

Syrian refugees in Lebanon

Quarterly snapshot

January - March 2015

KEY FIGURES

1,192,280

Syrian refugees*

69

Organizations

Consequences of new GOL policies

The first quarter of 2015 began with new entry and residency rules for Syrian nationals taking effect from 5 January 2015. Admission to Lebanon for Syrians has since been restricted to those who can produce valid identity documents and proof that their stay in Lebanon fits into one of the approved entry categories. Seeking refuge is not an approved reason other than in exceptional circumstances to be assessed by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The Government also issued new regulations governing the renewal of residency permits. Syrians who are registered with UNHCR must pay a fee of US \$200 and in addition provide: a housing commitment (certified copies of a lease agreement or real-estate deed); certified attestation from a mukhtar (village leader) that the landlord owns the property; and a notarized pledge not to work; and proof of their financial means or of the support they receive. Some refugees are also asked to sign a notarized pledge that they will return to Syria when their permit expires or when requested by the Government. Most refugees are not able to pay the US \$200 fee, nor can they produce the documents required since most do not have formal lease agreements or ways of demonstrating that they have financial means to live in Lebanon. As a result of these measures, there is a growing sense of insecurity and unease in refugee communities. Many are fearful of arrest or detention because of lapsed residency visas or are feeling increasingly vulnerable to abuse given their irregular status in the country.

A total of 45,150 Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS) have been recorded by UNRWA. The projected number of Lebanese returnees is around 50,000 persons.

Challenges

Many refugees perceive their situation in Lebanon to be getting worse. Some refugees report that they are becoming increasingly isolated and restricted in their movements due to curfews and a lack of residency documents. They also confirmed increased financial pressures due to reduced assistance provided by humanitarian partners, which in turn leads already vulnerable refugees to rely on activities that cause further harm, including early marriage and child labor. During 2014, 67 percent of reported cases of forced marriages



Photo: UNHCR - LEBANON

were children and data collected in the first quarter indicate that this number may be rising. The exact number of street children in Lebanon is difficult to gauge. However, a February survey indicates there are at least 1,500 children, nearly three-quarters of them Syrian, begging or working as street vendors. Some street children report working 11 hours a day, and sometimes seven days a week. To date, 380 street children benefited from psychosocial support.

Winter

Winter was particularly harsh this year, with heavy winds, snow, and flooding in several parts of the country. The 2014-2015 Inter-Agency winter support programme came to an end on 31 March. The goal of the five-month programme was to support affected populations in coping with dropping temperatures and staying warm. With US \$75 million secured out of a requested US \$95 million, 180,000 vulnerable families and those living at higher altitudes were prioritized. Seventy-six percent of the families were Syrian, 14 percent were Lebanese, and 10 percent were Palestinian.

“ 75% drop in monthly refugee registrations, compared to the same period in 2014 ”

As part of the winter response, 550,000 Syrian refugees were reached with cash to purchase items needed in the winter, they received winter clothes, fuel for heating and materials to seal off their accommodation and protect them from the cold. Following two especially harsh storms 34,400 refugee families received kits that included plastic sheeting, timber, iron monger, and plywood, helping to protect their homes and stay warm. Most of the beneficiaries were in informal settlements in the North, Akkar and Bekaa.

Through studies and surveys, refugees confirmed that cash



Photo: UNHCR - LEBANON

was their preferred means of support as it enables them to prioritize their own needs and respond to their personal situations in a dignified and flexible manner. It is also a rapid and cost-effective method. Around 75,000 households received winter cash assistance.

As winter drew to a close, the families included in the temporary cash programme were included in the targeting process used for identifying refugees eligible for multi-purpose cash assistance. Families who qualify will be incorporated into the longer-term cash assistance programme. To date, more than 30,000 households have been visited, and 36% have been found eligible for cash assistance due to their socio-economic level. By the end of March, around 1,000 families who had benefitted from winter-related financial support had been included in the multi-purpose cash scheme, bringing the total number of benefiting households to 21,000.

Sector interventions

A recent shelter survey confirmed an increase in shelter vulnerabilities among refugees: 55 per cent live in insecure accommodations, such as informal settlements, unfinished buildings, overcrowded apartments or other substandard housing: this is a 15% increase as compared to last year. Accordingly, shelter partners focus their efforts on activities that aim at providing refugees with greater and more secure housing. Specifically, this means that shelters will be rehabilitated, infrastructure in urban areas will be improved, and refugees will be offered legal support to increase security of tenure.

According to the Ministry of Public Health, cases of water-borne related diseases were on the decline (619 in the first quarter, compared to 1,026 in the previous quarter). However, the risk of an outbreak has not significantly diminished. Health risks due to poor waste-water and solid-waste management have recently been cited by some authorities as reasons for evictions from informal settlements. The sector is working closely with the eviction committees in the field to address these concerns, including through the provision of immediate desludging.

