

HIGHLIGHTS

- Over US \$1 billion has been allocated in support of the LCRP, almost 50% of the plan's requirements.
- RC/HC and UN representatives visit Aarsal, one of the most vulnerable and volatile areas in Lebanon.
- MoSA organizes a high-level conference to discuss the impact of the Syria crisis in Lebanon.
- The Gemmayzeh Theatre in Beirut hosts the first UN Film Festival in Lebanon and the region.
- 16 Days of Activism campaign is launched to end gender-based violence against women and girls.

FIGURES

(As of 30 November 2016)

# of estimated refugees	1,500,000
# of registered refugees	1,017,433
52.1 %  47.9 %  53 % 	
# of returnees	35,000
# of Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS)	30,675
# of Palestine Refugees from Lebanon (PRL)	277,985
# of vulnerable Lebanese	1,500,000
Total Lebanese population	4,400,000

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SCL Sigrid Kaag opens the Film Festival.
Source: UNIC

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This month in Lebanon

The 2017-2020 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan has been finalized this month, seeking US\$2.8 billion to provide humanitarian assistance, protection and basic services to 2.8 million highly vulnerable individuals and invest in Lebanon's infrastructure, economy and institutions. Humanitarian needs remain unchanged in November and a key focus of humanitarian partners is preparation for the upcoming winter season. To mobilize renewed support for one of the country's most deprived and unstable regions, the RC/HC travelled to Aarsal with a delegation of UN country representatives. The delegation underlined the need for additional international support for vulnerable border areas such as Aarsal, in particular in light of the approaching winter, in order to equip the refugees for the cold and snow that lie ahead. On 1 December 2016, partners put into effect a new 'common card,' which combines food, multi-purpose, winter, and education cash assistance, reflecting the humanitarian community's commitment to strengthening cash-based programming as a key modality to deliver the response in Lebanon. 25 November 2016 marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the start of this year's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign. Finally, on the funding side, as of the end of November, just over US\$1 billion have been allocated by donors in support of the LCRP making it now almost 50 per cent per cent funded.

LCRP 2017-2020

2017 Response Plan targets up to 2.8 million vulnerable people in Lebanon

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2017-2020 has been finalized in November 2016. Six years into the crisis, although high levels of assistance have avoided a sharp deterioration, the humanitarian situation remains precarious. Self-reliance among the refugees has not been achieved; the response barely manages to keep the most vulnerable afloat. In the meantime, high risk for communal tensions remains as host communities continue to perceive competition over services and limited resources.

Building on the achievements of previous years, the LCRP 2017-2020 is designed to respond to evolving needs on the ground through integrated and mutually-reinforcing humanitarian and stabilization interventions. It maintains a strong focus on humanitarian assistance to vulnerable communities but also, in line with the commitments made at the London Conference for Syria, continuously seeks to expand investments, partnerships and delivery models for stabilization as a transition towards longer-term development strategies.

For the year 2017, the LCRP proposes a US\$2.8 billion appeal to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to 2.8 million vulnerable individuals as well as to invest in services, economies and institutions reaching the most vulnerable communities. Similarly to last year, 1.9 million highly vulnerable individuals will be targeted for protection and direct assistance while 2.3 million people will be targeted for service provision through national systems and socio economic recovery, representing an increase of 10% from last year.

HC Calls for Renewed Support for Aarsal

Refugees face stark needs in deprived region

Aarsal, near Lebanon's eastern border with Syria, is one of the most vulnerable and volatile regions in the country.

Aarsal, near Lebanon's eastern border with Syria, is one of the most vulnerable and volatile regions in the country. The region also has a very high concentration of refugees, exceeding the host population by 15 per cent, and has suffered increased instability since armed clashes erupted in 2013. The region already suffered before the crisis from a lack of support from the central government.



RC/HC Philippe Lazzarini discusses issues facing Aarsal. Source: OCHA

On 10 November, a delegation led by Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator Philippe Lazzarini visited Aarsal to assess the humanitarian situation on the ground. The delegation also included UNHCR Representative Mireille Girard, UNICEF Representative Tanya Chapuisat and WFP Representative Dominik Heinrich. The delegation was briefed by the newly elected Municipal Council on the humanitarian and socio-economic situation in the area and met with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in Labwe. They also discussed operational issues and challenges with representatives of the Civil Society Coalition, local NGOs and INGOs working in the area. Finally, they visited a refugee family displaced from Qsayr since June 2013, as well as a local shop owner.

