

HIGHLIGHTS

- Partners roll out new e-card for 210,000 vulnerable households to access a wide range of assistance.
- Lebanon is among 150 countries around the world celebrating World Food Day 2016.
- RC/HC visits projects in Akkar, the poorest governorate in Lebanon.
- LHF partners are currently implementing 50 projects totaling US\$25.9 million.



A child in the Mhammara ITS in Akkar. Source: UNDP/Rana Sweidan

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This month in Lebanon

This month, as World Food Day 2016 was celebrated in Lebanon and around the world, aid partners introduced a pioneering new common card that will enable 210,000 highly vulnerable families across Lebanon to access a wide range of assistance, from food aid to education support. As winter approaches, UN agencies and their partners are also preparing to bring winterization assistance to 265,000 vulnerable households across Lebanon, up from 250,000 households which received winter aid in 2015-2016. Read Fawaz's story page 5 to see why this assistance is so essential for families living in tents, collective shelters and substandard buildings. Also this in this issue, we report on the RC/HC's visit to Akkar, the poorest governorate in Lebanon, to look at the response and the challenges in a region hit by high unemployment and extensive challenges for both vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees. On the funding side, our overview of the achievements of the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund shows that 40 partners, including 26 new ones, are currently working on 50 projects totaling US\$25.9 million.

FIGURES

(as of 31 October 2016)

# of estimated refugees	1,500,000
# of registered refugees	1,017,433

52.1 %  47.9 %  53 % 

# of returnees	35,000
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# of Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS)	40,807
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# of Palestine Refugees from Lebanon (PRL)	277,985
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# of vulnerable Lebanese	1,500,000
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Total Lebanese population	4,400,000
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Partners roll out common e-card for Lebanon

Refugee families to access wide range of assistance through one card

In October, WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF and the Lebanon Cash Consortium began distributing their innovative common e-card to approximately 210,000 most vulnerable and poor households, including 185,000 Syrian and 25,000 Lebanese households.

The red e-card – replacing other e-cards in circulation for food, winter and multi-purpose cash assistance from various UN agencies – provides each eligible family with a single tool to access a myriad of assistance, including food, winter cash, education support and multi-sector cash assistance (which can be used for a broad range of assistance), as part of a broader humanitarian safety net system.

Supporting with dignity

The common e-cards are loaded at the beginning of each month and can be used in any of WFP's 480 contracted shops and any ATM across Lebanon. Upon receiving the new e-cards, beneficiaries receive a booklet explaining how the e-card works, with a list of hotlines in each area of Lebanon.



This page from the booklet distributed with the e-card explains what kind of food the card can buy.

For food assistance, for example, every eligible family receives US\$27 per month directly onto the card, which they can then redeem against a list of items at participating local stores. This allows them to buy the foods that fit their needs, including fresh produce which is not normally included in traditional food rations.

Cash assistance is increasingly common in Lebanon, as it gives vulnerable families the ability to determine how to provide for their basic needs with dignity – an important social, psychological and cultural anchor for families in uncertain times. Cash assistance also boosts the local economy by bringing in revenue to the shops affiliated with the system, while also bringing money into the local market: since it was introduced in 2013, WFP's e-card programme has injected more than US\$650 million into the Lebanese economy. Cash-based assistance will also be a key modality as part of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan for 2017-2020 which is currently being finalized.

World Food Day celebrated in Lebanon

Exhibition highlights the food assistance provided by FAO and WFP

"Climate is changing. Food and agriculture must too". Under this slogan, 150 countries around the world celebrated the World Food Day 2016 on 16 October to mark the day that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was founded in 1945.

The World Food Day exhibition in Beirut highlighted FAO and WFP's contribution to improving food security, food safety and sustainable agriculture in Lebanon as well as around the world.

As part of the commemorations, FAO Lebanon and its sister agency, the World Food Programme (WFP), held an open air photography exhibition at Souk El Tawileh, Beirut Souks from 12 to 18 October in order to highlight their contribution to improving food security, food safety and sustainable agriculture in Lebanon as well as around the world.



The World Food Day photo exhibition in Beirut Souks. Source: OCHA

Technology against hunger

One of the highlights of the exhibition was the presentation of the e-card, an innovative electronic voucher system through which WFP Lebanon provided assistance to 650,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees in October. WFP has also developed an innovative smart phone app called GRASP (Geo-referenced Real-time Acquisition of Statistics Platform) that allows staff to assess shops in real-time using smartphones in order to design operational alternatives to current activities. Through this app, WFP staff can input information about the supply chain, the impact of the WFP e-voucher programme at trader/shop level, trading activities in different shops, and other key areas.

