

LEBANON: Aarsal Influx Inter-Agency Update

12 December 2013



Aarsal

 **35,000**
Resident
Population of Aarsal

 **21,561**
Registered Refugees
As of 11 December 2013

 **21,217***
Newcomers identified
and verified since 15
November 2013

 **77,778**
Total population in
Aarsal

CONTEXT

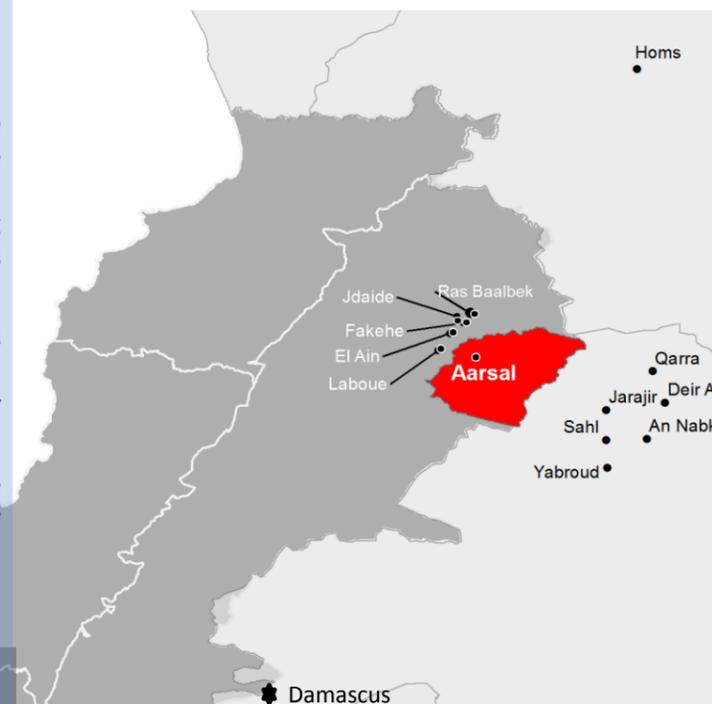
Humanitarian partners are responding to an influx of more than 4,800 refugee families following heavy fighting between the Syrian Armed Forces and Armed Opposition Groups in the Qalamoun area of Rif Dimashq, Syria. Heavy clashes which began on 15 November in Qarah, have spread to many neighbouring villages. Although fighting continues, the arrival of refugees has slowed to 10-15 families a day.

The majority of refugees have found shelter in Aarsal, with others now accommodated in the neighbouring villages of El Ain, Fakehe, Chaat and Ras Baalbek and some moving on to other areas of the country.

Humanitarian partners have been on the ground since the beginning of the influx. UNHCR is coordinating the inter-agency response under the direction of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Partners scaled up distribution of winter items, including 2,000 blankets and 360 stoves, to protect refugees against extreme weather conditions caused by the Alexa storm



Refugees are coping with extreme weather conditions, including at the temporary shelter site in Aarsal, 2013-12-11 © UNHCR

RESPONSE

Protection

(DRC, TdH, IRC, MOSA, NRC, TdH, UNHCR, UNICEF)

Registration with local authorities has ceased in response to the lower number of new arrivals. Newcomer families are identified by partners through outreach and provided with immediate assistance based on their needs.

Children have now access to two child friendly spaces in Aarsal and partners are carrying out psychosocial support activities in collective shelters for children, women and men. A protection desk dealing specifically with children has been established. So far, 59 separated children have been identified. For 25 out of these, a family care arrangement was found immediately; solutions for the remaining 24 are being identified.

Public Health

(AMEL, Beyond, HI, ICRC, IMC, MDM, MOSA, MSF, MOPH, SHRO, UNHCR, UNICEF)

Polio vaccination efforts continue, with the launch of the second round of the national vaccination campaign on 6 December. Children under 5 years of age of all nationalities are targeted. Children are also being provided with micronutrient supplements.

The malnutrition screening which started at the end of November was concluded, reaching over 1,390 children and leading to the identification of seven malnourished minors. All children were immediately assisted.

Three mobile medical units continue providing primary health care services and ante-natal care to refugees unable to reach local health centres.

* Refugees previously registered with the municipality and with partners as well as newcomers are now recorded in a consolidated database and will be registered with UNHCR

Core Relief Items and Food Security

(Amel, Al Jamaa Al Islamiya, Aarsal Municipality, DAF, DRC, GVC, IOM, IRC, Jousour Al Nour, KSA Relief, Prince of Qatar Aid, TdH, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP)

In anticipation of the Alexa storm, partners scaled up the distribution of winter items over the weekend. In a coordinated effort, partners delivered over 360 stoves, 7500 litres of heating fuel, 400 fuel vouchers, 3,000 meals, 2,000 blankets and 150 shovels to remove snow. Some 1,800 children living at the temporary shelter site, in informal tented settlements and collective shelters, received winter clothes on Sunday and Monday. Further stoves and blankets have been sent to Aarsal and will be distributed as soon as possible. The distribution of other core relief items and food continued. Some 18,000 persons have been assisted.

Shelter and WASH

(ACF, Dar el Fatwa, Intersos, IOM, Municipality, MOSA, NRC, Save the Children, TdH, UNHCR, UNICEF)

Refugees living at the temporary shelter site have been provided with 150 plastic sheets to isolate tents against the elements. Partners distributed 45 full shelter kits to refugees living in summer tents to ensure more appropriate dwellings. A further 56 shelter reinforcement kits were distributed to refugees living in informal tented settlements at the outskirts of Aarsal.

Mapping of water sources has shown that one of the three main water sources is currently not available due to freezing. Agencies will seek a solution together with the municipality. Regular WASH assistance, including water supply, provision of sanitation facilities, water tanks as well as hygiene promotion continued during the past week.

Challenges

Weather conditions remain critical putting refugees at real risk of deterioration of their wellbeing. With temperatures expected to remain very low in the coming days and weeks, continued and urgent action is needed to seal off refugee dwellings and identify alternative shelter solutions. An additional 100 tents and 70 sealing off kits have been prepositioned and will be distributed according to needs.

Ensuring access to fuel and heating is another critical concern. Partners are being encouraged to focus available funding on the purchase of heating items.

Next steps

Partners will mobilize all available resources to continue meeting urgent winter needs, through the distribution of shelter kits, blankets, heaters, fuel and winter clothes in the coming days.

Partners are updating records of refugees residing in informal tented settlements to identify new arrivals in need of assistance.

A mapping of water supply capacity in the town is planned to ensure no shortages will occur, in particular in view of dropping temperatures and the risk of freezing water sources.

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