

SYRIAN REFUGEE RESPONSE: LEBANON INTER-AGENCY UPDATE

5 December 2014

LEBANON



#FutureOfSyria

Agencies and the Government of Lebanon had requested US\$1.89 billion in the inter-agency funding appeal.

The mid-year review in June resulted in a downward revision of these requirements to US\$ 1.68 billion. US\$659 million - 44 per cent - has been received as of 5 November.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The World Food Programme (WFP) announced this week that it can no longer feed Syrian refugees as it has run out of funding .
- More than 67,000 people received fuel vouchers, quilts, weatherproofing kits and other winter assistance in the Bekaa.
- UNHCR and UNICEF have committed to supporting 57,000 schoolchildren in the afternoon shift.
- On 15 November, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) issued a circular for the opening of second shift. The deadline for enrolment will be December 20.

FOOD SECURITY

The World Food Programme (WFP) announced this week that it can no longer feed Syrian refugees as it has run out of funding. WFP said it needed \$64 million to fund its food voucher programme for December alone.

Word of WFP's suspension of food assistance spread rapidly among refugees, raising considerable anxiety. WFP began sending SMS messages to refugees on Tuesday, December 2, informing them of the suspension and advising that they will be notified if funding is received and WFP can resume food assistance. As word of the suspension spread, refugee telephone helplines began receiving thousands of calls from worried Syrians, many of whom are entirely dependent on international assistance.

Many callers were obviously shaken by the news, and several were weeping. They included disabled people and others who said they could not survive without food assistance. Many of them asked whether there were alternatives to the food vouchers and how long the suspension would last.

Although various options are being explored by UNHCR and partners to try ease the impact of the suspension on refugees, there are no quick, easy solutions that would cover more than 850,000 people affected. The best solution is for the international community to provide immediate funding to WFP.

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In the meantime, options under discussion include identifying any funds held by various partners that could be quickly transferred for use in providing at least some type of food assistance to the most vulnerable refugees, possibly through existing distribution channels. On Friday, UNHCR announced it would add an additional US\$ 20 to family cash cards for the month of December. Thus, families who should receive US\$ 80 will now receive US\$ 100 for December. The families who should receive US\$ 175 in December will receive US\$ 195. In all, some 67,000 families will benefit. The total cost for the extra funds is estimated at US\$1.34 million, plus transfer fees.

Other possibilities for filling some of the gap is to explore alternative sources of food assistance, including local NGOs, mosques and various civic organisations, many of which are already involved in helping refugees.

On the ground, partners are meeting with refugee leaders and local partners to identify available community resources and discuss ways of addressing concerns over the suspension. All of these options and others are being considered.

As WFP's Executive Director, Ertharin Cousin, said in announcing the suspension, it can cause "further tensions, instability and insecurity" in host countries and communities.

If funds are not received and the suspension is not lifted soon, there could be an increase in so-called negative coping strategies among refugees, most of whom are already in a very precarious situation. These negative coping strategies can include children dropping out of school to help raise money to buy food for their families; abuse and exploitation of children and workers trying earn money for food; an increase in crime/theft and resulting tensions with local communities; and an increase in refugees deciding under pressure of hunger to move elsewhere – either back to an unsafe Syria or onwards, beyond the region – possibly using irregular channels.

Host communities are already overstretched and do not have the resources to deal with the devastating consequences of a halt in food aid. High Commissioner Antonio Guterres said the suspension of food aid could not have come at a worse time. UNHCR and partners have been working hard to get all vulnerable refugees prepared for winter, an operation that has made good progress and is continuing. But the provision of food is obviously crucial to ensuring survival and safety over the coming winter months

WINTERIZATION

Efforts to protect refugee families from the elements across Lebanon continue. In all, UNHCR and its partners estimate some 132,000 refugee households (660,000 people) are in need of some kind of assistance during winter to keep them as warm and dry as possible.

The winter programme covers a wide range of activities and aid items. These include ensuring that sub-standard shelters are sealed off against the elements, and the provision of high-thermal blankets, stoves, fuel vouchers and cash to purchase various items people need in order to stay warm. The priorities are based largely on first reaching those living at higher altitudes and the most economically vulnerable.