Main Challenges Facing Aarsal

Security and Access: Aarsal has been particularly volatile since 2013 due to clashes between various non-state armed groups involved in the Syrian conflict, who have used the mountainous terrain as a retreat area. As of today, military operations to ensure control over this border area continue to be reported. The most recent violence, in July and October 2016, suspended non-vital humanitarian activities for several days, but overall assistance is still regularly provided by national and international NGOs, with the support of UN funds and agencies.

Concentration of Refugees: Aarsal hosts 40,280 refugees, a population which exceeds the Lebanese host population by more than 15 per cent. Refugees started to arrive to Aarsal following the battle of Qusayr (April-June 2013). Aarsal has experienced two subsequent large influxes of refugees in November 2013 and February 2014, following clashes in the Qalamoun region in Syria.

Vulnerability: 86 per cent of Syrian refugees in Aarsal are severely vulnerable, and 8 per cent are highly vulnerable, making Aarsal one of the most vulnerable regions in Lebanon. These vulnerability scores are similar to those of other Syrian refugees across the Bekaa. More than 70 per cent of refugees in Aarsal live in Informal Settlements, leaving them highly dependent on the assistance delivered by humanitarians. This dependence is particularly acute during the winter, given Aarsal's high elevation of 1,550m.

High Pressure on Host Community: The exceptional concentration of Syrian refugees in Aarsal is straining already limited resources, increasing poverty and social tensions between different communities. Strengthened support to the host community is needed to help them cope with the situation.

Wide-ranging efforts to support vulnerable populations

UN agencies have not been physically present in Aarsal since August 2014, however monitoring and support for NGO activities continue.



Informal Tented Settlement in Aarsal. Source: OCHA

While UN agencies have not resumed their physical presence in Aarsal since August 2014, when conflict flared up between the LAF and armed groups in the area, support continues to be provided through local and international NGO partners, primarily acting through locally-recruited staff. These partners are able to reach most of the affected population in the area. Over 85% of refugees in Aarsal receive e-cards they can use to buy food at local WFP-contracted shops. Meanwhile winter support is provided through

cards used to obtain fuel, as well as by improving shelter weatherproofing. Education partners have worked through homework-support programmes and by providing school supplies to students. In order to promote dialogue between host and refugee communities, partners have trained municipal staff on community engagement and conflict prevention. Partners have also been active providing job-skills training to Lebanese and Syrian youth, in order to boost their employability.

Access to the outskirts of Aarsal town, a mountainous region bordering Syria, remains a challenge, affecting an estimated 8,000 people. The LAF maintain checkpoints surrounding the town, but are unable to ensure the safety of humanitarian actors operating beyond the checkpoints, due to the presence of various armed groups involved in the fighting in Syria. Women, children, and Syrian men with residency papers are generally able to pass through these checkpoints, subject to a 6:00pm curfew, in order to access assistance and services within the town. A General Security Office was established in Aarsal to provide free residency documentation to Syrian refugees, however some refugees report continued difficulty obtaining documentation and moving through the checkpoints, especially when security incidents occur.

HC underlines UN's commitment to Aarsal

RC/HC Philippe Lazzarini underlined the need for additional support to vulnerable border areas, particularly in light of the approaching winter.

During the visit, the RC/HC underlined the need for additional international support for vulnerable border areas such as Aarsal, in particular in light of the approaching winter. "Aarsal is one of the many Lebanese municipalities that is generously hosting a large number of refugees," he said. "With winter fast approaching, our priority is to ensure that people in this isolated and high-altitude area are equipped for the cold and snow that lie ahead. It is clear that there is a need for more support. This is what we are all striving to and this is one of the objectives of our visit today – to draw attention to the situation here."

The RC/HC also underlined the UN's commitment to work with the Government, municipalities and international donors to meet the needs of both the host community and the refugees in Aarsal. "This year, the UN system and its partners have been able to provide better and more appropriate support to the people in Aarsal compared to previous years, thanks to international donors and the continued collaboration with local municipalities and the Government of Lebanon," he said. "We will continue to work in partnership so that the needs of the community as a whole can be met."

