

Key Figures

- 39,270** Syrian newborns registered (March 2011-October 2014)
- 70%** Syrian newborns lack official birth certificates*
- 40%** Syrian newborns lack official birth certificates because their parents lack documentation required by civil registries*

* This is based on a survey of 7,731 newborns registered with UNHCR between 1 August 2013 and 31 March 2014.

Excerpt from information leaflet on birth registration





Animated film on birth registration available at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=AX0j243WnTk

October developments

- It is anticipated that the recent Government policy to regularise Syrians without legal status will improve access to birth registration, as legal status is required to register births at the Personal Status Department. As a result, 6,500 Syrian children will now potentially be able to have their births registered.
- To meet the possible increase in the number of Syrians approaching Personal Status Departments, UNHCR has offered to provide equipment and additional staff. This offer was welcomed by the Ministry of Interior and an agreement on capacity building will be elaborated by both parties.
- UNHCR is working to improve access to birth registration in respect of all births on the Lebanese territory through a national campaign. In October, the tools for the campaign were developed – a brochure, poster, TV spot, radio spot and website explaining. These tools explain why birth registration is important and the relevant procedure for Lebanese nationals, foreign nationals and stateless persons.

Achievements: January – October

Activity	 reached January-October	 2014 Target
Individuals receiving information on birth registration	31,314	22,000
Families of newborns provided with individual counselling on birth registration	8,564	9,000
Training on birth registration with officials and front-liners	499	600
Individuals provided with legal assistance for civil registration/nationality cases	590	1,000

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.

Syrian refugee who has no documents proving he's legally married therefore; his young baby's birth could not be registered @UNHCR



Challenges

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 to 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.

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, 39,270 Syrian refugees have been born in Lebanon and, according to a UNHCR survey of 7,731 Syrian newborns, 70% do not possess an official birth certificate.

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 the 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 of 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 civil registration procedures in Lebanon. UNHCR has implemented a legal aid project on statelessness which focuses on assisting unregistered persons of Lebanese origin to access Lebanese nationality. UNHCR has initiated a national campaign on birth registration in partnership with Frontiers Ruwad Association and with the support of the Ministries of Interior, Social Affairs, Public Health, Education and Justice.

UNHCR implementing partners

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

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