In Mount Lebanon, 190 households received shelter kits from CHF and ACTED. As more funding came in this week, an additional 5,000 refugee families (25,000 individuals) living between 500 and 875 m will benefit from financial assistance in the form of ATM cards. Some 4,200 cards will be distributed to these families by ACTED and Makhzoumi Foundation in the coming week.

In North Lebanon, nearly 1,300 refugees received financial assistance amounting to US\$80, while 6,682 refugees received fuel vouchers, blankets, and/or weatherproofing kits to insulate their shelters.

In the Bekaa, 13,404 families (67,000 individuals) have received fuel vouchers so far. Over 8,600 families received blankets and another 20,797 received financial assistance. Additionally, nearly 800 refugees in Aarsal received stoves and over 6,500 families received fuel vouchers.

67,000 received fuel vouchers, quilts and weatherproofing kits in the Bekaa

Also this week, UNHCR learned that a number of forged fuel vouchers were detected in November by Medco, the fuel supplier – contracted by the Qatari Red Crescent (QRC) – that produces and redeems the winter fuel vouchers for refugees.

To ensure that refugees continue to receive fuel at this critical time, Medco – in consultation with UNHCR – immediately limited the distribution of fuel in exchange for vouchers to a smaller network of Medco-run stations where local managers are able to verify the vouchers on a case-by-case basis and ascertain their validity.

UNHCR worked fast to make sure that all refugees are able to redeem their vouchers at suppliers near them, while making sure that scarce resources are not compromised. UNHCR has informed all refugees who benefit from this programme about operational suppliers within their areas of residence. The distribution of fuel vouchers was put back on track on Wednesday, 3 December, across Lebanon.

The reduction in the number of gas stations providing this service affected refugees the most in Wadi Khaled. Medco does not run any gas stations in the area, which posed a problem for refugees who found it difficult to commute to other towns to access services. UNHCR is currently working with Medco to operationalize at least one gas station within Wadi Khaled to improve access for refugees there.

PROTECTION

On 25 November, UNICEF, UNHCR and partners celebrated the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and marked the launch of the annual international 16 Days Campaign to End Violence against Women and Girls. Community events on violence against women and girls have been taking place across the country, bringing together women, girls, boys, and men to say no to violence against women and girls. The campaign this year has a specific focus on child marriage. UNICEF and UNHCR's partners in the campaign include: Makhzoumi, UNRWA, UNFPA, IMC, Intersos, CLMC, Save the Children, ABAAD, IRC, DRC, Beyond Association, Heartland Alliance, LECORVAW, MAP UK, and Najdeh Association.

EDUCATION

UNHCR and UNICEF have committed to supporting 57,000 children in the afternoon shift.

Public schools continue to welcome Syrian children in the morning first shift following a mid-October decision by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). UNICEF and UNHCR deployed volunteers to MEHE in order to collect and digitalize school registration data from all public schools. This data collection effort will begin next week and will help determine the exact number of Syrian children who have so far been able to enroll in public schools.

On 15 November, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) issued a circular for the opening of the second, afternoon shift for schoolchildren. The deadline for enrolment is December 20.

UNHCR and UNICEF have committed to supporting 57,000 children in the afternoon shift. The final selection of public schools that will be accommodating afternoon classes should be finalized this week by MEHE. They should be able to start enrolling in afternoon classes as soon as the final public school list is shared.

An exhibition on Saturday, 6 December, entitled “Do You See What I See” will wrap up a two-week photography workshop for young Syrians in the Bekaa. The event – which will be held in the old Lebanese house, ‘Rural Delights Boutique,’ on Gemmayze street -- will be attended by some of the participants and their parents and is open to the public and media. “Do You See What I See” workshops conducted by photographer Brendan Bannon have also been held with refugee populations in other countries, including in Jordan. A story about the project also appeared in The New York Times.

HEALTH

15,665 consultations conducted for primary and secondary health care services

A total of 14,515 primary health care consultations were conducted during the reporting period in the country. These include treatments, referrals, provision of medication, antenatal care, postnatal care, family planning, child health and diagnostic tests. These are provided by UNHCR, AMEL, International Medical Corps (IMC), Makassed and URDA in coordination with the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) through mobile or center-based clinics.

