UNHCR Flash Update on Lebanon: Beirut Port Explosions

4 September 2020

Situation overview

- A month on, UNHCR's response has progressed from initial emergency assistance to the next phase. With many of the most vulnerable Lebanese, refugees and other affected men, women, girls and boys having received immediate help, there is now an increased focus on specialized support to their mental health, socio-economic situation, and housing.
- UNHCR facilitated a field visit for the Resident Coordinator in Lebanon, Najat Rochdi, to have an overview of assessment, protection and shelter interventions. Ms. Rochdi visited the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) operation room, participated in a shelter weatherproofing kit distribution and met with persons affected by the blast with UNHCR's partner, Helem.
- As of the 1 September, almost 11,000 calls were made to refugees living near the blast. Their main priorities remained shelter and cash for basic needs and food, in line with the needs expressed by the wider affected population.

Operational Update

- This week, UNHCR submitted two projects for the Inter-Agency Flash appeal reflecting its engagement in the Protection and Shelter sectors for a total of USD 35 million (USD 2.5 million for protection and USD 32.5 million for shelter). These interventions adopt a phased approach in responding to the explosions' aftermath. Grounded on LRC coordinated rapid assessments and community outreach, UNHCR and its partners have provided immediate relief to persons affected by the explosions, while in parallel organizing the next phase of assistance.
- In total, UNHCR aims to reach over 100,000 affected persons through all its interventions.
- UNHCR is also co-leading the inter-agency response in the same sectors of Protection and Shelter, supporting coordination in the field and contributing to ensure that interventions are strategic and cohesive.

Photo: © UNHCR

Lebanon. People flee to safety as massive explosion shakes Beirut
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UNHCR response

Protection

- UNHCR's Protection response has started to shift emphasis from emergency to more specialized interventions. While some Psychological First Aid (PFA) needs remain, UNHCR and its protection partners' activities have an increased focus on men, women, girls and boys requiring longer term or specialized support. These persons – Lebanese and other nationalities – were identified by UNHCR Mobile teams who were on the ground the day after the blast, door-to-door assessments, and UNHCR's protection hotline and Outreach Volunteers, among other avenues.

- Person identified are referred to partners who provide specialized support who then provide case management services; Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS); emergency cash assistance (ECA); services for persons with specific needs, such as persons living with disabilities; individual rehabilitation services; and legal aid.

- As an example, when signs of psychological distress or trauma are spotted during one of the UNHCR activities or during a phone call to the UNHCR protection hotline, a referral is immediately triggered with a partner that specializes in mental health and psychosocial support. This partner will then provide the appropriate response in a way that is sensitive to gender, age and other characteristics. If unaddressed, the multi-layered traumas experienced during and after the explosions at the Beirut port can aggravate over the months and years, preventing the victims from recovering and moving on with their lives, especially for children.

So far, through our partners we have been able to support:

- **59** households with ECA, reaching 200 individuals, helping them to pay for their most basic needs;
- **477** persons benefitted from PFA, to help start the recovery process;
- **107** persons with legal advice in order to replace or obtain official documentation such as IDs or legal residency;
- **294** persons received case management services to ensure they receive appropriate and tailored support.

Shelter

- UNHCR's shelter response is also evolving as urgent support and immediate weatherproofing needs are being addressed and preparations for activities related minor and medium-term repair and rehabilitation are nearing completion.

- Immediate and urgent needs have been addressed through the distribution of 6,319 UNHCR weatherproofing kits by partners (93% of target), providing privacy, dignity and safety to 24,000 individuals. Beneficiaries were 69% Lebanese, 28% Syrians and 3% other.

- The multi-sectoral needs assessment led by the LRC and supported by UNHCR, administered to 6,100 households, shows that support with shelter repairs is the top priority in most areas. Over 35% of the assessed population presented it as their main priority. UNHCR, in collaboration with inter-agency partners, will use the results of this assessment to target households and buildings that need support for minor repairs and rehabilitation as well as communal areas in need of rehabilitation and improvement.

- The first phase of minor repairs support will start shortly through the provision of USD 600 cash grants for minor repairs, primarily targeting residents, rather than landlords. Beneficiaries of this cash grants will be based on socio-economic criteria and a visual inspection by trained personnel.

- Together with our partners, we aim at providing over 11,000 such grants, benefitting almost 40,000 people.

- Subsequent phases include support to homeowners and landlords to continue repairs, including through more substantial shelter rehabilitation. In parallel, UNHCR helping communities to address damage to communal areas.

- Looking forward, UNHCR is already linking these longer term interventions to development frameworks, a critical step in the transition from immediate humanitarian programmes to more sustainable support.

UNHCR Lebanon operation

Funding:

USD 607.5 million requested for the UNHCR Lebanon operation in 2020

45% funded as of 1 September 2020 (USD 276.1 million received)

Additional links

- For further information, please visit – UNHCR Lebanon website or the UNHCR data portal.
- Support UNHCR's emergency response in Lebanon: https://donate.unhcr.org/sg/stand-with-lebanon/~my-donation

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