

LEBANON/SYRIA SITUATION

STATELESSNESS MONTHLY UPDATE

July 2014

JULY DEVELOPMENTS

- UNHCR launched a capacity building project with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities as part of a campaign on birth registration in Lebanon. The objective is to sensitise those involved in the birth registration procedure on the links between birth registration, child protection and prevention of statelessness, as well as to elaborate best practices. This project is undertaken in partnership with the local NGO Frontiers Ruwad Association, and as part of a joint campaign with UNICEF and OHCHR.
- UNHCR launched a legal aid project to assist persons of Lebanese origins to confirm Lebanese nationality. Legal representation will be provided to 20 cases, including strategic cases under the nationality law and the judicial registration of civil status events. This project is undertaken in partnership with the local NGO Frontiers Ruwad Association.
- The Statelessness Unit provided telephone counseling on birth registration to 1,000 individuals with Syrian children born in Lebanon. The Unit also facilitated a training on birth registration for social workers in Mount Lebanon.

Needs

There are estimated to be tens of thousands of stateless persons in Lebanon. The exact number is difficult to ascertain. Two significant reasons for this are that there has not been an official census since 1932 and many stateless persons do not have civil registration records. There are a number of different profiles of stateless persons in Lebanon, as well as individuals who are at risk of statelessness. Stateless persons in Lebanon face obstacles in accessing healthcare, education, social services, as well as the labour market. They are unable to move freely and face risks of detention and arrest.

Challenges

Influx of Syrians: With the continued arrival of refugees from Syria, the number of stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness has risen. Stateless refugees in Lebanon include Syrian Kurds who were denaturalised in Syria in 1962. Since March 2011, 31,879 Syrian refugees have been born in Lebanon and, according to a UNHCR survey of 5,779 Syrian newborns, 72% do not possess an official birth certificate.

Gaps in Legislative Framework: Lebanon is not a signatory to either the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The Lebanese nationality law contains gender-discriminatory provisions, which only allow a Lebanese woman to confer her nationality on her children in exceptional circumstances. Provisions for naturalisation are highly politicised and at the discretion of the Lebanese State. Safeguards against statelessness at birth are interpreted very narrowly by the courts.

Gaps in Administrative Framework: Not all children are registered at birth in Lebanon. This is despite the fact that Lebanon is a State Party to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child which requires the registration of the birth of every child and reaffirms a child's right to

a nationality. Barriers to birth registration include a complex procedure with onerous requirements for documentation.

Strategy

UNHCR has a global mandate to work on the identification, prevention and reduction of statelessness, and the protection of stateless persons. In Lebanon, UNHCR is working to respond to statelessness through three strategic actions.

- Identification of the population:** The advancement of rights and protection for stateless persons in Lebanon is constrained by the lack of data on persons concerned. UNHCR is supporting a survey on statelessness in Lebanon being undertaken by a local NGO called Frontiers Ruwad Association. UNHCR is also undertaking qualitative research on statelessness through individual casework and participatory assessment. This information is contributing to strategy for the prevention and reduction of statelessness as well as the protection of stateless persons.
- Advocacy for legislative changes:** UNHCR works with the Lebanese government for improvements to the Lebanese nationality law, access to civil registration, as well as the protection situation for stateless persons. The Lebanese Ministries of Interior, Justice, Health, Education and Social Affairs have appointed statelessness focal points who are engaged with UNHCR bilaterally and are also participating in working groups on statelessness and civil registration.
- Direct Assistance:** UNHCR is assisting Syrian refugees to access birth registration procedures in Lebanon. UNHCR has started work on developing a legal aid network on statelessness to assist unregistered persons of Lebanese origin to access Lebanese nationality. This work has included documenting test cases on marriage registration to inform strategic litigation and information counselling to assist with prevention and reduction of statelessness.

Achievements: January - July

Activity	Reached Jan - July	2014 Target
Individuals receiving information on birth registration	22,932	22,000
Families of newborns provided with individual counselling on birth registration	6,834	9,000
Training on birth registration with officials and front-liners	334	600
Individuals provided with legal assistance for civil registration/nationality cases	439	1,000

Key figures

- 31,879 Syrian newborns registered – (March 2011 – July 2014)
- 72% Syrian newborns lack official birth certificates*
- 42% Syrian newborns lack official birth certificates because their parents lack documentation required by civil registries*

*This is based on a survey of 5,779 newborns registered with UNHCR between 1 August 2013 and 31 January 2014

Funding (UNHCR total requirements: USD 451 m)



UNHCR implementing partners

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Caritas, International Relief and Development (IRD), Frontiers Ruwad Association.

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Links: Inter-agency Information Sharing: <http://data.unhcr.org/lebanon>

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