Additionally, some 1,150 individuals were hospitalized this week, including 600 deliveries, supported by UNHCR.

Another 6,000 individuals benefited from health awareness sessions provided by UNHCR, IMC, CLMC, IOCC & URDA. Sessions covered included malnutrition screening, nutrition, reproductive health, infant and young child feeding, contraception, first aid and health promotion for children.

A total of 1,276 social and mental health consultations were provided nationwide by IMC through its outreach and center-based services. A further 648 awareness sessions were conducted on mental health, gender based violence and early marriage.

Ahmed's Story

When street violence spread through the Syrian city of Idlib three years ago, most residents shuttered their windows and stayed home while the fighting raged outside. Dr. Ahmed was not among them. Instead, he ventured out to tend to the wounded.

The 45-year-old dermatologist and plant specialist cauterized flesh wounds, reset broken bones and rescued children separated from their parents.

"When you see another human being lying in the street, you have to help," he says.



Today, Ahmed is still helping the needy, but from the sidelines rather than the thick of the Syrian conflict. He is a refugee volunteer for UNHCR.

Read the full story here: <http://tracks.unhcr.org/2014/12/a-natural-humanitarian/>

SHELTER

Weatherproofing activities and site improvements continued this week in informal settlements across the country.

A total 1,663 refugees received weatherproofing kits by CONCERN in Akroum, Akkar. 485 refugees received weatherproofing kits by MEDAIR and Save the Children in Central and West Bekaa.

More than 2,500 refugees living in informal settlements identified as flood-prone were assisted with site improvements by Medair in West and Central Bekaa, and CONCERN in Akroum, Akkar.

Some 835 refugees were provided with sealing-off kits for their substandard shelters by CHF in Aley, Baabda, and Chouf districts.

A total 225 refugees were provided with adequate shelter through the rehabilitation of small shelter units by NRC in Central and West Bekaa, CHF in Chouf, PU-AMI in Sahel Zahrani, and CISP and Intersos in Nabatieh.

WATER, HYGIENE AND SANITATION (WASH)

A total of 650 Lebanese and 400 Syrian refugees residing in Mashta Hassan, Akkar, will soon benefit from a joint water project by CONCERN and the municipality of Mashta Hassan. The transmission line and water storage system were installed this week by CONCERN.

A total of 2,100 Lebanese and 600 Syrian refugees residing in Bsatine, Akkar, already benefiting from a borehole created by CONCERN in 2013, now also have access to a water treatment plant.

In the Bekaa, 7,392 m3 of water were trucked to Syrian refugees and Lebanese in the towns, including Aarsal, by Action Contre la Faim (ACF) and Intersos.

A total of 1,655 latrines were emptied; 164 water filters and 42 water tanks were distributed; and 13 latrines were installed in the Bekaa and the South by ACF, CHF, and ACTED.

Over 4,000 Syrian refugees attended hygiene promotion sessions

5,711 refugees were protected against the winter elements this week

276,650 Lebanese and 69,400 Syrian refugees will soon benefit from water projects by UNICEF and UNHCR.

conducted in Bekaa and Mount Lebanon by ACF, CHF, ACTED and Intersos.

Some 100 refugees received hygiene kits and another 100 refugees benefitted from the provision of 31 garbage bins in the South by ACF.

Construction works for three water reservoirs in Borjein, Jadra and Baasir, Mount Lebanon, are in process.

Over 276,000 Lebanese and 69,000 Syrians will benefit from the replacement of 11 water pumps by UNICEF in the South. These pumps were installed in the most vulnerable municipalities of the South.

DONORS

Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, EU, France, Germany, Holy See, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA.

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AGENCIES THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT



This report is produced by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) on behalf of humanitarian agencies working on the Syrian refugee response in Lebanon. The report is based on information provided by UNHCR and partner agencies. For more information, please contact Dana Sleiman at sleiman@unhcr.org or Mona Monzer at monzer@unhcr.org.