

# UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees

Beirut, 2-9 November 2012



## Highlights of the week

- The number of Syrians receiving protection and assistance in Lebanon has reached 115,000;
- UNHCR registered over 6,000 refugees this week;
- Access to Wadi Khaled resumed following fruitful discussions with Military Intelligence;
- UNHCR and partners identified 36 Lebanese public schools to receive fuel vouchers for heating during winter;
- The World Food Programme will be giving newly registered refugees food vouchers, whereas previously they were receiving food kits, helping families choose their preferred foods from local Lebanese grocers;



## Registration and New Arrivals

The number of Syrians receiving protection and assistance in Lebanon through the efforts of the Government of Lebanon and UN and NGO partners has now reached 115,000 persons. Of this number, 83,860 are registered, with an estimated 31,000 people having been in contact with UNHCR to be registered.

UNHCR registered 6,126 refugees this week at its centres in Tripoli, Al Qaa, Beirut, and in Ghaziyeh. Registration capacity currently stands at more than 1,000 persons per day across Lebanon.

Current distribution of registered population is as follows:

**North Lebanon:** 52,152

**Bekaa:** 47,521

**Beirut and South Lebanon:** 15,282

This week, the majority of individuals registered have come from Homs, Damascus, Halab, Edleb and Hama.

In the Bekaa, the mobile registration team has been in Al Qaa since 30 October 2012, and registered more than 2,700 Syrians.

In North Lebanon, registration activities continued in Tripoli but access to Wadi Khaled was disrupted due to temporary measures imposed by Military Intelligence. UNHCR and Military Intelligence have met and access will resume and the mobile registration planned for Wadi Khaled can commence within the coming week.

Mobile registration activities in South Lebanon started on 24 October. As of 7 November, 1,464 Syrians were registered in the South, with more than 1,600 Syrians having also contacted UNHCR for appointments. The registration team has been identifying Syrians in the South with the support of the municipalities in Sidon and Tyre, and has been relying on their outreach capacities.

## Protection

Previously announced commitments by the Government of Lebanon to waive renewal fees and to regularise those refugees who had to cross through unofficial crossings have not been operationalised. The General Security Office (GSO) has informed UNHCR that a directive on the former has been sent to GSO offices throughout the country but the government would appreciate international support for covering the lost revenue associated with those fees. The GSO also expressed its concerns in regard to finding the most appropriate process for regularisations given security concerns prevalent in the country. UNHCR will continue to liaise with the GSO on this matter.

Although the majority of refugees continue to cross through official border crossings, some enter Lebanon unofficially due to a variety of reasons. This includes family members not being authorized to cross together from the Syrian side of the border, prohibitive bribes and targeted shootings on the Syrian side hindering refugees' access to Lebanon. There are reports of refugees entering Wadi Khaled via the Nahr Al-Kbeer river following the killing of a Syrian official army member at the previously favoured unofficial Kneisseh entry point. This is concerning, especially with winter approaching, as it adds a new perilous dimension to the already difficult journey of crossing into Lebanon through unofficial points.

In east and north Lebanon, the monthly inter-agency protection working group took place to review the implementation of protection activities. In the North, it focused on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) response for Akkar, Wadi Khaled and Tripoli, establishing which organizations are responsible for specific services in each area. As part of this inter-agency response, UNICEF is working with local actors to provide targeted services that will address the needs of female survivors of SGBV, such as administering psychological first aid to refugees adversely affected by violence and displacement.

## Security

The security situation in Lebanon remained calm this week. However, UN agencies and international NGOs had to be escorted by military intelligence in order to cross through the Wadi Khaled area. The issue was soon resolved in a meeting between UNHCR and Military Intelligence on Friday where both parties agreed on security procedures for entry and exit to Wadi Khaled. The Military Intelligence also committed to facilitating all UN and local and international NGOs humanitarian programmes in the area.

## Distribution

UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), World Vision (WVI) and Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre (CLMC), Makhzoumi Foundation continue to assist Syrian refugees throughout Lebanon through distribution of essential food and non-food items.

In north Lebanon, over 38,000 people (7,766 families) received assistance over the past 11 days, completing the October cycle for distribution. Blankets were distributed in Wadi Khaled and Akkar to keep refugees warm as the colder weather nears, and all received WFP food vouchers or food kits, hygiene and baby kits and sanitary napkins. Fortunately, distribution efforts were not affected by the temporary closure of the Chadra checkpoint (the crossing point into Wadi Khaled), as items were distributed before access to the area was limited.

In the Bekaa, DRC distributed in Fakeha and Brital while WVI assisted refugees in Saadnayel and Jeb Jenine. CLMC also assisted 565 people (113 families) in the Bekaa with food, hygiene kits and bedding and an additional 270 people (54 families) in south Lebanon and Beirut. WFP distributed food vouchers, hygiene and baby kits to over 3,200 households throughout the Bekaa.

WFP also announced that all registered refugees will receive food vouchers whereas previously the newly registered in the North were receiving food kits as their names were not yet updated in the computer system. WFP will manually write the names of new families so they can directly receive food vouchers in lieu of food kits, allowing them to choose foods of their choice from local Lebanese grocers. As of December, the WFP food voucher system will be implemented in south Lebanon.

