

UN Inter-Agency Response for Syrian Refugees

Beirut, November 2012



Highlights of the week

- UNHCR registered close to 25,000 people in November;
- Agencies commenced the distribution of fuel coupons to registered Syrian refugees across Lebanon;
- Agencies distributed 80,000 fuel coupons, mattresses, blankets, sanitary napkins, hygiene kits, food vouchers and food kits to registered refugee individuals and families in Beirut, the north, east and south Lebanon.;
- The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) permitted access to public schools for activities such as remedial classes;
- Action Contre la Faim (ACF) began upgrading and constructing sanitation facilities -mainly latrines and showers- and led awareness-raising sessions on hygiene in tented settlements in the Bekaa.



Donors

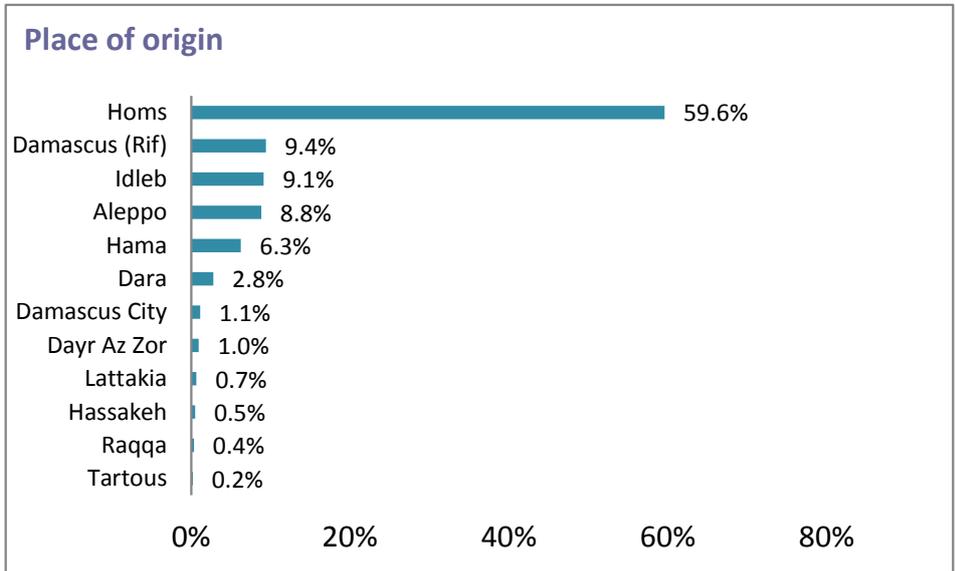


Funding is also received in private donations from the following countries: China, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, and Spain.

Registration and New Arrivals

This month, the number of registered Syrian refugees receiving assistance from UNHCR, the Government of Lebanon, UN and NGO partners reached over 133,000. From this number, 102,369 are registered and 32,623 people are scheduled to be registered.

Registration with UNHCR continues to be centralized in Tripoli and Beirut, and mobile in the Bekaa and South Lebanon. UNHCR teams register some 1,300 refugees daily. In the Bekaa, mobile registration teams continue to reach people in need of basic assistance such as food and winter items, pending the opening of a centre in Zahle in mid-December.



Over 25,000 refugees were registered throughout the country in November. Current distribution of the registered population is as follows:

North Lebanon: 53,329

Bekaa: 41,413

Beirut and South Lebanon: 7,627

Protection

The recent formation of an inter-ministerial committee tasked with responding to the needs of Syrian refugees is working to better coordinate efforts and enhance interventions on behalf of refugees and affected Lebanese communities. The Government of Lebanon is working with UNHCR to resume joint registration with UNHCR through the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA). UNHCR, MOSA, the High Relief Commission (HRC) and other relevant partners; a mechanism based on harmonized criteria will be adopted for the identification of those among the registered refugees who are in need of assistance

In November, partners further strengthened the Sexual and Gender-Based response plan. Throughout the month, UNHCR, UNICEF and other partner agencies worked on enhancing SGBV referral and detection mechanisms by providing technical staff with training on how best to deal with survivors of SGBV and expanding services to vulnerable cases including by providing alternative shelter options. UNHCR, UNICEF, and partners are now preparing for the opening of women centers aimed to respond to and prevent SGBV problems. SGBV coordination meetings were held on a bi-weekly basis among specialized agencies to enhance the response mechanism in legal, health and shelter services.