Official ceremony in Aley

The official World Food Day ceremony was organized on 10 October by FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture at the Al Hay El Gharbi Garden in Aley, in collaboration with WFP and Italian Cooperation. The event took place under the patronage of Agriculture Minister Akram Chehayeb, with the participation of the Ministry of Energy and Water and the Ministry of Environment.

In his opening remarks, Dominik Heinrich, WFP representative in Lebanon said "World Food Day is an opportunity for reaffirming WFP's commitment towards achieving the Social Development Goal: Zero Hunger by 2030, and to express gratitude to the

Government of Lebanon, to FAO and all other partners and to donors for entrusting WFP to contribute towards shared objectives of food security and good nutrition in Lebanon.”

Maurice Saade, the FAO representative in Lebanon, stressed that agricultural sectors can play a transformative role in addressing the impacts of climate change and added that “for Lebanon, the 40 million trees programme constitutes a key element in enhancing the country’s adaptation to climate change.”

In his speech, Agriculture Minister Akram Chehayeb stated that “the negative impacts of climate change on food production could get worse if we do not implement adequate policies for sustainable food production and sustained productivity increase”. He added that the negative impact of climate change on Lebanese agriculture could amount to US\$800 million by 2020 and up to US\$2.6 billion by 2040.

Lebanon Country Programming Framework 2016-2019

FAO’s Lebanon Country Programming Framework (CPF) for 2016-2019 addresses the priorities identified under the Ministry of Agriculture’s 2015-2019 Strategy, as well as the LCRP/Food Security Strategic Response Plan 2016. The Strategy identifies targets including increasing the share of agriculture to 6 percent of GDP from the existing 4 percent, reducing the current agriculture trade deficit by 15 percent points, increasing the value of agricultural production by 30 percent, in addition to increasing public spending in the sector, raising farm household income and creating jobs in agriculture. The Food Security Strategic Response Plan 2016 aims to improve food security and increase the resilience of the agriculture sector and related activities in response to the current food security situation in Lebanon.

Akkar, an agricultural region along Lebanon’s northern border with Syria, is the poorest governorate in the country, with severe vulnerability levels and some of the country’s highest unemployment rates

HC visits vulnerable areas in Akkar

RC/HC and Social Affairs Minister emphasize support for deprived area

Akkar, an agricultural region along Lebanon’s northern border with Syria, is the poorest governorate in the country, with severe vulnerability levels and some of the country’s highest unemployment rates. On 28 October, the Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, Philippe Lazzarini, visited the area with Social Affairs Minister Rashid Derbas in order to assess the region’s specific challenges.

The visit started with a focus group discussion with refugees in the informal tented settlement (ITS) of Mhammara, near the coast, where more than 150 refugees were relocated in August after being evicted from a different ITS in Minnieh. Several organizations are bringing support to the ITS under the coordination of UNHCR, including



RC/HC Philippe Lazzarini meets refugees in Mhammara ITS in Akkar. Source: UNDP

Concern (for shelter and WASH) as well as IRC (for protection), among others. Fifty per cent of the refugees in the ITS receive food assistance from WFP, and 40 per cent receive multipurpose cash from UNHCR – unrestricted cash transfers that enable

beneficiaries to choose and prioritize the assistance they receive. School enrolment levels for refugee children have increased after additional schools were added to the network of second-shift schools in the area; a pilot project is also underway in the area to provide cash to families if their children attend school, in an effort to dissuade child labour. However, despite the assistance, the refugees in the ITS face many challenges, from poor infrastructure to difficult access to basic services, in a region where 60 percent of Syrian refugees are unemployed (according to VASyR 2015).

Empowering and supporting local communities

As part of their mission, the RC/HC and the Minister for Social Affairs visited several local projects which support vulnerable Lebanese communities as well as Syrian refugees, including a project by the El Hissa Social Development Center which hosts UNICEF child protection activities; and the public market built by UNDP in the town of Halba to help boost the local economy. They also visited a project by the Akkar Network for Development (AND) in Tal Hayat which provides vocational training to vulnerable women and has created a committee of local women to identify key needs in the community and develop a project.

At the end of the visit, the RC/HC and the Minister for Social Affairs met with the Governor of Akkar and the head of the Akkar Union of Municipalities to discuss the challenges and gaps in the region. "The municipalities of Akkar have been neglected by aid, and at the same time are at the forefront of the response to the arrival of refugees," the RC/HC told local leaders during the visit. "The solutions to the region's challenges are multifaceted, and everyone must work together and take on their share of responsibility in meeting these challenges."

The RC/HC also noted that the UN system is currently shifting its approach to longer-term development as part of the recently-signed UN Strategic Framework (UNSF) 2017-2020 for Lebanon, which lists Akkar and the North as priority regions.