A total of 156 public schools opened second-shifts across the country in early 2015. To date, 106,000 Syrian children have enrolled in the first and second-shift classes of formal education. Three-quarters of the enrolled children receive support for transportation given that this has been identified as a major obstacle to school attendance due to the long distances often required to reach schools.

To improve the learning environment for refugees, assessments were conducted in schools that will be rehabilitated or renovated, including water and sanitation facilities. School supplies, textbooks, and pens were distributed to all public schools. Schools also received fuel for heating in the first semester of the year.

Services for women and children who are survivors of SGBV, including clinical management of rape, are available in 54 facilities across the country. Mobile teams are also reaching out to women and adolescent girls in remote locations – mostly in Bekaa and in the North. In February, initiatives were expanded in Mount Lebanon and Akkar to engage refugee men and boys in helping prevent SGBV through sessions in which they discuss gender roles, child marriage, non-violent communication, and anger and stress management.

Refugees access primary health care through primary health centers. Since January, 343,257 consultations have been offered and 14,920 refugees were provided with life-saving or obstetric secondary health care. Out of these, 7,945 were women accessing safe delivery in hospitals.

“ Refugees confirmed that cash was their preferred means of support ”

With the burden on primary health care centers (PHCs) increasing, an effort to strengthen the existing PHC system has got off to a good start in 2015. A total of 2,568 health care providers have been trained on various topics, including the Early Warning and Response System, standard protocols, the use of the Health Information System, and mother and child health and mental health. All of this helps to ensure standard quality health care. In parallel, 1,029 primary health centres have been renovated or provided with improved IT and medical equipment, such as solar fridges, weighing scales, examination tables, and echography machines.

With increased vulnerabilities and anxieties among refugees, and less self-sufficient means to survive due to depletion of resources, the challenges will grow throughout the year. UNHCR will continue to improve targeting and service delivery efforts in order to provide refugees with the protection and services they need.

	REACHED	TARGET
Shelter		
Increase availability of shelter, through new installations, rental support, or upgrades to uninhabitable shelter spaces	4,834	160,000
Upgrading of occupied shelter units to improve living conditions	83,120	400,000
Site improvements and infrastructure upgrade within neighbourhoods and temporary settlements	11,433	191,000
Create conditions for secure affordable housing by providing counselling and assistance for leasing support	0	163,000

	REACHED	TARGET
Basic Assistance		
Conduct social-economic profiling of refugee households	145,335	230,000
Assist most vulnerable families with multi-sector market based interventions	301,135	467,975
Reach targeted households with seasonal multi sector market based interventions, in-kind distribution or vouchers	547,209	442,500

	REACHED	TARGET
Food Security and Agriculture		
Provide food assistance to most vulnerable families (monthly)	900,000	985,000
Increase refugee awareness on good nutritional and food safety practices	0	9,600

	REACHED	TARGET
Social Stability		
Communal level support projects (# of communities)	100	242
Refugee youth in peace building initiatives	736	18,624

	REACHED	TARGET
Livelihoods		
Facilitate access to rapid income generating opportunities for refugees and improve employability through skills training	1,104	98,738

* Data used above is as of end March 2015 - Source ActivityInfo

	REACHED	TARGET
Protection		
Register and verify Syrian refugees in need of international protection in 2015	148,567	1,500,000
Multi-sectorial support to persons with specific needs, including SGBV survivors and children at risk	16,185	98,000
Provide legal counselling on access to civil documentation including birth certificates, legal residency, security of tenure	3,469	40,000
Participation of refugees in community center and community-based activities	25,604	194,000
Facilitate burden sharing through resettlement to a third country for the syrian refugee population	2,141	9,000

	REACHED	TARGET
Health		
Improve access, coverage and quality of primary healthcare (PHC) services	255,958	900,000
Contribute financially towards hospital care of refugees for life saving conditions and deliveries	10,108	77,745
Provide essential equipment and rehabilitation for selected public hospitals	27	82 hospitals

	REACHED	TARGET
WASH		
Facilitate access to adequate, clean and safe water to refugee families	163,926	1,190,000
Provide water storage installations to communities and families		
Ensure access to adequate sanitation through construction and maintainance of sanitation facilities	40,152	335,000
Improve drainage, waste water and sewage systems to reduce the risk of diseases		

	REACHED	TARGET
Education		
Access to learning for school aged boys and girls	106,000	489,145
Provide school supplies to children attending school	63,277	397,935
Strengthen national education system by rehabilitating schools and providing other assistance	0	180 schools

