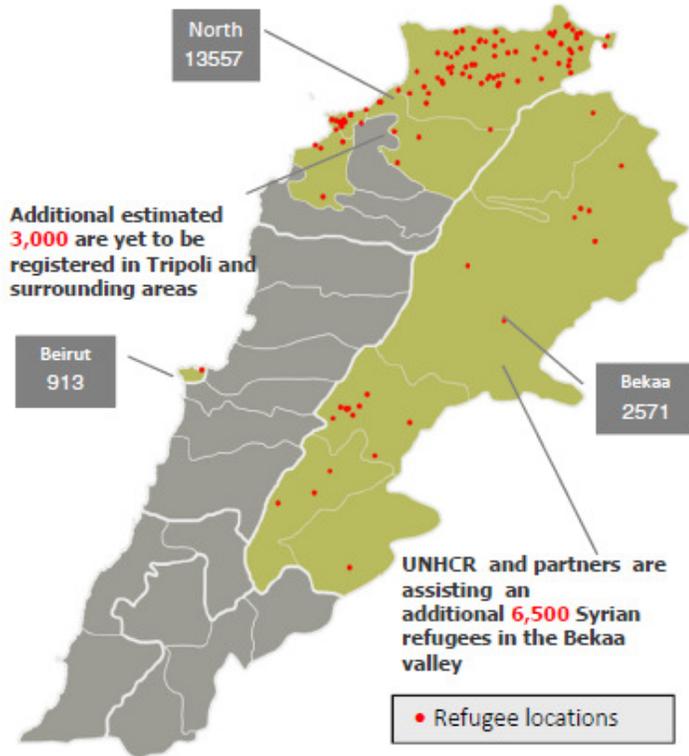


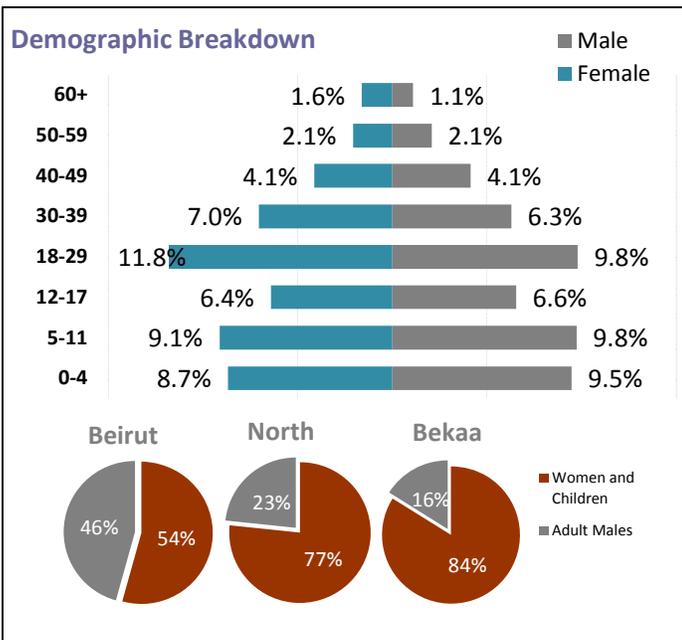
UN Inter-Agency Update

on Syria Situation Response in Lebanon

UNHCR, May, 2012



The following represents a brief overview of the Lebanon response to the protection and assistance needs of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. It will be issued the last Friday of every month and will replace the weekly update for that week only.



Numbers

Over 26,000 displaced Syrians are currently receiving protection and assistance in Lebanon through the efforts of the Government of Lebanon and UN and NGO partners. Of this number, 17,041 people are registered.

Needs

Syrians arriving in Lebanon have a myriad of needs. Most fled their homes and villages due to fighting in these areas. They have been deeply affected by the loss of their homes, communities and many have lost loved ones. Over 75% of those who are being assisted are woman and children. Many live with hosting families who themselves struggle to make ends meet. Among the most pressing needs are food and basic non-food items, shelter, medical care and psycho-social support.

For over a year, the Government of Lebanon, through its High Relief Commission, has been providing food and secondary medical care to displaced Syrians in North Lebanon and the Ministry of Social Affairs has been engaged in psycho-social support. Other needs, including protection and assistance to those in the Bekaa valley, are being addressed by UN and NGO partners.