Cash Assistance through New ‘Common Card’

Cash assistance consolidated into ‘common card’

In line with the World Humanitarian Summit commitment, humanitarian partners are strengthening their cash-based programming as a key modality to deliver the response in Lebanon. On December 1st, WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, and the Lebanon Cash Consortium put into effect the use of a new ‘common card’ through a Memorandum of Understanding.

660,000 economically vulnerable refugees will benefit from various humanitarian programmes through a single card.

With the introduction of the common card, over 660,000 refugees deemed economically vulnerable will be able to benefit from various humanitarian programmes through a single medium. Through the common card, refugees will have access to food assistance, monthly multi-purpose cash transfers, support to help refugee children enroll and stay in school, winter assistance from November through March, and / or protection cash to help refugees in periods of severe distress. Using the same card, refugees can redeem their food assistance in any of WFP’s 480 contracted shops or withdraw regularly uploaded funds at any ATM machine across Lebanon.



New consolidated ‘common card.’ Source: WFP

The consolidation of cash assistance aims to simplify the process for beneficiaries, who now have just one card to collect and keep track of, as well as to increase efficiency for agencies and partners.

Relying on cash to help vulnerable populations

Benefits of cash assistance include increased choice and dignity for the beneficiary, greater efficiency and accountability, and positive spill-over effects on the local economy.

The benefits of the common card system extend beyond mere convenience for beneficiaries. Cash assistance gives recipients the flexibility to prioritize their own needs, instead of relying on what humanitarian organizations are mandated and equipped to provide. Recipients know better than anyone their individual needs in a given month, be it money for rent, groceries, or medicine. Crucially, cash assistance also provides greater dignity to vulnerable populations, affording them more choice and control over their own lives.

There are also significant advantages for the organizations using cash assistance to meet needs. As the availability of digital payment systems has grown, the delivery of cash assistance has become more affordable, secure, and transparent. For aid organizations, this means significantly reduced operational costs, reduced potential for duplication of support and streamlined and consolidated information. It also means greater accountability, as in many ways it becomes easier to track how much funding reaches specific populations in need.

Finally, the use of cash assistance can have a hugely positive spill-over effect on local economies. When recipients purchase what they need locally, instead of receiving it directly from an international organization, this boosts local markets, generates jobs, and increases the incomes of local producers. In this way, reliance on cash to meet certain needs can also increase support for humanitarian operations by host populations, who see the benefits to the local economy.

Assessing the Impact of the Syria Crisis on Lebanon

High-level conference explores opportunities for Lebanon



HC/RC Philippe Lazzarini discusses the impact of the Syria crisis in Lebanon. Source: OCHA

Lebanon's prospects in response to the Syria crisis were the subject of a high-level conference in Beirut on 9 November organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs in cooperation with DELTA Association and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). The conference, entitled 'The Repercussions of the Syria Refugee Crisis on Lebanon: Fostering Opportunities', brought together Lebanese ministers, UN officials, ambassadors, economic experts, representatives from municipalities and

NGOs to discuss ways to address the country's socio-economic challenges and position the country in a strategic role in the future reconstruction of Syria.

Promoting international solidarity with Lebanon

UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Philippe Lazzarini praised the country for hosting a large number of refugees. "We acknowledge the extraordinary generosity and commitment of Lebanese in terms of solidarity and hospitality; it's something unique," he said. "This is why we have to advocate for international solidarity with Lebanon. The UN is committed to support Lebanese stability by investing in peace, security, governance and development. We are also addressing main challenges pre-dating the crisis and supporting the municipalities to catch up on areas that were neglected for several decades".

In response to a question about "safe havens" in Syria," the RC/HC reminded the audience that there are currently no "safe areas" in Syria and that the establishment of these depends on the consent of all relevant parties. He emphasized that the solution for Syrian refugees is a political solution to the conflict in Syria. As long as a political solution is not found no return can be envisaged. The essence of voluntary repatriation is return and reintegration in safety and dignity, in line with the principle of non-refoulement, to ensure that return is a lasting solution and does not generate another cycle of displacement.

Future prospects

During the conference, Social Affairs Minister Rashid Derbas emphasized Lebanon's excellent relationship with the United Nations and noted that "Lebanon should be prepared to become one of the bases for building the new Syria."

