

FACT SHEET

PROTECTION ENVIRONMENT

Lebanon is not a state party to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or to its 1967 Protocol. It also does not have legislation or administrative practices in place to address the specific needs of refugees and asylum seekers. As a result, refugees who enter the country without prior authorisation or who overstay their visa are considered to be illegal in the country and are at risk of being fined, detained for considerable lengths of time and/or deported. Without permission to stay until a durable solution is found, many live under considerable hardship. Many are extremely destitute and worry about meeting their own and their children's very basic need for food and shelter.

UNHCR has operated in Lebanon for 47 years. The Office has both country and regional responsibilities. The country responsibilities are set out below. Regional responsibilities include the provision of guidance and support to UNHCR Offices throughout the MENA region for the timely registration and status determination of refugees and asylum seekers and the search for durable solutions, principally resettlement.

STATISTICS

As of 30 September 2011	Refugees	Asylum seekers	All registered, including others of concern
Iraqis	8,626	803	9,436
Non-Iraqis	321	876	1,859
Total	8,947	1,679	11,295

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

UNHCR continues to work with the Lebanese High Relief Commission (HRC), the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and partner organizations in responding to the needs of just some 3,000 displaced Syrians in north Lebanon. This includes ensuring that their fundamental needs are met and that they have access to essential services. Since the end of September 2,770 food kits, 4,684 blankets, 4,222 mattresses, 1,655 hygiene kits, 343 baby hygiene kits, 460 diapers and a host of other services have been provided.

One of the main concerns of the community in the north is the risk of arrest and detention. Although the Minister of Interior announced last June that circulation permits would be provided to displaced Syrians in the north, this has not yet happened. UNHCR continues to follow-up on this matter with the Ministry as such permits would substantially improve the security of the displaced population.

During the past month, considerable work has been done to ensure that refugee children throughout Lebanon are enrolled in school. UNHCR is covering the cost of school fees, books, and uniforms, for over 2,000 children in need.

Also during September, UNHCR, along with seven partner agencies, conducted organized dialogues with refugee women, men, children, adolescents and other specific groups in order to assess their needs. Their expressed concerns will inform our work and programmes.

On September 18, a formal Sudanese men's committee with a one year tenure was elected through a fair and transparent process at Amel Association's community center in Haret Hreik. This committee, composed of four refugees and one asylum-seeker, is tasked with liaising between the Sudanese refugee community and UNHCR to better voice refugee concerns.

Also in September, over 600 refugees were given access to generic medications for chronic diseases through national public health centers at nominal fees. UNHCR facilitated an agreement between these centers and YMCA, the official supplier of generic medications commissioned by the Government of Lebanon. Through this agreement, chronic medication costs are reduced by 30%.

OTHER ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE

During this year, more than 64 per cent of detained refugees were incarcerated solely for illegal entry/stay and other minor administrative offences. UNHCR continuously intervenes with the authorities to request their release. By the end of September, the Office had secured the release of 32 persons of concern.

In addition, the Office assists persons of concern who fall within existing regulations to obtain work and residence permits. The Office also provides legal counselling and representation in matters such as: issuance of birth and marriage certificates, resolution of rental and labor disputes and protection of fundamental rights. So far in 2011, the Office assisted 482 refugees in obtaining work and residence permits, provided legal counselling to another 747, and assigned lawyers to 43 cases in need of legal representation in court.

Health and psychosocial support

UNHCR, through its partners, provides health assistance to all refugees and asylum seekers in need. An office for the rehabilitation of victims of torture and violence run by UNHCR's partner, RESTART, also provides mental and psychological health services. Through the agreements signed with 11 public and governmental hospitals, refugees and asylum seekers have access to quality medical services including health emergencies at unified and flat rates, similar to nationals. A total of 3,279 patients have received primary health care services and life saving operations including different mental health services in 2011. In addition, partners have conducted 200 health education and prevention sessions which benefited 2,734 refugees.

In the north, UNHCR is working with the HRC and World Health Organization (WHO) in ensuring that every registered displaced person in the north has access to health care services through the most specialized partner. UNHCR and its partners have agreed with Public Health Centers in the region to provide primary health care and medication to the displaced. The HRC continues to cover the cost of secondary and tertiary health care through local hospitals in the north.

Education

The number of children enrolling in primary and secondary school for the 2011-2012 school year looks promising with 80% of refugee children between 4-17 years of age enrolled. This is in part due to extensive awareness sessions conducted by UNHCR and partners with both parents and children and assistance provided to cover school expenses. Nevertheless, we remain concerned about the number of children opting for work rather than school. In order to address this issue, UNHCR along with its implementing partners will conduct a comprehensive mapping exercise to identify the extent of the problem and develop means to address it with the community. Meanwhile remedial classes are continuing. For the 2010-2011 academic year 41 refugee students passed their official exams. In parallel, remedial and vocational training continue to be provided.

To date 400 refugee students have enrolled in formal vocational training (BT-TS) and in accelerated skills training. In relation to displaced Syrian children, the Minister of Education is facilitating the enrollment of displaced children in public schools.

Community development

UNHCR supports three community centres for refugees and asylum seekers. Two of these centres are run by its partner, AMEL Association: one is located in the southern suburbs of Beirut with a focus on children and youth empowerment, and the other is located in the east of Beirut with a focus on women empowerment. The third community centre is located in the northern suburbs of Beirut focusing on the provision of vocational training for youth adult men and women, and is managed by UNHCR's partner, Caritas Migrant Centre.

In the north, outreach workers from the Ministry of Social Affairs and partners continue to visit the displaced Syrians at homes and in schools in Wadi Khaled, Tall Bire, and Tripoli in order to counsel them, assess their needs, and refer

DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Durable solutions for refugees in Lebanon are limited to resettlement and voluntary repatriation since the Government of Lebanon maintains that Lebanon cannot be a country of permanent asylum.

Voluntary Repatriation

Most refugees are unable to return because conditions in their home countries are not safe. For example, in Iraq, despite some security improvements in specific parts of the country, many Iraqis still face serious risks of human rights violations. Overall, the security situation remains volatile and 1.5 million persons continue to be displaced internally, many living in miserable conditions and unable to return home. While voluntary repatriation is unlikely to pick up in the immediate term, UNHCR provides counselling and repatriation assistance to those, who willingly decide to return to their country. This includes cash grants of 100USD for refugees above 18 and 50 USD for those below 18, provided they have been registered with UNHCR for a duration of eight months.

So far in 2011, UNHCR has assisted 82 persons voluntarily repatriate to their country of origin. UNHCR remains concerned that voluntary repatriation is triggered by the harsh and expensive living conditions in Lebanon.

Resettlement

Resettlement continues to constitute the only durable solution for the vast majority of refugees in Lebanon. More than 2,000 refugees of different nationalities departed to resettlement countries in 2010 and at least 3,000 refugees will be submitted for resettlement in 2011. By the end of September, 2,438 refugees had already been referred to resettlement countries for consideration, but only 506 refugees had departed due to delays in US security checks.

PARTNERSHIPS

Implementing Partners	Association Justice et Miséricorde (AJEM), Amel Association, CARITAS- Migrant Centre, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Makhzoumi Foundation and RESTART.
Operational Partners	Arc-en-Ciel, Chaldean Charity Association, Frontiers Ruwad Association, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), Institut Européen de Coopération et de Développement (IECD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Medical Corps (IMC), Insan Association, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Lebanese Association for Development (Al Majmoua), Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Pinnacle, Right to Play, Save the Children – Sweden and World Vision International.



STAFFING

Total: 70 (International: 19, National: 51)



FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT
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