

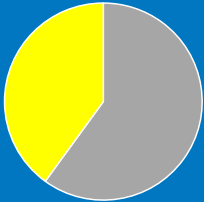


OCTOBER UPDATE

- Winter Preparations: a visit to a distribution of winter items in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley
- Latest Developments
- Onward Movement to Europe



FUNDING



Agencies and the Government of Lebanon have requested US\$ 1.87 billion in the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) (revised downward from US\$ 2.1 billion). As of 20 October 2015, agencies reported to having received US\$ 840 million (45% of the requirements)

REGISTERED REFUGEES

A total of 1,078,338 are currently registered with UNHCR in Lebanon

LEBANON

INTER-AGENCY UPDATE

OCTOBER DEVELOPMENTS

Winter preparations

Preparations are in full swing to protect the most vulnerable families from a possible repeat of last year's winter storms. At a time when the vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees have increased by 100 per cent in some areas, aid agencies estimate that 195,000 Syrian families (975,000 people) will suffer from winter and will need assistance to keep warm and dry. Vulnerable Lebanese families in elevated areas will also be affected and assisted by the agencies.

UNHCR has doubled the number of people receiving cash grants for winter in Lebanon this year because of this increased vulnerability among the refugee population. Over 151,000 families (750,000 people) will receive financial assistance for four months starting in November. This will allow refugees to stagger purchases such as fuel for heating.

Among these, 75,000 Syrian families living above 500 meters will receive \$147 per month, while 76,000 families below 500 meters will receive \$100 per month. Another 10,000 families in remote areas such as Aarsal – where cash programmes cannot be administered due to a lack of ATM systems – will receive \$100 fuel vouchers per month. Assistance during the four winter months will also be provided to vulnerable Lebanese families identified by the Ministry of Social Affairs under the National Poverty Targeting Plan.

UNICEF, IOM and partners are providing cash for warm clothing and other winter needs to vulnerable Lebanese people and Lebanese who have returned from Syria. UNRWA is providing cash support to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, including those who have fled Syria.

Agencies are also distributing aid to 65,000 families (325,000 vulnerable Lebanese and Syrians), such as stoves, heavy blankets, winter clothes, and fuel for schools to help them survive winter, also ensuring shelters are weatherproof and insulated and that classrooms in elevated areas are warm by providing fuel in schools.

Weather proofing kits including plastic sheeting, plywood and timber to reinforce weak small-scale shelters will be given out for 27,000 families, protecting 135,000 people from the elements.

In addition, insulation kits for 15,000 families (about 75,000 people) will be introduced this year for refugees living in larger spaces like unfinished buildings where it is hard to conserve heat, especially for those in very exposed parts of the country like the Bekaa Valley. The kits include timber and plywood construction materials rolls of compressed insulating foam, stretched into wooden frames and

installed inside rooms and shelters to improve heat retention. These materials are more durable than plastic sheeting, and will also help keep shelters cool in summer. Floor raising kits and extinguishers will also be provided to mitigate flood and fire risks – a recurrent problem in informal settlements last winter. Site improvements will continue by putting gravel on high traffic pathways and installing drains in flood prone settlements.

A distribution of blankets in the Bekaa for Syrian refugee families who did not receive winter assistance last year started on 30 September and continued in October. Over 8,000 refugees have benefited from this distribution.

The distribution of winter cards started in October with 2,718 families (13,590 individuals) already assisted in the Bekaa, 10,399 families (51,995 individuals) in Northern Lebanon, 4,094 families (20,470 individuals) in Southern Lebanon and 7,848 families (39,240 refugees) in Mount Lebanon.

The distribution of winter assistance to Syrian refugees residing in Aarsal started on October 6. Refugee families residing in Aarsal will receive \$100 worth of fuel vouchers per month in November and December. A total of 981 families (4,454 individuals) residing in Aarsal have so far benefited from this distribution.

Dar Al Fatwa (DAF) distributed blankets to around 633 families (over 3,000 individuals) in Aarsal. The distribution of winter shelter materials also started in October in Aarsal, benefiting 1,064 families (4,446 individuals) so far. More distributions are underway.

Bracing for winter



Ibrahim and his family will spend their first winter in a tent this year. They collect wood and plastic sheets to reinforce their tent ahead of the coming winter during a distribution of weatherproofing materials in an informal settlement in the Bekaa.

“First we were two families living in a house, then, when one family left, we could no longer pay the rent, so we moved to another house, we couldn’t pay the rent there, so we ended up here. We borrowed money to build the tent”, says Ibrahim.

Aid agencies distribute winter aid early every year, but working against the weather is not easy.

Check out more stories on winter preparations here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wm2xMRv8VWw> (English)

and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5Er9XB-VLw> (Arabic)

Inactivation of refugees from UNHCR’s database

Between January and September 2015, UNHCR inactivated over 149,000 Syrian refugees from its registration database in Lebanon. Of those, 35,280 persons were inactivated in September. The inactivation follows a verification exercise of several months to confirm those still present in the country.

UNHCR conducts regular verification exercises to update its information about registered Syrian refugees, review their needs, and deactivate the files of those deemed to be no longer present in the country of asylum and those who have passed away. Verification is made through various means including visits to UNHCR offices, regular activities and home visits to refugees by UNHCR and other humanitarian staff, and WFP’s food distribution validation exercises.