Acknowledging the numerous – and ongoing – repercussions of the Syria crisis on Lebanon, the conference formulated a series of recommendations, including reaching political consensus over a national policy; reinforcing tolerance for refugees; investing in infrastructure; developing small and extra small loans; setting a global economic plan to nationalize the industrial sector; empowering the public sector and strengthening state institutions; increasing the representation of Syrian organizations in conferences; and preparing the Lebanese economy to benefit from the reconstruction of Syria.

Funding Update

As of the end of November, just over US\$1 billion (US\$1,041,030,704) have been allocated by donors in support of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). Taking into consideration the carry-over of US\$186 million related to the LCRP, this represents almost 50% of the overall 2016 appeal of US\$2.48 billion.

"Lebanon should be prepared to become one of the bases for building the new Syria."

Social Affairs
Minister Rashid
Derbas

Over US\$1 billion have been allocated in support of the LCRP as of November 2016.

UN in Lebanon Hosts UN Film Festival

Diverse films highlight personal stories of hope and determination

The UN Film Festival at the Gemmayzeh Theatre in Beirut was the first in Lebanon and the region.

On 4 and 5 November, hundreds of people gathered at Gemmayzeh Theatre in Beirut for the first UN Film Festival in Lebanon and the region. Organized as part of the UN Day celebrations in Lebanon, the festival showcased a broad range of films dealing with themes common to the mission of the United Nations and the goals of Lebanon. As she opened the festival, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Sigrid Kaag emphasized that “the messages of the UN – which are very much shared with the Lebanese people, Syrian or Palestinian refugees – are of rights, belonging, nationhood, development, prosperity and equal chances.” The selection of movies was diverse, ranging from documentaries highlighting the role of the United Nations in different contexts to films depicting more personal stories of hope and determination in situations of conflict or displacement.



Lebanon UNHCR Representative Mireille Girard takes questions during the festival's opening. Source: UNIC

Reducing negative perceptions towards displaced people

The festival's opening also included a Question & Answer session moderated by UNHCR Representative Mireille Girard. Ms. Girard explained how the festival fit into the worldwide campaign 'Together – Respect, Safety and Dignity for all' which aims to reduce negative perceptions toward displaced people. Emphasizing the international community's common responsibility for refugees and migrants, Ms. Girard remarked that films have the power to remind us that behind the numbers and statistics we hear every day are actual people, with their own stories.

16 Days of Activism against GBV

A campaign to end violence against women and girls

'16 Days of Activism' is an international campaign that takes place every year from 25 November – the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women – until 10 December, Human Rights Day. The '16 Days Campaign' is a time to galvanize action to end violence against women and girls around the world. It was initiated in 1991 by the first Women's Global Leadership Institute.

In support of this civil society initiative, every year, the UN Secretary-General's campaign, UNiTE to End Violence against Women, calls for global action to increase worldwide awareness and create opportunities for discussion about challenges and solutions. The global 2016 call is 'Orange the World: Raise Money to End Violence against Women and Girls'.

In Lebanon, the SGBV Task Force chose a specific theme to complement the global one and reflect local challenges: 'Protection and Empowerment of Women and Girls: a Collective Accountability.' A broad range of activities will be organized by NGOs and UN agencies across Lebanon, including a photo exhibition, awareness sessions on specific GBV issues, a football match, a film screening, art sessions and a press conference.

A safe house saving women's lives

On the first day of the Activism campaign, the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Sigrid Kaag, together with the Norwegian Ambassador, H.E. Lene Natasha Lind, visited "Al Dar", one of ABAAD's safe houses for women and girl survivors or those at high risk of violence.

A range of activities will be organized in Lebanon as part of the campaign, including a photo exhibition, awareness sessions, a football match, a film screening, art sessions and a press conference



SCL Sigrid Kaag visits an ABAAD shelter.
Source: UNSCOL

Al Dar provides shelter to women from Lebanon, Syria, and elsewhere, in addition to a wide range of medical, legal and psycho-social services to facilitate healing and recovery.

During the visit, the Special Coordinator stressed the importance of protection programmes, stating that the safe houses have saved the lives of many women and girls facing violence. Ms. Kaag underscored the urgency of stopping all violence against women and girls, and also of putting in place necessary institutional and legal mechanisms to provide protection and ensure legal recourse.

