####  Arsal Coordination Meeting

***Minutes of meeting***

Date: 12/09/2018

Place: Arsal Municipality

Participants: Deputy Mayor of Arsal, Mayor of Arsal, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, UNDP, UN-OCHA, DRC, NRC, ACF, ICRC, LRC, Syrian NGOs (I am Human, Jana Watan, Women circle of Arsal, MCA-URDA, CEA and EDA).

Food security:

* A study is being implemented as to increase the number of contracted shops. The study includes certain conditions that contracted shops need to obey with regards to legal registration, distance, items … the study will be finalized soon and contracted shops will increase in number to attain to refugees needs and reduce overcrowding.
* Municipality stresses that it plays a neutral role and trusts that WFP will choose the most deemed appropriate shops and asks from WFP not to take any recommendation from any municipality member and takes into account solely the results of the study. At the end of day, whatever shop is chosen they are still Arsali’s and hence the village is benefiting.

Education

* As mentioned earlier a fourth school was opened in Arsal and education sector still advocates with MEHE to identify more schools in Arsal. Some resolutions were identified for children not attending school such as the basic literacy and numeracy program that are suitable for children ten, fourteen years and above especially if they are not ready to enroll in formal education as of yet and the early education program which targets children of three or four years old. These certified programs will assist in reducing the load of formal education. In addition UNICEF and other agencies are collaborating on youth programs to advice or rather guide the youth that graduate from grade nine and above if they choose to attend a technical school. Preparation for the new school year is ongoing in the summer pending appointment of new minister.
* Recommendations were made from municipality to initiate second shift schools in private schools which was set that it is MEHE’s decision and would be discussed with the assistance of some encouragement and pressure on MEHE by the municipality itself.

Protection

* UNHCR is not promoting nor facilitating returns to Syria, however, UNHCR will not discourage Syrians from going back to their country and respects their voluntary decision as long as they are not making this decision under coercion, i.e. as long as they are making an informed choice. In some cases, it appeared that UNHCR was perceived to be part of return deals and therefore it was important to clarify UNHCR’s position. UNHCR has a particular interest in looking at the issue from the perspective of solely ensuring, through dialogue, that the housing, land and property rights as well as documentation and other needs of Syrian refugees are factored in the implementation of this movement and working viably to attain them. UNHCR is transparent and clear and aims or intends solely to ensure that the return is implemented in the best way possible. Up until today, four return movements took place respectively on 28th June, 7th July, 23rd July and the last being on 9th of September. UNHCR was present with agreement with GSO. Vaccination are being provided a day prior to departure as well as ensuring all documentation are present. In principal in Arsal, beneficiaries are approved for return after their names are cleared by Syrian government and the need to have some sort of identification (family booklet, ID...)
* A return taskforce was established in all field offices to discuss return related issues and it is highly important and requested for all agencies that are able to be physically available to coordinate with UNHCR as to avoid any duplication on the ground.
* Municipality questioned as to whether data is being shared by UNHCR for inactivation purposes. UNHCR stresses that this is not still in place but is something UNHCR will aim to do complemented by physical verification.
* LRC stated that they have actual data being updated on monthly basis which are based on field assessment conducted by them after each return movement. They encouraged coordination on this matter with UNHCR as to have better data on existing families and informal settlements.
* Draft SOPs were finalized by the shelter colleagues with regards to usage of left tents after return has taken place and will be discussed with MSA and then municipality accordingly.

Winter assistance:

* Under basic assistance, winter planning proposal for 2018-2019 was sent by BO to amman for approval and funding. The proposal states that UNHCR intends to assist eligible Syrian refugee families living below the poverty line (Severely and Highly Vulnerable), approximately 280,000 households, during the five winter months, November 2017 to March 2018. UNHCR will provide winter cash assistance at a rate of USD 75 per family per month, aiming to deliver a 375 USD winter cash package. In lieu to funding availability and prioritization of resources, Syrian refugee families who are not cash assistance beneficiaries (MCAP and/or food) will be primarily prioritized to be assisted through winter assistance. Refugee families who are already enrolled into UNHCR Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MCAP, USD 175 per family/month) or MCAP provided by any another agency, will be considered as a second priority in terms of delivery of winter assistance. All families are targeted based on the desk formula. In addition, complementary core relief items will provided on a case-by-case basis and based on the needs.
* In Arsal in specific, UNHCR is planning on shifting the restricted winter assistance done through gas stations in Arsal to unrestricted cash being redeemed from ATM machines in neighbouring areas.
* As for shelter assistance, assessments will be made to provide shelter needs prior to winter. (Timber, kits...)
* On assistance to host community (vulnerable Lebanese families), the Mayor still stresses the need not to provide Medco cards to the families as to not build dependency, but rather shift this assistance to developmental projects that is more sustainable. As such, bilateral meeting will be held among UNDP and municipality to discuss the planned projects for Arsal.
* LRC states that they have studies conducted in informal settlements that would assist in managing the issue of flooding.

Syrian NGOs

* Since the end of 2014, Syrian NGOs have been active in the field working under different sectors one of which is education of which an informal school was established in Wadi Ata hosting around 150 children. Centres were also established which offer vocational training, technical trainings, knitting workshops for widowers as well as a gym for activity. Syrian NGOs are of course not registered in Lebanon, but would appreciate if cooperation is made with UNHCR or any other INGOs as this would assist them in being more active in the field as well as sustainable upon return.
* Municipality supports the growth of Syrian NGOs under the condition that reports are being sent to the INGOs accordingly and proper communication is made with the municipality is made with regards to the activities being implemented in the field.

Social Cohesion/Livelihood:

* UNDP is also working on a project to provide support to the affected persons working in agriculture specifically cherries and apricots.
* A new study was also implemented on social stability that covers several topics such as tension among two communities, electricity, waste management, security... As means to provide conflict analysis. Under this study UNDP is looking into the possibility of assisting MoSA centres in Arsal with medical equipment.
* As to the waste water treatment plant and network the studies and approvals with relevant ministries are finalize and presented to interested donors and embassies for funding.

**Municipality request:**

Mayor thanks everyone for their support and the services being provided from all agencies in the field. He is appreciative of all the efforts made; however, Arsal has been facing a big challenge with regards to waste management especially with the presence of Informal settlements and improper dislodging and absence of proper channels.

The municipality is well informed that a proposal on waste water treatment plant was made, but this has been ongoing for the past year with no action made. He would like to inform the INGOs, in specific UNHCR, that the municipality will address the Lebanese government for the need to address this issue and will hold UNHCR responsible. If an action is not to be made by 2019, the municipality will evict all informal settlements whether as to other areas in Lebanon or back to Syria.

***Action points***

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| Action | Who |
| Share SOPs on usage of tents after return with MSA and municipality.  | Shelter  |
| List of NGOs working on livelihood social stability projects  | MSA/UNDP |
| Attend to municipality’s request on the waste management plant  | UNICEF/UNDP/UNHCR |