Protection

From the outset, the Lebanese Government has taken a humanitarian approach by keeping an open border policy allowing Syrians to enter Lebanon. It has also facilitated the provision of assistance directly through its High Relief Commission and also indirectly by its cooperation with UN

and other partners in the provision of relief.

The government has been reluctant to provide circulation permits to registered Syrian refugees. This has meant that they are confined to small areas, unable to move freely in search of work. This confinement is difficult for many to bear, particularly those who would like to provide for themselves and their families and not rely on humanitarian relief.

Among the other protection challenges is the insecurity of some border areas, with reports of armed activities threatening the safety of refugees, residents and humanitarian workers in those areas. Reports of arms smuggling activities along the Lebanese-Syrian borders have also created additional protection concerns as has the armed clashes between rival Lebanese groups in Tripoli. The latter led to a temporary suspension of humanitarian programmes by some agencies.

The insecurity of some areas where refugees reside creates significant challenges to addressing individual protection needs. Persons who have suffered serious trauma, sexual or gender based abuse, or whose security is at risk, need specific care. Ensuring that these people are identified and appropriately assisted requires a robust outreach mechanism and securing trust of those who may be reluctant to come forward. This type of response requires a regular field presence, and confidence building measures. Interrupted access to persons of concern due to security incidents makes this challenging aspect of programmatic response difficult.

North Lebanon

Numbers

From the outset of Syrian displacement to Lebanon in March 2011, UNHCR and the Government High Relief Commission (HRC) have been jointly register the displaced in the North, where the total number of registered people stands at 13,557.

Origin and Place of Residence

The majority of displaced Syrians in the North has come from Tal Kalakh in Homs and is living with the host community. Most of those living in Wadi Khaled and its surroundings have entered through illegal border crossings, while those living in Tripoli have entered legally.

Registration

The HRC and UNHCR have so far been registering displaced Syrians through house to house visits in Akkar and Tripoli. Most recently, outreach to the displaced communities was impeded due to ongoing security incidents and road closures. As calm returned in Akkar this week, UNHCR launched an information campaign throughout Akkar in preparation for the first centralized registration at MoSA's Social Development Center (SDC) in Bire. The information campaign includes focus group discussions aimed to raise awareness on the process and requirements of registration. So far, 35 villages have been visited in Bire, Akkar Al-Atika and Halba.

Centralized registration in Tripoli has not commenced due to the security situation there which has also interrupted house to house registration in the city.

Displaced people who are yet to be registered face some obstacles in accessing government-sponsored health assistance. UNHCR and IMC work together to assist unregistered persons in need of urgent medical attention, usually with the generous help of regional or international NGOs.

Coordination Mechanism

Working alongside the Government of Lebanon, notably the High Relief Commission, the Ministry of Social Affairs and municipalities, UNHCR has worked to ensure a consolidated and coordinated inter-agency response, engaging fellow UN agencies and local and international non-governmental partners. UNHCR teams hold regular inter-agency sector-based meetings on a bi-weekly basis at the central level in Beirut, and at the field level in the North and in the Bekaa.

Food and NFI

Food distribution has been largely covered by the HRC, UNHCR and other agencies including UNICEF, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Caritas Migrant Center, World Vision, and Islamic Relief and Action Contre la Faim (ACF) have been meeting gaps and distributing non-food items.

In May, the HRC suspended food distribution because the Coalition of Islamic Charities carried out food kit distributions in Akkar and Tripoli. UNHCR and DRC agreed with the HRC to continue to distribute hygiene and baby kits pending the resumption of the regular distribution programme in June. HRC will resume the distribution of food kits in June for Akkar. It is expected that WFP will contribute to the HRC's efforts in providing food in June in the

Akkar region. HRC is waiting for the security situation in Tripoli to improve before resuming distribution of food kits. HRC meanwhile is monitoring the distribution of food done by the Coalition of Charities to ensure all displaced receive food assistance.