UNHCR continues to follow up with the General Security Office (GSO) on the previously announced commitments to waive renewal fees and to regularize those refugees who crossed through unofficial border crossings.

Security

The security situation in Lebanon remained calm throughout the month, enabling all assistance activities to continue as usual. At the beginning of November, UNHCR and Military Intelligence agreed security procedures for entry and exit to Wadi Khaled. Military intelligence is now committed to facilitating all UN and NGO humanitarian programmes in the area.

Distribution

November marked the beginning of the distribution of fuel coupons for registered Syrian refugees across Lebanon. Fuel coupons, in addition to a host of winter items such as blankets, clothing and rugs, were the focus of this month's distribution as Lebanon begins to slip into its coldest months. November also marked the formal launch of basic distribution assistance and food to Syrian refugees in the South. In parallel, the World Food Programme (WFP) began mapping and assessing local grocery shops in south Lebanon in preparation for the implementation of the food voucher system in the area at the turn of December. As in north and east Lebanon, the food voucher system will benefit the local economy while enhancing the range of foods choice for refugees.

UNHCR, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), World Vision (WV), the World Food Programme (WFP), Makhzoumi Foundation, and UNFPA distributed some 80,000 fuel coupons, mattresses, blankets, sanitary napkins, hygiene kits, food vouchers and food kits to registered refugee individuals and families in Beirut, the north, east and south Lebanon. Newly arrived families in Tripoli, Bekaa and Sidon were assisted by Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center with food and non-food items.

Education

This month marked advancements in the education response, as UNHCR alongside the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) worked with partners to develop an accelerated learning programme aimed at integrating Syrian students into the formal Lebanese education system within the next six months.

Following the initial 'Back to School' outreach that enrolled some 8,000 Syrian students, UNHCR and partners brainstormed methods to continue enrolment as Lebanese public schools are now stretched and the capacity of staff and locations inhibits further students from enrolling. With the strong support of the MOEHE, refugee children who are not currently enrolled in school will attend accelerated learning classes in the afternoons that will lead them to taking a placement test in the next six months for integration into the formal Lebanese education system. The strategy is twofold as it will not only bring Syrian students up to speed with the Lebanese curriculum but will also give UNHCR and partners time to rehabilitate and construct schools so that there is more space to accommodate children. UNHCR, the MOEHE, UNICEF, UNESCO and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) are coordinating to implement the program, and will pay teacher incentives as well as provide transportation for children as it gets dark early during the winter afternoons.

The MOEHE has also permitted access to public schools so that activities, such as remedial classes, can take place. Some 3,000 enrolled students were identified this month as needing extra assistance adjusting to the Lebanese curriculum, and will benefit from the MOEHE's decision.

UNHCR with UNICEF, UNESCO, NRC, Save the Children (SCI), Makhzoumi Foundation (MF), Amel Association, Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (CLMC), Terre des Hommes (TdH), World Vision and other partners will pull efforts and resources to conduct a Joint Education Needs Assessment (JENA) in the coming months to further develop the education response.

Health

Hundreds of Syrian refugees received health care assistance throughout Lebanon in November, bringing the cumulative number of people who received primary health care services (doctor consultations, diagnostic tests, regular and chronic medication) to 27,000, and the number of patients who were admitted to IMC-supported hospitals to 5,000.

