

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

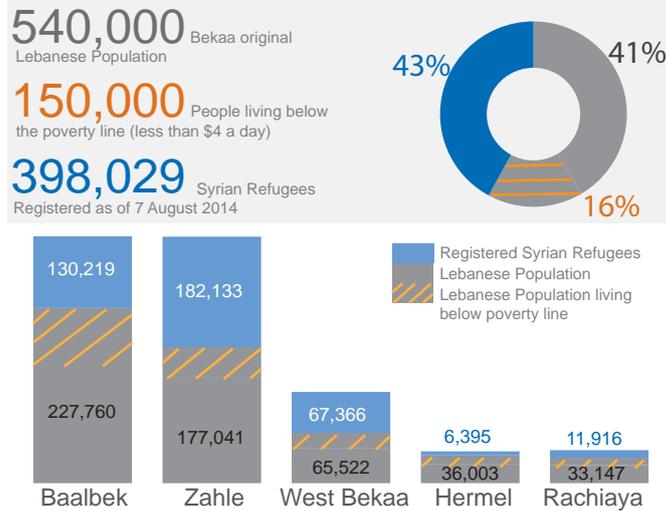
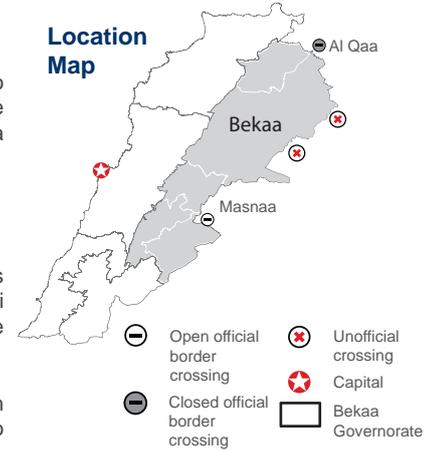
The Bekaa valley, with a length of 120 km and width of 16 km, represents 42% of Lebanon's area. It is divided into three main areas. North Bekaa, composed of Baalbek and Hermel. Central Bekaa (Zahle) is considered the economic hub of Bekaa. It is also hosts the largest official border crossing, Masnaa. West Bekaa and Rachaya have a relatively greater sense of security than the rest of Bekaa.

## POPULATION OVERVIEW

Bekaa has a population of 540,000. North Bekaa is populated by a large number of clans and the population is mainly Shiite, although it is also home to some Sunni pockets. Central Bekaa is composed of a majority of Sunni and Christian population, whilst West Bekaa and Rachaya has a more mixed confessional population than the rest of Bekaa.

There is one Palestinian camp in Bekaa, located outside Baalbek. However, most of the 8,500 Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) live outside the camp. Bekaa also hosts more than 10,000 Lebanese returnees who have listed food and health services as their priority needs.

Bekaa hosts almost 400,000 registered Syrian refugees, many who live in the more than 730 Informal Settlements scattered across the valley. However, there are three main concentration points: Aarsal, Central Bekaa and Baalbek. The halting of trade with and through Syria has hit Bekaa particularly hard, with many trade routes being affected. There are indications that the once good relations between the host communities and refugees (based on kinship), have started to deteriorate, especially following the fighting and around Aarsal in August 2014. This has been exacerbated by some Lebanese labour being replaced by cheaper Syrian refugee workers, as well as from the strain on basic social services.



## Palestine Refugees

UNRWA programmes for Palestine refugees in the Wavel camp outside Baalbek, include one health centre, two schools and a women's centre. The main challenges are bad living conditions, limited employment opportunities and a high school drop-out rate. One fifth of the 53,000 Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS) is hosted in Bekaa, mostly living outside of the Palestinian camp. The most immediate concern for PRS is shelter.

10,000 Palestine Refugees in Lebanon  
8,400 Palestine Refugees from Syria



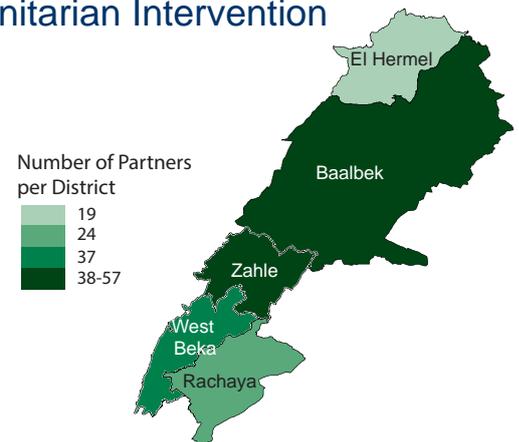
## HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Bekaa is hosting the largest number of refugees in the country, as well as 8,400 PRS and over 10,000 Lebanese returnees. Several UN and INGOs have offices across the valley and regular inter-agency coordination meetings are held in Zahle. However, the security situation in parts of Bekaa has meant that at times humanitarian access has been a challenge, especially in North Bekaa. The winter months also lead to physical access constraints. The issue of Informal Settlements is of great concern in Bekaa with more appearing every week and over 732 sites with four or more tents in total. The first Formal Settlement was approved by the authorities in Aarsal at the end of 2013, as was the use of T-shelters, which are considered the most appropriate shelter option for Lebanon. An inter-agency assessment led by UNHCR of Informal Settlements is on-going with a focus on shelter, WASH and protection. A number of agencies including UNICEF, DRC, ACF, SCH, OXFAM, MC, MEDAIR and NRC have joined the assessment. The initial findings show gaps in shelter and WASH and highlighted a range of protection issues such as evictions, local tensions, and medical cases. The issue of water scarcity is one of the main focuses for the Bekaa WASH Sector, with mapping of vulnerable areas currently underway in order to urgently assist the areas most at risk. Five projects to address the humanitarian impact of water scarcity were approved for Bekaa by the Emergency Response Fund in July 2014.

## Security Situation

Bekaa has suffered from the spill-over of the Syrian conflict into Lebanon. The 2014 spring and summer saw regular shelling in North Bekaa. The towns and surroundings of Hermel, Tfail and Aarsal have continued to receive rockets and mortars fired from Syria, resulting in several deaths and injuries as well as a feeling of general insecurity. Early August saw heavy fighting in and around Aarsal, which led to displacement of both local residents and refugees within Aarsal but also to other parts of Bekaa and beyond. The fighting caused extensive damages to shelters, houses, shops, warehouses, PHCs and other installations as well as the death of civilians. Humanitarian partners were unable to access the area and the needs caused by the fighting are still to be assessed, although some response has begun. Agencies are actively reviewing their contingency plans to ensure preparedness in the event of further restrictions or secondary movement of refugees and residents.

## Humanitarian Intervention



	Education	Health	Protection	Shelter	WASH	Food Security	Other	Total *	
<b>Baalbek</b>	17	7	16	7	21	8	7	10	45
<b>El Hermel</b>	4	3	7	4	7	2	4	2	19
<b>Rachaya</b>	4	2	5	2	7	3	2	3	24
<b>West Bekaa</b>	9	4	16	5	16	5	5	5	37
<b>Zahle</b>	12	10	18	6	25	11	6	12	57

\* Total number of organizations operating in each district  
 Social Cohesion Sector Livelihood Sector