While the coordination mechanism is very solid among the HRC, MoSA and UN and traditional partners, additional work is needed to liaise more closely with others. The HRC and UNHCR are working to improve the coordination between all other distribution actors to avoid duplication of efforts and to ensure that distribution is equitable and efficient. Distribution coordination meetings take place on a regular basis with the aim to streamline the different agencies' efforts.

Shelter

The majority of displaced Syrians in the north live with host families, many of whom struggle to make ends meet for their own families. Assistance therefore has been focused not just on the refugees, but also on measures to assist host families who have been so generous in spite of their own difficulties. Over 100 families have been provided with coupons that enabled them to renovate their homes. NRC has secured additional funding to rehabilitate 60 more houses and upgrade 12 unfinished homes in Akkar.

While the majority of the currently displaced families live with the host community, over 300 people reside in four abandoned public schools that have been renovated by UNHCR, DRC and Al-Bashaer.

The need for additional collective shelters with improved sanitary and water conditions is increasing as more displaced families are facing a number of challenges in finding convenient shelter solutions. Preliminary findings from a needs assessment conducted by ACTED -UNICEF's implementing partner- indicate that the occurrence of diarrhea among children is above the normal level. Reasons behind these findings include unsanitary shelter conditions and water contamination.

The assessment findings were formally reported to the water and sanitation working group for follow-up.

HRC, UNHCR, NRC and DRC and other agencies are working on a mix of shelter options to meet ongoing needs including securing and renovating more collective shelters.

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)

The coordinated inter-agency response seeks to support host families and communities who have opened their doors to refugees since the beginning of the influx. The Office has invested in strengthening the capacities of the Government, local partners, and the local community through technical and material support and the establishment of local projects to benefit refugees and hosting communities.

UNDP has initiated a socio-economic assessment to ascertain the specific needs of Lebanese communities affected by the influx of Syrian displaced populations. The assessment will seek to measure emerging levels of vulnerabilities, as well as identify coping mechanisms currently used by communities, in order to recommend

immediate and medium term responses to mitigate growing socio-economic pressures. The assessment will concentrate on Wadi Khaled, Tripoli and the Bekaa and is expected to be finalized by early July.

In the meantime, UNHCR and DRC implemented five quick impact projects (QIPS) in the Akkar area throughout 2011. These included the rehabilitation of a public garden in Amayer, the opening of a new public garden in Moukayble, the opening of a public Library in Aidamoon and a Cinema club in Al Awadi and the procurement of agricultural tools for Akroom's cooperative.

This month, another four QIPs were identified and are currently in the pre-implementation phase. These include the rehabilitation of the public garden in Tal Abbas and the city hall in Mouanseh, the construction of a playground in Al Rama and the equipment of the Social Development Centre (SDC) in Qarha with an electric generator.

Health

The HRC continues to cover the cost of secondary health care while UNHCR covers the full cost for doctor consultations and diagnostic tests for women and children and up to 85% of diagnostic tests for all displaced people through local primary health care centers.

UNHCR, IMC, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) have recently started providing psychological and social support services in Tripoli including psychotherapy sessions, mental health awareness sessions and home visits.

UNICEF and YMCA have developed a key training to 45 community health workers through which 10 key health awareness topics have been consolidated to serve as a reference for any health awareness campaign targeting displaced Syrians.

UNHCR and IMC are also working to improve the communication strategy in the area in order to better disseminate messages about the availability of health services to displaced Syrians.

Education

From the beginning of the influx of displaced, MoEHE facilitated the enrolment of Syrian children in Lebanese public schools and most recently, it has officially appointed three focal points to actively follow-up on the education of Syrian children.

By the end of the school registration period, out of 4,309 children between the age of 5 and 17, only 552 displaced children have enrolled in schools. Despite extensive and consistent awareness campaigns about the importance of education, the school enrolment rate is as little as 13% among school-aged children. The main reason behind this worryingly low rate is the arrival of the majority of Syrian children after the school registration deadline.

In light of such statistics, UNICEF and Save the Children have launched an education needs-assessment, the preliminary results of which are expected to be issued in mid-June.

In the meantime, and in order to address those gaps, the education working group has implemented a number of projects

aimed to find solutions for idle children and adolescents.

