

Minutes of Northern Lebanon Inter - Agency Meeting

09 July 2019, 10:00 – 12:00

UNHCR Tripoli Office

Chairperson(s)	Anne Dolan (UNHCR) Alain Chatry (UNDP) Khaled Osman (MoSA)
Agenda of the Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sector updates - Updates on Dismantlement & Evictions - ARC perception survey – UNDP - The shift to water resilient communities project – Acted - AoB

Introduction:

A round of introduction to all the agencies representatives in the Northern Lebanon interagency meeting.

Introducing UNHCR new Head of Office in North Lebanon, who will be co-leading the Interagency with MoSA and UNDP.

Briefing on Batroun Governor Meeting:

It was highlighted by MoSA and MOIM representative in the north that any agency planning to conduct any activity in the Batroun district should inform the municipality, MoSA rep and MOIM rep in advance to the implementation of the activity. It is recommended that all agencies/organizations to conform for a smooth and better coordinated implementation of activities.

Last week, a meeting with the Qai'm Makam of Batroun, UNHCR and partners regarding the restrictions imposed on organizations to implement activities in Batroun. The meeting resulted with a circular which was shared with all municipalities in Batroun to facilitate the activities of partners in the area under the above procedure. The circular mentions that organizations should coordinate with both MoSA and MOIM coordinators in the north prior to the implementation of activities in the Batroun. Moreover, the Governor contacted all mayors in his district to further discuss the directive.

Sector updates discussions key highlights:

Basic Assistance:

- WFP initiated their first pilot of self-verification via Liban Post and Cash United offices in the North. The process was taking around 20 seconds per refugee to get IRIS scanned and cross check his common card. *No issues were reported on the system to date, while WFP is still monitoring the system.*

Protection:

The Ministry of Higher Defense issued in April a decision that all refugees who entered Lebanon illegally after April 24 2019 will be deported back to Syria. In light of this decision, if any partners identify a case arrested on these grounds, please inform UNHCR as soon as possible for follow up and advocacy as possible. In some cases, UNHCR was successful to suspend the deportation of individual by issuing proof of entry to Lebanon prior to April 2019 (i.e. appointment slips). This decision only impacts refugees who have entered post April 2019, yet it might impact other refugees who have entered Lebanon illegally. . At the moment, UNHCR is finalizing some Q&As to be shared with partners and front-liners to be aware of the situation and to be able to identify and counsel refugees on the matter as needed.

A new circular by GSO was issued during June 2019 which restricts refugees coming to Lebanon based on sponsorship visa to expand the visa to their children who are under 15 years old. Advocacy by UNHCR on national level was made, which resulted in an amendment to the circular to grant access to refugees on sponsorship visa to bring along their children (below 15 years old) but not their spouses. Moreover, this circular waved off the possibility for sponsored refugees to invite relatives into Lebanon. These restrictions will impose additional challenges on refugees seeking safety as it will risk family unit.

Health:

Measles outbreak is more under control especially in the North as numbers of new cases have been decreasing. The response to the outbreak has been under the leadership of MoPH, UNICEF and UNHCR with the active participation and implementation of various NGOs such as IOCC, Mercy USA, IMC, MSF, LRC, ICRC, Al Midan and PU-AMI.

Ministry of Public Health and partners are planning a new vaccination campaign in September 2019.

Data collection was conducted by UNHCR and MoSA colleagues at UNHCR registration center aiming to identify the reason for families to prefer delivering new borns at a Midwife clinic instead of delivering in a hospital setting. The results showed that families preferred Midwife delivery for financial reasons and urgency. Yet, after analysis, families are paying in most cases either same cost or more than what they will be charged at a hospital which means that there is a misunderstanding and misinformation of refugees of how much the patient share at the hospital level. This calls for more information sharing and dissemination among the refugee community on available services.

Social stability:

It was reported through the ARC survey that tensions increased during the last months in Batroun, Chekka, and other localities in Akkar especially on anti-settlement issues. Some tensions were reported in Tripoli area mainly due to evictions and some personal disputes. Recently, the Ministry of Labor has called on construction workers to have a special work permit even though this category of work is approved by the government under daily labor.

Furthermore, the general director of the Ministry of Labor issued a statement during the first week of July that the ministry will initiate visits to shops to check foreign workers and their legal status.

Hard structures:

All stakeholders are focused at the moment on Aarsal, Bekaa relocation activities pertaining the hard structure dismantlement.

An update to all RNA partners that the response in the north is not similar to Bekaa, partners in the North only need to assess or intervene into a site after the site receives a notice. Out of the 264 sites identified in the North to have such structures, only 62 were visited by UNHCR and partners.

UNHCR and partners have been working closely with municipalities in Mhammara and others on the removal of rubble. At the moment, rubble has been partially removed either by landlords, refugees or municipal support.

Communication with Communities at the moment on the topic might be sensitive if the families are not aware or might not be actually at risk of demolition, as it might cause some tensions or panic. At the moment, very limited number of sites have been informed and for a number of reasons which includes hard structures, yet it wasn't the driving force for this dismantlement/eviction.

Eviction:

After consultation with partners, UNHCR is currently drafting and updating geosplit for the pre-eviction and post eviction. Both tools have been finalized and shared with other field offices and partners for testing.

To highlight that MoSA has a core role on the pre-eviction and partners will be put on standby to support as needed.

Way forward

- To have a meeting or a workshop on improvement of communication with communities.