

UN INTER-AGENCY RESPONSE

UPDATE

UNHCR SEPT 14-21 2012

Highlights of the week:

- Thanks to the policy decision of the Ministry of Education, all Syrian refugee children are permitted to access public schools, and the registration period has also been extended to facilitate this.
- The Ministry also offered to provide more help to schools that face difficulties in accommodating the Syrian children.
- Over 3,500 individuals (730 families) received food kits and vouchers, hygiene kits and baby kits, and sanitary materials.
- UNHCR, WFP, DRC distributed food, hygiene and baby kits to 5,260 displaced Syrians (1,052 families) in the Bekaa.

Numbers

Over 74,537 Syrians are receiving protection and assistance in Lebanon through the efforts of the Government of Lebanon and UN and NGO partners. Of this number, 53,233 are registered, with an additional 21,304 people having been in contact with UNHCR to be registered.

North Lebanon

Registration/Numbers

This week, 1,484 individuals (331 households) registered with UNHCR in north Lebanon, bringing the total number of people registered in the North to 29,667.

Efforts are underway to encourage refugees to register through awareness campaigns and by maintaining dialogue with influential local leaders who can reach out to refugee families in their villages.

UNHCR and International Medical Corps (IMC) provided training for the staff from the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) on referral mechanisms for cases in need of medical or educational assistance. With the assistance of MOSA who provide

information on available services to the registered displaced community, a larger number of people will be able to make use of the services in place.

Protection

Just over 400 people arrived in the North (82 families) this week from Homs and Damascus. Most entered Lebanon legally through the Masnaa official crossing point. These families decided to settle in the North mainly because of family ties in the region. Many families –reported of difficulties they had in Syrian in being permitted to cross into Lebanon.

Distribution

Over 3,600 individuals (730 families) received WFP food kits and vouchers this week in addition to UNHCR hygiene kits and baby kits, and sanitary materials from UNFPA.

On the first day of the September round of distribution, hundreds of refugees arrived to the distribution site hours before the scheduled time, causing unusual overcrowding which presented a security and protection concern. Distribution was hence canceled on that day, and partners met to discuss the incident and develop a security strategy



to avoid the reoccurrence of similar incidents in the future.

In an effort to monitor the effectiveness of the food voucher system and ways of improving it, DRC held a meeting with ten focal points from the displaced community to discuss the challenges faced in using the vouchers. While many prefer vouchers over food kits (because it enables them more choice) they voiced concerns about relatively high prices which some shop-owners are alleged to be inflating only for those holding vouchers.

WFP will contact concerned shops to address this issue.

Education

Since school enrolment started on September 3, a total of 965 Syrian children have registered and received education grants, almost twice the number of refugees who had enrolled in northern schools last year.

The recent announcement by the MOE allowing all Syrian refugee students to register in Lebanese public schools will further encourage refugee parents to come forward to register their children.

Nonetheless, a number of challenges persist. In addition to an under-capacitated public school system, the difference between the Lebanese and Syrian curricula continues to pose a major problem for Syrian students, as many are not familiar with English or French used in the Lebanese system.

Remedial classes aiming to assist displaced children with integrating into the English or French-based curriculum are currently offered in Wadi Khaled and UNHCR is exploring how to ensure that these programmes are extended beyond this area in the North. UNICEF too is

working with school directors to provide extra-curricular French and English classes to Syrian refugees.

Health

UNHCR and IMC covered the hospitalization of 24 urgent lifesaving cases during the course of the week. The Islamic coalition of NGOs and Arab Medical Doctors assisted with the health coverage of unregistered medical cases.

Access to secondary health care continues to present a challenge in the North as UNHCR is only able to cover costs until the end of October with the current funding levels. UNHCR and partners are appealing to donors for additional support to secondary health care.

Funding levels are also preventing UNHCR and IMC from being able to meet gaps in available medications at the primary health care level.

Shelter

In August, UNHCR identified a total of 56 displaced Syrian families living in operational schools in north Lebanon. Since then, UNHCR, DRC and partners have managed to relocate 46 of them. Some were generously hosted by Lebanese families, some moved into the recently rehabilitated Tekrit school. The remaining families will be offered a temporary shelter solution until a more permanent option is found.

DRC has also worked to expand the shelter capacity in Akkar by providing more prefabricated shelters for single family occupancy in addition to expanding the number of collective shelters.

Water and Sanitation (WASH)

A targeted assessment in Beddawe and Haret Altanak in Tripoli revealed refugee families who are living without adequate water supply and latrines. Efforts will now be made to address these problems.

Assistance in the Bekaa Valley

Registration/Numbers

A total of 22,114 (4,798 families) Syrian refugees are registered in the Bekaa, with an additional 12,302 people having been in contact with UNHCR to register.

Mobile registration continued in Baalbek throughout the past week, with more families approaching UNHCR's registration center. Some 1,500 people (341 families) have been registered during the course of the week.

Most of these families are from Baba Amr, Qusayr, Homs, and Aleppo, Zabadani and the suburbs of Damascus. by Homs

Baalbek will be one of the last mobile registration destinations, after which UNHCR will establish a permanent presence in central Bekaa where any refugee family will be able to register. The setting-up of this center is under way.

Protection

Displaced Syrian families have approached UNHCR registration centers with a myriad of protection needs. The majority expressed concern regarding the education of their children, some were found to be in pressing need for medical follow-up, while others had arrived with minimum belongings without managing to salvage their legal documents.