Time to stop the silence

“The family home should not be place of silent violence.”

RC/HC Philippe Lazzarini

In an op-ed that was published in three major newspapers in the country, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Philippe Lazzarini addressed silent violence. “The family home should not be a place of silent violence. The family home should be a place of love, protection and nurturing. We are not helping our families or communities by keeping silent, by looking the other way. We have a duty to help members of our families and our neighbors when we see them suffering in silence,” he said.

Highlighting the fact that in the past few years, Lebanon has taken significant steps to address this problem, the Humanitarian Coordinator said that more needs to be undertaken, stressing that the UN and its partners stand ready to support the survivors of gender-based violence and to support the government to do more to protect survivors.

“We all have a role to play in creating a society that ensures that women and girls have the freedom to choose their own future, the strength to pursue those choices and the means to protect themselves and those around them. This year’s 16 days of activism to campaign against gender based violence is called “Protection and Empowerment of Women and Girls: a Collective Accountability.” Please support me in this call today and every day onward, from the home, to schools, to neighborhoods and to the state,” Mr. Lazzarini concluded.

Key facts on Gender-Based Violence in Lebanon

Women and girls in Lebanon are disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence, with grave consequences for their physical, emotional, and social well-being. Over the past three years, an average of 90 percent of the incidents of SGBV reported to specialized service providers have involved women and girls.

Data collected in Lebanon highlight that displacement increases the risk of SGBV. Some 91 percent of incidents reported occurred after arrival in Lebanon. Child mothers, early married girls, unaccompanied and separated boys and girls, women and girls with disabilities, older women, and female heads of households continue to be the most at risk. The most commonly reported type of violence involves physical violence, mainly linked to violence within the family or home, sexual violence (rape and sexual assault), as well as forced and early marriage. 18 percent of all reported SGBV incidents involve sexual violence, of which seven percent are rape.

Reported incidents of sexual exploitation have also been increasing over the past two years. Dire socio-economic conditions, lack of legal stay, and impeded access to much-needed services may contribute to an increased risk of exploitation for women, girls, boys, and men, including the risk of trafficking and survival sex.

Survivors are presenting increasingly complex needs triggered by multiple types of violence, imminent risks, as well as challenging legal, mental health and shelter issues. Humanitarian actors continue to assist survivors while a number of barriers still prevent women, girls, men and boys in need of services to respond to SGBV.

Nour's Story

“I feel ready to move forward ...”

“I thought I would always feel safe and loved, but sadly, reality can be way far from what you wish for”. With these words, Nour, a 29-year-old from Idlib, Syria, describes her suffering as a woman who was subject to violence in her parents' house and later on, during her marriage.

Nour got married when she was seventeen. She was the youngest in her family, and was always scared of her brothers who beat her eldest siblings, with her father condoning the situation.

“Yes, my deep suffering at home and my awful situation pushed me to accept the first marriage proposal I ever received,” she says. “I thought that maybe through marriage, I would finally feel happy and safe and have a beautiful life free from the fear and terror that I was constantly feeling when I was living with my parents.”

Unfortunately, life did not go the way Nour expected. Her husband “only cared about himself and his main concern was to satisfy his own desires, his own happiness, and his own needs”. He forced her into sexual intercourse with him. “He turned my dreams into nightmares. My life became hell on earth”, she said.

Nour used to cry a lot, overwhelmed by a feeling of powerlessness. She felt constantly humiliated and debased. “Marital rape throws you in a world of constant fear that strips you of everything else”, she added. Eventually, Nour asked for a divorce.

At “Al-Dar” house, a free temporary house run by the NGO [ABAAD](#) for women at risk or survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Nour found a supportive family that protected her from violence and helped her find confidence again. “Today I feel lucky, as I learnt a lot at “Al-Dar”. I learnt how to rely on myself, which I had forgotten. I learnt how to overcome obstacles. Today, I feel stronger and ready to move forward in life”, she said.



NGO ABAAD conducts a gender-based violence information outreach session in a makeshift settlement. Source: ABAAD

“Today I feel lucky, as I learnt a lot at ‘Al-Dar’. I learnt how to rely on myself, which I had forgotten. I learnt how to overcome obstacles. Today, I feel stronger and ready to move forward in life.”

Nour, Syrian refugee in Lebanon

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