"The solutions to the region's challenges are multifaceted, and everyone must work together and take on their share of responsibility in meeting these challenges."
RC/HC Philippe Lazzarini

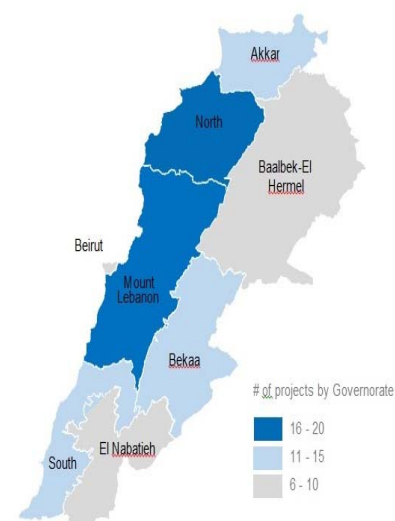
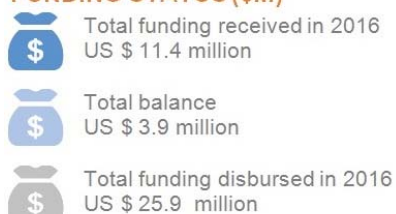
Akkar, a region facing many challenges

Northern Lebanon is one of the poorest parts of the country: out of a total population of 1.1 million people in the North and Akkar, 708,000 live under the poverty line: 341,000 deprived Lebanese, over 266,000 Syrian refugees, 88,000 Palestine refugees and almost 12,000 Lebanese returnees. As Akkar Governorate shares a 100km border with Syria, the conflict in Syria has had a strong spillover effect on the region, with the arrival of high numbers of refugees: in Halba municipality, there are 8,108 registered Syrian refugees to 5,826 Lebanese residents. The crisis has also triggered a downturn in economic and commercial activities, as the area was strongly reliant upon trade with Syria. The arrival of refugees into the already poor region has put a strain on water, electricity, waste management and other basic services, while public institutions including schools and health centers also require additional support.

Funding update

In 2016, the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF) received generous contributions from four donors – Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden – amounting to US\$ 11.47 million, in addition to a carryover of US\$ 18.5 million from 2015. The Fund's 40 partners, including 26 new partners, are currently working on 50 projects totaling US\$25.9 million. The projects, which span a broad range of sectors, make up 2.64 per cent of the contributions to the 2016 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP).

The infographs on page 5 provide an overview of the LHF's activities since January 2016.

FUNDING CONTRIBUTION BY SECTOR (\$M)**# OF PROJECTS BY GOVERNORATE****FUNDING STATUS (\$M)**

Fawaz's Story

"Living in a tent you can feel the weather; the wind can cause a change. You notice the difference."

Fawaz, Syrian refugee in Akkar

Bracing for winter in a tented camp

This will not be Fawaz's first winter in Lebanon. Having fled Syria with his family in 2013, he has already endured three winters as a refugee. He and his family now live in Akkar, the Lebanon's northernmost governorate, known for its harsh winters. They live in one of a series of arched tents that mirror the rows of plastic greenhouses dotting the surrounding countryside.

They live near a village called Wadi el Jamoush, which roughly translates as "valley of the buffalo." More specifically "wadi" can mean a normally dry ravine that floods during periods of heavy rainfall. This helps to explain the challenges Fawaz and his family face during Lebanon's rainy winter season.

"My first winter in this tent, I didn't know which direction the water would flow," recalls Fawaz. "The floor

was not well made, and the tent flooded. At one point the water reached up to here," he explains, indicating a high-water mark of over a foot. "The community's tents were all flooding. We didn't yet have the materials or maintenance kits to make repairs."



Fawaz and his family inside their tent. Source: OCHA

Thanks to winter cash assistance from UNHCR and Concern as well as other organizations in Akkar, Fawaz has since been able to significantly improve the

weatherproofing of his tent; it now rests on a smooth concrete base, with a solid barrier around the perimeter to divert the flow of water. In addition, the community has worked together to create a central drainage system which channels water underground and away from the tents to a stream below.

Flooding is not Fawaz's only concern as winter begins. Temperature drops are keenly felt by those living in inadequate shelters, like tents or unfinished buildings, as 41 percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon do. Fawaz can't say for sure whether the climate in Wadi el Jamoush is colder than in Homs, the region in Syria where he's from. It's impossible to compare, he explains, because there he lived in a solid building. "Living in a tent you can feel the weather," he says, "The wind can cause a change. You notice the difference."

Fawaz feels much better prepared for this coming winter than when he first arrived in Lebanon. Yet he still worries about keeping his children warm, and about the more recently-arrived families which haven't made the same weatherproofing improvements. The community needs to acquire blankets, clothes, and fuel; they need to expand the central drainage system. Winter assistance will be essential to these preparations.

For further information, please contact:

Anne-France White, white5@un.org, or **Jessica Bou Tanios**, boutanios@un.org or email: ochalebanon@un.org

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