Along with partners, UNHCR teams conducted in depth interviews to and

refer them to the adequate partner for needed services. In addition, protection teams conducted Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) for three unaccompanied Syrian children who were found to be in urgent need of basic services such as food and shelter. The children were provided with necessary services and referred to education partners so that they can enroll in schools.

Baalbek witnessed two kidnappings this week as part of a series of financially motivated abductions that have recently become a trend in the area. The Internal Security Forces (ISF) in Zahle intervened to resolve road blocks in response to said abductions. Both kidnapped people were released later in the day.

Distribution

UNHCR, WFP, DRC continued the September distribution with 5,260 displaced Syrians (1,052 families) receiving food, hygiene and baby kits.

Caritas too distributed food kits and non-food items such as blankets and mattresses to 865 newly arrived refugees (173 families).

Among those coming to Lebanon are Lebanese families who have been living in Syria. Many are also in need of assistance. IOM, WFP and UNHCR are in discussions with the Government's High Relief Commission (HRC) on ways include this population in assistance and services.

Education

SCI reported over 90 refugee families a day in the Bekaa are coming forward to register their children in schools. To date, 740 children have been registered and provided with bags, shoes, uniforms, and books/stationary coupons. Many schools

have been very open to the new arrivals but some have had reservations. SCI representatives are meeting with the latter to try and resolve any impediments.

The absorption capacity of number Lebanese public schools remains a challenge for over 6,000 primary school aged refugee children in the Bekaa. UNHCR, UNICEF and SCI are working with the MOE and other education stakeholders to identify alternative solutions.

Health

Basic health and hygiene awareness sessions continued to be offered by IMC. The main issues encountered pertained to poverty and psychosocial distress. Cases in need of special care were referred to local clinics for follow-up.

Shelter/ Water and Sanitation (WASH)

A main priority for UNHCR and partners over the past month was the identification of immediate shelter solutions for 114 families living in active schools including Al Marej, Majdel Anjar, Manahel and Fadel.

This week, the last few refugee families living in Al Fadel school were offered temporary accommodation in a nearby building, pending a longer-term solution by UNHCR and DRC. In the meantime, the situation of these families will be monitored and necessary assistance will be provided.

With this, all active schools have effectively been vacated and solutions are under way for all refugee families who were living in these schools. Most families (77) opted for the cash-for-rent option whereby UNHCR and partners cover their rent by directly paying landlords; some families (36) identified

other solutions, few (3) moved to collective shelters, while one family voluntarily returned to Syria.

In parallel, the renovation of abandoned schools and shelter box assessments continued with the aim to increase the shelter capacity in the area.

In coordination with local municipalities, DRC started rehabilitating the Mdoukha and Makassed schools in Saouiri where a number of refugee families already live. Repair work is also underway in the Ain Ata School where three families are temporarily residing. DRC conducted a mapping of the Bekaa area in order to identify adequate locations where shelter boxes could be built. The first plausible venue identified is a privately owned land in Majdel Anjar. The implementation of the project should start soon upon the identification of appropriate shelter box suppliers.

UNICEF, in partnership with Action Contre la Faim (ACF), continues to deliver potable water to displaced families in the Bekaa valley, reaching over 4,300 people on a weekly basis.

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)

UNHCR, DRC and partners are conducting participatory QIPs assessments where local leaders and agencies engage in suggesting projects beneficial to their own communities. Two associations in Hermel have come forward to submit QIPs proposals for the area, and a group discussion was held with 20 Lebanese and Syrian children in Baalbek about the type of games needed at the Ras el Ain public garden. The selection and implementation of suggested projects will start in the coming week.

Assistance in Beirut and South Lebanon Registration

UNHCR expanded assistance in south Lebanon, in coordination with Caritas Migrant Center, as the number of new arrivals is increasing. The new arrivals are mainly from Homs, Halab, and Idlib.

Based on estimates by local NGOs and municipalities there are approximately 10,000 displaced Syrians in south Lebanon and around 30,000 in Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

Efforts are underway to find a suitable centre for registration which UNHCR would like to commence by mid-October. In the meantime, preliminary assessments are ongoing to get a better picture of the names, locations, family ties and phone numbers of all displaced Syrians in the South who have approached the Office expressing interest in registration. Appointments will follow once the registration centre is up and running.

Distribution

UNHCR, Caritas and Makhzoumi Foundation are distributing food and non-food items (NFIs) to registered Syrians in these areas, in addition to organizing other outreach activities through local municipalities and NGOs.

Shelter

The majority of displaced Syrians are living in rented accommodation; some are staying with family and friends. whilst a minority are being provided accommodation by their employers. The living conditions of displaced Syrians in Beirut and the South however remain very eager as many families continue to live in small spaces in extremely cramped situations.

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.

Protection

Syrians refugees in the South report fear over the recent kidnappings. As a result, many are restricting their movements, choosing not to leave the villages in which they reside. Many are currently living with friends or family and feel safest doing so or remaining in areas that are similar to their own confessions. UNHCR is monitoring the protection needs of these populations to ensure their safety and security is addressed.

Education

UNHCR and partners alongside local municipalities and NGOs are enrolling children in Lebanese public schools. UNHCR is covering the fees of registered Syrian children, and UNICEF is covering for others who have not yet been registered. School supplies, bags, stationary and books are being provided.

Health

UNHCR and Caritas are providing primary and secondary health care services to Syrian refugees in the South and UNHCR is partnering with Makhzoumi for assistance in the Beirut area. Local NGOs, primary health care centres and dispensaries are assisting, giving access to medical exams and through ad-hoc provision of some medicines.