partners worked to build the capacity of Lebanese public schools to accommodate the increased number of enrolled children. UNICEF distributed 'School in a Box' kits - books, pencils, erasers, scissors, counting cubes and posters-, Early Childhood Development (ECD) and recreational kits to help equip schools with necessary supplies, with the number of schools assisted quadrupling since a month ago. 'School in a Box' kits have helped teachers establish a makeshift classroom almost anywhere. This has been a helpful initiative as UNHCR and partners brainstorm alternative methods to ensure all children are hosted in schools. In the meantime, support to refugee families continues, with remedial classes helping children acclimate to the new curriculum.

Health

A total of 1,450 refugees received primary health care services this week, including consultations, treatment, medication, vaccinations and diagnostic tests. UNHCR and International Medical Corps (IMC) are now focusing on making use of primary health care centers in the North, Bekaa, South, and Beirut to raise awareness among refugees regarding health issues such as diarrheal diseases, acute respiratory infections, breastfeeding, family planning and antenatal/postnatal care. Over 330 refugees benefited from health awareness sessions this week, while more are planned for the coming weeks.

UNHCR and IMC are currently working to enhance the primary health care referral mechanism by adding a fifth primary health care center to the network. Refugees will be able to benefit from doctor consultations, vaccinations and diagnostic tests at this center in Halba as of December 16.

With the onset of winter, seasonal diseases like lice become more prevalent in society especially in schools where children are in close contact with each other. IMC rolled-out awareness sessions on lice transmission and management that will be given to refugees in the coming weeks. In the meantime, health actors provided lice cases with adequate treatment.

Due to security concerns, accessibility to primary health care centers and hospitals in Tripoli was limited this week and patients were advised to postpone non-emergency services to the following week.

UNHCR and IMC continued to cover 85% of hospitalization costs to refugees in need of secondary health care. Over 200 refugee patients were admitted to hospitals in north Lebanon and the Bekaa. Many refugees continue to report facing problems in covering the remaining 15%. Most recently, the IMC team met with the local NGO Ishrak El Nour that agreed to cover outstanding costs for vulnerable patients. Additionally, UNHCR and IMC increased the secondary health care referral network in the Bekaa by signing additional agreements with Hermel Governmental Hospital, Al Bekaa Hospital, and Farhat hospital, bringing the total number of referral hospitals in the area to eight.

Given the high demand, UNHCR and IMC employed an additional psychologist in the Bekaa. The psychologist will operate through the Rafic Hariri Center in Taanayel and the MOSA center in Hermel. As some refugees have found it difficult to commute to these specific hospitals, it was also agreed that the psychologist will conduct home visits to follow up on the cases of vulnerable refugees.

Shelter

With many refugees taking shelter in the coldest areas of Lebanon (the Bekaa and North), UNHCR continued its efforts to rehabilitate unfinished houses, add plastic sheeting to tented settlements to help seal off winter elements and weather-proofing other shelters as needed. Such interventions include adding doors, windows and installing stoves to provide much needed warmth. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) adding plastic sheeting, doors or windows to over 100 houses this week and is currently rehabilitating 23 houses.

Also of concern is the fact that following the large influx of Syrians into Lebanon since the summer, there has been an increased demand for affordable housing. The current majority of refugees are renting and unable to afford high rent fees, but this has also begun to leave an economic and social impact on local Lebanese. UNHCR and DRC visited refugee families in the Bekaa to assess their shelter status and provide them with necessary support. The most vulnerable among refugees visited will be assisted through the 'Cash for Rent' programme, whereby cash is paid to landlords on behalf of refugees who are not able to pay their rent. In the North, over 200 families will begin receiving Cash for Rent.

Water and Sanitation

Efforts to improve Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) conditions in refugee shelters continued this week. UNHCR and PU-AMI distributed water filters to 50 refugee families in Sidon, and conducted hygiene awareness sessions among registered refugees in the area. PU-AMI also mapped out refugee families who were living in inadequate sanitation conditions. Identified families will be assisted in improving the status of their sanitation facilities including latrines and showers. In the Bekaa, Action Contre La Faim (ACF) conducted a WASH assessment in the Laboue, Dal'hamie, Saddnayel and Jeb Jennin areas where a considerable number of refugees currently reside. UNHCR and ACF are currently rolling-out a WASH action plan based on assessment results.

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.