## Education

UNHCR, UNICEF, Save the Children and other education partners enhanced coordination with school directors this week to ensure Syrian refugee children are enrolled in Lebanese public schools and that all are equipped with proper school supplies.

UNICEF distributed school bags, uniforms and other educational materials to refugees in Wadi Khaled and Akkar. So far, over 7,500 children in north Lebanon and the Bekaa have received UNICEF school supplies. UNICEF signed an agreement with Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre to also help facilitate the enrolment of an additional 11,000 children.

Distribution of fuel vouchers will commence, to help warm schools during winter. UNHCR and partners selected 15 public schools in north Lebanon and 20 in the Bekaa based on the number of Syrian refugees enrolled, which schools were in particularly cold areas and upon recommendations from the Ministry of Education.

Save the Children will now have a focal point at UNHCR's registration centre in Tripoli, offering advice to refugees on education services available. This will help stress to the refugee community the importance of continuing education through displacement as well as address any concerns and questions families have.

In south Lebanon, Caritas and Amel are paying the tuition fees of students while education grants are covering the costs of uniforms, transportation, stationary, remedial classes and minor repairs on school buildings.

## Health

UNHCR, IMC, Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center and partners are working jointly to assess refugees' health status and ensure that primary and secondary health care needs are met.

One of the most pressing challenges identified this week is the lack of proper vulnerability criteria to determine the urgency of medical cases and their referral to secondary/tertiary health care services. Health stakeholders met to agree on a valid set of criteria to be put into action in the coming week in order for emergency cases to be appropriately prioritized. Health actors are also working on the prioritization of non-registered refugees. This category of people will be referred to hospitals should their medical condition be critical or life-threatening and will be expedited for registration.

UNHCR, IMC and partners held a workshop with primary health care professionals with the aim to streamline the referral mechanism at the primary health care level, namely with regards to SGBV cases. The facilitators stressed the importance of the continual provision of post exposure prophylactic (PEP) kits for survivors of gender-based violence in accordance to WHO standards, along with the appropriate medical and psychosocial response needed.

Additionally, UNHCR, MOSA, MOPH, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, and UNFPA are working to reinforce appropriate infant and young child feeding amongst refugees and the exercise of caution about unnecessary and potentially harmful use of breast milk substitutes.

Four cases of suspected tuberculosis (TB) that have been reported, assessed and integrated into the Ministry of Public Health's National program for TB.

## Shelter

UNHCR, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), DRC, Premiere Urgence-Aide Medicale Internationale (PU-AMI) and partners continue to renovate unfinished host community houses, rehabilitate abandoned schools and install single family dwellings in the form of prefabricated shelter boxes and temporary shelters (T-shelters) in order to improve the living conditions for refugees throughout Lebanon.

In the North, UNHCR and DRC are closely liaising with local municipalities to identify pieces of abandoned land suitable for the establishment of prefabricated houses. This week, two single family dwellings were installed in Kfartoun and another four were installed in Quachlak bringing the total number of such houses in the area to 33. Some 45 members of the refugee community have been recruited and trained to build the houses while previously identified vulnerable families have been relocated to the houses. In the Bekaa, NRC constructed seven temporary shelters (T-shelters) in Saadnayel by also employing members of the refugee community.

NRC is in the process of rehabilitating just under 100 unfinished houses in Aarsal, Baalbek, Fakeha, and Saadnayel and another 42 in Wadi Khaled by adding doors, windows, and plastic sheeting where needed. NRC also reached the final rehabilitation stages of six large collective shelters in Aarsal, Fakeha and Baalbek with the capacity to host over 450 people (93 families).

UNHCR and partners still require Government approval to fully rehabilitate abandoned schools, and delays in that regard have resulted in limiting refurbishments to minor sanitation repairs. This, along with the identification of public buildings that could serve as collective shelter and the identification of proper pieces of land for the building of T-shelters and prefabs, have become urgent priorities for agencies. UNHCR and partners continue to advocate for these approvals while maximizing the provision of shelter services –including rent assistance– to refugees.

## Water and Sanitation

UNHCR and UNICEF are co-leading the response in water and sanitation to ensure refugees maintain proper hygiene and have access to adequate water. Recently signed agreements with *Premiere Urgence-Aide Medicale Internationale* (PU-AMI) and *Action Contre la Faim* (ACF) to begin the implementation of different water and sanitation projects will help improve refugees' living conditions in North, South and East Lebanon. In the Bekaa, ACF began assessments that will result in the constructing or repairing of latrines and showers in tented settlements and pre-fabricated houses while raising awareness among refugees about the importance and ways to maintain proper hygiene standards.

In Sidon, the Shouf, and Beirut, PU-AMI started a mapping and assessing the living conditions of refugees in the area. Based on findings, PU-AMI will distribute water filters to Syrian refugees hosted by the Lebanese community in addition to conducting hygiene awareness campaigns. Also in the South, PU-AMI will upgrade or construct sanitation facilities including showers and latrines for families not meeting appropriate sanitation standards. The agency will test the water quality of these families and develop a response plan accordingly. In Akkar, PU-AMI has planned to complete a water supply project previously launched by the municipality of Mashta Hammoud. The agency will construct a water supply scheme –a water system that entailed the establishment of a water source, tanks, and pipelines- in addition to improve water conditions in the area.