

Intersector meeting – 11 September 2017



Inter-Agency
Coordination
Lebanon

Arsal: current situation and next steps

9 August 2017



I. Recent events in Arsal

- February 2017: Return / relocation agreement between Hezbollah and Saraya Ahl al Sham.
- June / July 2017: First return / relocation movements under the Qalamoun agreement. 10 June: 19/20 families, 12 July: 35 families, 106 individuals, monitored by UNHCR
- 30 June: Army raids in two ITSs in Arsal. Five suicide bombers detonate themselves. One Syrian refugee child died along with at least 10 more Syrians. 21 LAF servicemen wounded. Some 360 Syrians detained. Reports of maltreatment. Debates on refugee return.
- 21 July: Air and land offensive against JFS, and start of displacement within the city.
- 27 July: Ceasefire with JFS and negotiations for population transfer to Idlib. 99 families return to the outskirts. Between 4,250 and 5,100 individuals are transferred to Idlib on the 2nd of August.
- 14 August: transfer of 546 Syrians, Saraya Ahl al Sham members and sympathizers among other Syrians: 253 combatants and 293 civilians, most of them from the outskirts and around 100 from Arsal.
- 19 August: Start of LAF operation against Daesh in the outskirts of Ras Baalbek and Al Qaa
- 28 August: transfer of 112 Syrian civilians from Arsal to Syria as part of ceasefire negotiations with Daesh.
- 30 August: joint UNICEF – UNHCR mission to Arsal
- 6 September: LAF relaxes conditions for UN access to Arsal.

II. Current situation

- Around 571 civilians continue to stay at Wadi Hmeid, including 35 shepherd families. According to authorities, they need to be transferred to Aarsal proper.
- Saraya mediator continues to negotiate return / relocation to Qalamoun of Syrians inside Aarsal city.
- LAF patrols have intensified in town.
- No news about further return movements.
- While situation is now much more calm, important concerns remain in the refugee population as well as Lebanese population.

III. What happens on the “day after?”

- Importance to keep engagements on area-based projects: Waste water situation, WFP – UNHCR – UNDP joint water channel project, UNDP – UNHCR joint baseline on employment.
- Importance to keep and respect current coordination mechanisms: Aarsal coordination group (which may be transferred to Aarsal security permitting), Aarsal health working group.
- Humanitarian aspects and needs:
 - Mobile recording campaign for refugees (under planning),
 - Access to cash assistance,
 - More organized management and coverage of ITSs, Wash situation, cholera contingency plan,
 - Winterization,
 - Children and youth, access to education.

IV. Aarsal protection strategy

Objective: to enhance asylum space and access to rights for the refugee community, while contributing to peaceful coexistence with the host community.

Priorities expressed by the refugee community: Civil rights: detention, physical security, documentation, freedom of movement; access to education; proper access to cash assistance; resettlement & proper protection handling of the issue of returns, including UNHCR presence and messaging.

Aspects covered in the draft strategy:

- UNHCR and UN presence,
- Increasing protection capacity on the ground,
- Advocacy, mediation and direct action on issues of civil rights including mobile UNHCR campaign for documentation,
- Reduce vulnerability including through provision of MCAP,
- Peaceful coexistence,
- Advocacy for enhanced presence of the Lebanese state, including improved access to services (education and health),
- Improved coordination.



Part I: General aspects

- 1.1. Introduction and summary
- 1.2. Needs and targeted population
- 1.3. Response strategy
- 1.4. Coordination, monitoring and evaluation

Part II: Operational response plans

[SECTOR]

- 2.1. Current situation and needs
- 2.2. Overall strategy
- 2.3. Sector outcomes: action plan

ACTION PLAN

Outcome x

Action (including advocacy)	Who	When



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Stabilization

*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Actual Situation in Arsal

- Terrorist Groups were removed from the outskirts;
- Militants are not seen anymore in Arsal;
- Presence of the LAF in Arsal and the outskirts, movement of LAF patrol in Arsal;
- LAF checkpoint between Arsal and its outskirts, with restriction of movement for protection of civilians;
- Lebanese took advantage on Syrians nowadays when it was the opposite during the presence of militants and terrorist groups;
- Presence of mine in the outskirts in specific areas, and rockets not exploded;
- Demography: Multiple Marriages (First Lebanese Women and Second Syrian Women) – (20-30%)
- Main source of income:
 - Small Business;
 - Sectors: Agriculture (trees), Crushers & Quarries, Shepherds;
 - The mentioned sectors were destroyed;
 - The landlords and beneficiaries are emotional hurt, because of their memories;

Social Stability

- The Host Community may seek retribution against the refugee population now that all the militants have left;
- Large number of shops/businesses run by Syrians could be a cause of concern;
- Some in the Host Community consider that refugees receive support from the International community while they get nothing;
- Presence of a Syrian committee (Chawich, Community Leader, etc...) to intervene in internal conflict and coordinates closely with the municipality;
- Interventions should build on develop local structures, ex: existing local NGO's, ...

Livelihood

- Considering that main livelihood activities are run in the outskirts:
 - Improve safe and easy access through the LAF checkpoint;
 - Demining and clearing of unexploded ordinance;
 - Lebanese and Syrians will benefit from safe access to the outskirts;
- Longer term, the most likely opportunity here lies in revitalizing the cherry, apricot and apple orchards. The challenge being this will require considerable investment, with no major return coming before 3 – 5years;
- Beside, rapid intervention with quick impact is needed, ex: planting vegetables beside the trees, etc...

Basic Services

- Waste Water / Sewage Network and Treatment unit;
- Storm Water Canal;
- Education:
 - Ensuring additional schools and presence of teachers;
- Water:
 - Rehabilitation and extension of the main water Network;
- Electricity;

Thank You!