Most recently, UNICEF has received reports of children participating in violence in Tripoli. UNICEF's implementing partner War Child Holland has planned to establish two Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs) in Tripoli in hope that the social and recreational activities offered by the CFSs will provide opportunities for meaningful participation alternatives to that of armed conflict. In addition, Save the Children has established five such spaces.

WarChild Holland and Terre des Hommes Italia agreed to provide trainings on child protection, psychosocial support, creative learning methodologies and first aid to ensure quality of the services provided at the different child-friendly spaces. ACTED and WarChild Holland conducted a WASH assessment to ensure drinking water and sanitary facilities are adequate to receive the children at these Safe Spaces. A psychologist has joined the Save the Children team to develop capacity building in a number of areas, including expression activities with post-trauma therapeutic objectives, child development and means to better identify and follow-up on cases with behavioral trouble.

Save the Children Sweden (SCS) put in place regular remedial classes, awareness sessions and school empowerment projects. In addition, agencies are now studying the possibility of establishing vocational training for youth.

East Lebanon

Numbers

UNHCR has recently started to register an estimated 9,000 displaced Syrians in the Bekaa where it has established a presence since March 2012. So far, 2,571 people have been registered.

Government engagement

The HRC does not have a mandate to operate outside North Lebanon. UNHCR has established a coordinated response with MoSA, MoPH, MoEHE, in addition to local municipalities and authorities in order to run its programme the most efficient and transparent way possible.

Origin and Place of Residence

The majority of displaced Syrians in East Lebanon have come from Homs, Hama, Halab, and Idlib, with some arriving from the suburbs of Damascus.

Almost half of the displaced community is living with the host community while the other half is renting apartments in the area.

The legal status of displaced communities in the area will become clearer as UNHCR teams will advance in its registration exercise. So far, the majority of the 2,571 registered Syrians in the Bekaa have entered through legal borders.

Registration

UNHCR started registering displaced people in Aarsal following a comprehensive information campaign aimed to inform the displaced community about UNHCR, the requirements and timing of the registration, and the services provided. UNHCR teams completed registration in

Aarsal where a large number of displaced are residing. UNHCR continues centralized registration in Central Bekaa and is expected to conclude an initial round of registrations by the end of June. Challenges include the geographical expanse of the targeted area, and the reluctance of the displaced to disclose information. The element of photo capturing every individual during the registration process is working to further elevate fears and increase hesitation. UNHCR teams have incorporated awareness raising elements in their information campaign and are attempting to counter any misconceptions about the registration process, especially as to how and with whom information is shared.

Food and non-food items (NFIs)

Distribution in the Bekaa is facilitated by UNHCR, DRC, NRC, UNICEF, Caritas Migrant Center, World Vision, Islamic Relief, in addition to a host of local actors. Since it has established a presence in the area early March 2012, UNHCR has started its food and non-food outreach to displaced communities in the area.

Following a thorough needs-assessment and study of the local market, the World Food Programme (WFP) recommended the use of food vouchers in lieu of home to home distribution of food kits. The transition from the current distribution mechanism to the voucher system is due to start gradually as of the beginning of June.

WFP has finalized most preparatory steps towards implementation of vouchers. WFP voucher specialists have completed initial market and retail assessments and are currently

proceeding with more in depth analysis in order to short list the retail stores that meet set hygiene and food standards and are ready to work under the voucher programme conditions. Contracts will be signed with shop owners and DRC will begin voucher distribution during the first week of June in Aarsal, followed by Central Bekaa in July with World Vision.

Shelter

In northern Bekaa, 80% of the displaced Syrians are residing with host families, 10% are paying rent and the other 10% are living in collective shelters. In western Bekaa, almost half of the displaced community is currently residing with the host community while the other half lives in rented houses. The provision of housing solutions remains a priority in the area as many families are facing challenges in meeting the rent by the end of each month. Agencies are still assessing the cash for rent option, provided directly to landlords, for the most vulnerable families. In the meantime, the identification of vacant collective shelters that can be renovated to host additional families remains one of the biggest challenges, notably in Central and West Bekaa. The support to the host families is ongoing to ensure their extended hospitality, while a long-term contingency plan is in the pipeline in order to address a possibly protracted displacement situation.