UNHCR, IMC, CLMC, MF and Amel Association have turned to focus on health care services in Beirut and south Lebanon this month where the number of refugee health beneficiaries is increasing. During the past week alone, over 750 Syrian refugees received primary health care assistance and medications.

UNHCR and UNFPA set a Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) plan that entails providing reproductive health kits (different types of contraceptives) and SGBV kits (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis kits) at different primary health care centres, training care givers including obstetricians and gynecologists on SGBV awareness and response, and ensuring access to forensic doctors. This plan is aimed to improve SGBV awareness, care and prevention.

In light of reported needs for psycho-social support to refugees who have undergone traumatic experiences in Syria or while attempting to cross, IMC's mental health unit devised a plan for training on psychological aid and providing frontline workers with comprehensive information about the symptoms of psychological distress so to help identify and respond. UNHCR and IMC also decided to expand mental health services in Tripoli through three hospitals and two primary health care centres. This adds to the already existing psycho-social care programme where psychologists in different health care centres across Lebanon provide consultations to vulnerable refugees (separated children, persons suffering from post-traumatic stress, single mothers, etc).

Partners also joined efforts to encourage breastfeeding among new mothers within the refugee community. The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), UNHCR, IMC, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), UNICEF, World Vision, DRC, UNFPA and other partners took part in a workshop on infant and young child breastfeeding. As per the World Health Assembly resolution, the workshop aimed at optimizing breastfeeding versus breast milk substitutes through a call of support for breastfeeding. Health organizations will work jointly to promote breastfeeding and healthy infant and young child feeding among refugees.

UNHCR and partners note a number of persistent challenges in the health programme. There continues to be a need to ensure that newly arrived Syrian refugees have access to health care, and that non-registered critical emergency cases can be treated while their registration is fast tracked. Agencies are now working to strengthen the referral criteria of those who are in a critical health state, while also developing and improving the Health Information System (HIS) that keeps all partners informed and up-to-date on refugees' health status.

Shelter

As Lebanon slips into its coldest months, UNHCR, NRC, DRC, Premiere Urgence (PU-AMI), CLMC and partner agencies accelerated the provision and identification of adequate shelter solutions for refugees across Lebanon.

With just above half the refugee population living in rented accommodations, UNHCR, DRC and NRC continued the provision of cash to landlords to accommodate some 1,250 refugees in critical situations in north and east Lebanon who are no longer able to pay their rent.

As Syrian refugees often arrive to Lebanon with close to nothing, many are forced to live in tented settlements or unfinished houses that belong to the host community. Agencies have also worked on improving the shelter conditions in both cases by adding doors, windows, plastic sheeting and other basic items such as stoves and fridges.

Shelter agencies also made sure to train and recruit men from the refugee community to rehabilitate shelters, creating much needed job opportunities.

The need for shelter assistance in south Lebanon, namely in Tyr and its surroundings, is becoming increasingly essential at this juncture with more refugees choosing to settle in the area. UNHCR and partners rolled-out a shelter strategy for the area including a larger number of partners capable of covering the needs of all vulnerable refugees. In the meantime, UNHCR and CISP carried out shelter repairs including the sealing off of unfinished houses.



Syrian refugee family in tented settlements in central Bekaa, September 2012. ©UNHCR /D.Sleiman

Water and Sanitation

In November, UNHCR stepped up its Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme based on needs identified in different Governorates. Action Contre la Faim (ACF) began upgrading and constructing of sanitation facilities - mainly latrines and showers- and led awareness-raising sessions on hygiene in tented settlements in the Bekaa. In parallel, PU-AMI initiated the much needed construction of a comprehensive water supply scheme –the installation of a water pump, generator and water pipe- in Mashta Hammoud, north Lebanon, where many refugees currently live. The project is scheduled to be completed by June 2013. PU-AMI will start the distribution of 500 water filters, the upgrading of sanitation facilities, water quality testing and awareness sessions from the first week of December in the South and Beirut.