Relocation of refugees from the Ouzai shelter in Sidon

Since the beginning of 2012, the Ouzai collective centre in southern Lebanon has hosted 175 Syrian refugee families free of charge. However, its owners had stated from the outset that they ultimately planned to turn it into an institute of higher education.

Fully acknowledging the difficulty of the situation for the refugees, UNHCR and PU-AMI negotiated an exceptional rental agreement in December of last year and covered the cost on behalf of the refugees in order to allow sufficient time for an orderly move. This agreement has expired in August.

Today, 148 refugee families are still in the process of moving out of the shelter to find alternate accommodation. UNHCR and PU-AMI have been working closely with the Lebanese authorities including the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) to help the refugees identify alternative shelter options before the start of the winter season and relocate the most vulnerable among them into rehabilitated shelters in South Lebanon.

Over 110 families in the centre continue to receive food assistance on a monthly basis and 28 extremely vulnerable families receive monthly financial support, while all refugees in the centre receive healthcare and education assistance. All types of assistance will continue for the refugees after the move.

A joint response to Typhoid cases in the Bekaa

A few refugees in an informal settlement in Omarieh in the Bekaa were identified as suffering from Typhoid in October. The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), UNHCR, UNICEF, Beyond and Save the Children immediately provided the affected refugees with the appropriate medical care. They are also working to eliminate the source of the contamination through testing the water quality, cleaning the water tanks, and raising-awareness among the refugees about hygiene and risks of typhoid outbreaks. Agencies are scouting for other sites that could also be receiving water from a contaminated source in order to fully contain the outbreak.

Back-to-School campaign

According to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), as of 22 October, a total of 65,000 refugee students are enrolled in the first shift in Lebanese public schools across Lebanon, with an additional 85,000 enrolled in the second shift. This brings the total number of refugee children who have so far enrolled in Lebanese public schools between KG and Grade 9 to 150,000 – a 50 percent increase from last year.

A number of schools in the Bekaa, North and Mount Lebanon have reportedly reached their capacity and cannot admit any additional students. The Ministry is working on opening additional schools that would also help reduce distance and transportation cost – one of the chief obstacles mentioned so far by refugee parents.

The target for enrollment in 2015 is 200,000 refugee children. This leaves a further 200,000 refugee children still out of school and efforts are underway to increase this target in 2016 while identifying and engaging with out of school children, particularly adolescent youth.

Enrollment in public vocational schools – Brevet Technique (BT), Technique Supérieure (TS), etc - is also open. This effort will provide youth with more opportunities in practical and adapted learning, such as marketing, nursing, design, etc.

Participatory Assessments

Participatory Assessments (PAs) are structured dialogues with refugee men, women, boys and girls of diverse background as well as with Lebanese families from host communities. These assessments continue to serve as the best forum to gather information about protection risks and concerns of the two communities, as well as identify existing capacities and solutions.

October witnessed the launch of this year's round of PAs. Agencies conducted over 60 focus group discussions with Syrian refugees and Lebanese citizens. Preliminary findings indicate that the lack of valid residencies was the most recurrent concern reported by the refugees, who pleaded that this issue be given consideration. Other concerns relate to the limited humanitarian assistance and healthcare coverage. The comprehensive list of findings will be communicated in November's inter-agency update.

The PAs were organized by UNHCR in coordination with MOSA, UN agencies, as well as local and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

ONWARD MOVEMENT TO EUROPE

In 2015, an increasing number of Syrians have been observed to be moving through, or onward from, Lebanon to Turkey, utilizing air connections or the maritime route between Lebanon and Turkey , to join the ‘Eastern Mediterranean route’ to Europe .

These routes are among the few routes from Syria to Turkey not going through areas of active conflict. Once in Turkey, Syrians either remain there or contact smugglers, who reportedly have operations to various European destinations.

Syrians in transit through Lebanon

Syrian nationals who have secured onward travel to, among other places, Turkey, may enter Lebanon by means of a transit visa arranged through travel agents.

From Masnaa or Aboudiyeh, passengers proceed directly to the port where they embark to Turkey on the same day.

It is estimated that several thousand individuals are departing every week, the majority of whom having arrived from Syria. This preliminarily indicates that the largest number utilizing the Lebanon-Turkey connection are Syrians coming directly from Syria and transiting through Lebanon.

Onward movement of Syrians in Lebanon

Onward movements of Syrians who have been residing in Lebanon are more difficult gauge, but the deteriorating situation and dwindling assistance for Syrians in Lebanon have led more Syrians in Lebanon to express their intention to move onward to third countries.

Protection partners report that refugees in Lebanon departing to Turkey cite the high cost of living in Lebanon as a primary reason for their departure, followed by the reduction in assistance. Other reasons are legal status requirements and lack of livelihood opportunities

Unofficial sea travel

Syrians unable to meet the requirements for official travel include those without passports and / or lacking legal residency and unable to afford regularization.

Information on the options for unofficial travel from Lebanon is limited, but may include obtaining forged documentation or embarking clandestinely on fishing or cargo vessels.

Such arrangements and pricing vary widely. People indicate that the cost ranges from USD 1,500-2,000 for an illegal sea voyage to Turkey, to USD 3,500 for an illegal sea voyage to Greece, to USD 5,000 to 8,000 for the entire journey to Europe, including forged passports. There have been numerous reports of Syrians subjected to scams, paying for forged documentation or journeys, never to receive them.

DONORS

Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Union, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Luxemburg, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America.

Contributions have also been received from the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) as well as from private donors, national and international organizations.