Based on shelter assessment findings, NRC provided 65 hosting families with coupons enabling them to renovate their houses: 56 houses in Aarsal, 4 houses in Fakiha and 5 houses in Saadnayel. NRC has identified some 35 additional collective shelters in Aarsal and Fakiha that it should start rehabilitating soon.

Similarly, in coordination with NRC and DRC, Premiere Urgence-AMI has been assessing the shelter needs in Baalbek and has developed a plan to rehabilitate 15 individual shelters and one collective shelter with the capacity to host six families. These rehabilitation initiatives are planned to be conducted through the *cash for work* method –i.e. by hiring Syrian displaced persons to undertake the work.

Islamic Relief International have constructed prefabricated metal houses equipped with a bathroom, a fully equipped kitchen and water tanks for each of the 30 families that will be hosted in these prefabs.

Health

Since March 2012, UNHCR has been working with health actors including its implementing partner IMC to respond to the medical needs of the displaced communities.

IMC has signed agreements with primary health care centers in Taanayel, Baalbeck and Aarsal to provide doctor consultations, medications including chronic, and diagnostic services to all displaced Syrians, while Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) and Amel Association are covering primary healthcare in Saadnayel and Aarsal. In parallel, Médecins du Monde France (MDM) is helping displaced Syrians received free primary healthcare services through three centers in the Bekaa.

Since displaced communities are dispersed in a wide geographical area between South, Central and North Bekaa, there remains a need to expand primary and secondary health care

services in order to reach all displaced people in need of medical care. Recent assessments showed a pressing need to expand health care networks in Hermel and Rachaya where a number of displaced families reside. These families are so far not able to receive the full primary health care package and are forced to travel to different neighboring cities to run medical tests and consult doctors. IMC is mapping out potential hospitals in the area and is working on the modalities of establishing primary health care centers within the reach of the displaced in these areas. In addition, a newly recruited pediatrician started consultations during the second half of May through mobile medical units in Taalabaya, Douris, Ain, Fakiha, Kherbet Rouha, Sawire and Al-Qaa.

UNHCR is covering the cost of hospital care at three local hospitals through its implementing partner IMC. Hospital agreements have facilitated the provision of the secondary health care in the Central Bekaa area. Recent assessments continue to show high rates of C-section deliveries, preterm births and newborns in need of neonatal intensive care. Reasons behind these finding include the lack of proper pre-natal care and trauma suffered by the conflict witnessed by Syrian women. UNHCR is currently working on a family planning awareness campaign aimed to provide proper counseling for pregnant women, and help other displaced women avoid unwanted pregnancies.

The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) continues to cover the hospitalization cost of all wounded displaced pending their transfer to north Lebanon for complete treatment. Other

cases in need of hospitalization continue to be covered by the HRC if transferred to north Lebanon.

Education

Very few displaced children in the Bekaa have enrolled in schools because of their late arrival to Lebanon. The education working group has addressed this gap through a number of initiatives in preparation for next year's school registration.

Save the Children have opened four CFSs while UNICEF and Movement Social have planned for a Summer Day Camp due to start on June 11th over a period of six weeks in six public schools in the Bekaa. This summer activity includes vocational trainings for out-of-school children between the age of 14 and 17.

UNESCO has also been working as part of the inter-agency response on the design of a training of school inspectors in Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) minimum standards as soon as possible. This training will target at least 35 and at most 105 inspectors and should happen before start of the next school year in marginalized and conflict areas.

Funding

In March 2012, UNHCR launched an inter-agency Regional Response Plan (RRP) that comprehensively outlines the humanitarian needs of displaced Syrians, as well as anticipates the needs of future arrivals. UNHCR, UN and local and international NGO partners will be revising their plans for the second part of 2012. A joint funding appeal will be drafted by mid-June.



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For more information on Syrian displacement in Lebanon, please visit the Lebanon page on the webportal: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>. There you will find facts, figures, and 'who does what', as well as updates on food and non-food items distributed per area and by agency. Additionally, for more on how the response is being coordinated and the many contributions of various agencies, please click on "situational overview" of the Lebanon page.