

## Key achievements



**Up to 10,000**

refugee households visited per month to assess their needs.



**553**

Outreach volunteers from within refugee communities provide up-to-date information on services available to their communities and provide feedback to UNHCR and partners about needs of refugees and solutions they propose.



**96**

Community groups have been supported to be an interface with UNHCR and partners, and have been capacitated to address their issues of concern.



**78**

Community centres provide counseling, skills training, recreational activities and awareness sessions across Lebanon to over 130,000 persons.



**10**

different communication means such as SMS, regional counseling information hubs and social media have been set up to provide information and receive feedback.



**1,129**

Lebanese, Syrian and other refugee women, men, boys and girls have been consulted through focus group discussions (participatory assessments) to inform humanitarian programming during last quarter of 2015.

## UNHCR's mission statement

UNHCR's mission is to safeguard the rights and well-being of asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and returnees as well as communities hosting them.

Rights can only be realized when men, women, boys and girls of different backgrounds have **equal access** to services and **participate equally** in the making of decisions that affect them. The principle of **participation of persons of concern to UNHCR** places refugees and others of concern, including communities affected by displacement, at the centre of all interventions. It thus ensures that all of UNHCR's protection and assistance programmes are **accountable** to them.

Through participation, refugees and others play a critical role in assessing, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating their needs and solutions to address them, including through their own involvement. This takes various forms such as consultations, surveys, home visits, as well as through the establishment of community-based groups and outreach volunteers.

Participation is one of the core components of UNHCR's **community-based approach** across all sectors in which it intervenes. This approach entails working with communities to identify, prevent and, where possible, address the issues they face. As with all UNHCR interventions, it is carried out in **partnership** with governments, civil society and affected communities themselves.

## Commitments to accountability in Lebanon

In Lebanon, UNHCR ensures that Syrian and other refugees of all gender, ages and backgrounds are regularly consulted, inform its and its partners' interventions and participate in the implementation of its programmes through the following:

### Seeking regular feedback

Whether through **outreach efforts or focus group discussions**, UNHCR seeks feedback from refugees on their concerns and needs, as well as on their views on current and foreseen interventions to make sure that they are the most efficient and appropriate ways of better protecting them. Each year, UNHCR and humanitarian actors consult with over 1,000 Lebanese, Syrian and other women, men, boys and girls of different backgrounds. The results inform our activities and direct interventions. In addition, UNHCR and partners conduct some 200 community and individual **meetings** each month.

### One stop shops for information, queries and knowledge

**Community Centres** run by the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNHCR partners are open places where people come to receive information, ask questions and learn new skills. These centres have information desks which provide updated information on services and activities available to refugees and host communities, as well as guide them to the adequate specialised service provider, when necessary. Some 130,000 persons approached such centres in 2015. These centres form a platform for UNHCR and its partners to continuously exchange with persons they serve about the quality and appropriateness of the services provided.

### Up-to-date information

UNHCR communicates with communities based on their preferred means of communication, which in Lebanon are through SMS and face-to-face. **Over 35 counseling and information desks** have been set up in UNHCR offices and community centres throughout the country. These desks are reference points for the latest information on assistance and services. They facilitate face-to-face and two-way communication whereby refugees and Lebanese are consulted on their needs and suggest ways to address them. The information desks are handled by UNHCR, NGO staff or social workers from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

A **bulk SMS system** allows UNHCR to communicate instantly with the entire refugee population. Individuals are informed about their eligibility for some forms of assistance, such as food, or can update their contact details through a **two-way SMS system**.

**Social media and the internet** are key communication tools for people on the move. Community-led Facebook accounts monitored by UNHCR and a dedicated website with information on services and policies affecting refugees have been established. Persons can contact UNHCR through the website and are able to provide feedback on its content and make suggestions on the services made available to them.

## Refugee to refugee

UNHCR supports volunteers to conduct outreach visits into their own communities where they pass on updated information on government policies, assistance delivered and other information which impact refugee well-being. In turn, these **outreach volunteers** share information on community priorities, including gaps in assistance and services which inform and improve UNHCR's humanitarian programmes. Volunteers, particularly those specialized in health, education, legal and child protection, also carry out risk prevention and social activities, such as providing homework support, organizing cleaning campaigns, raising awareness on good hygiene practices and visiting home-bound persons, such as older persons and persons with disabilities.

Outreach volunteers are effective in maintaining close contact refugees and in promoting community participation, as well as fostering positive relations with host communities, especially in urban areas. Given their experience, outreach volunteers are well-placed to positively and immediately contribute to development, rebuilding and reintegration programmes upon voluntarily returning home or in countries of resettlement.

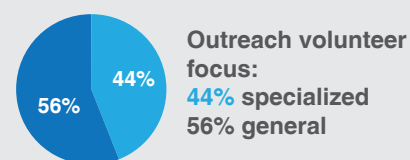
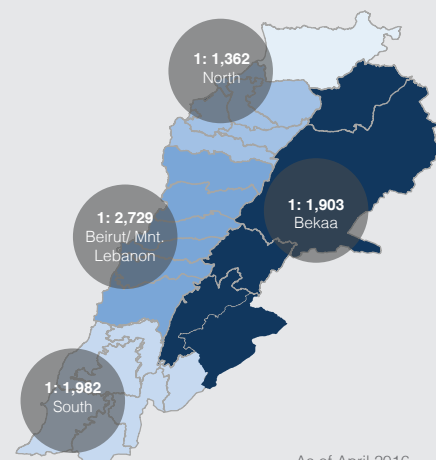
Lebanon's outreach volunteer programme was first set up in 2007 and expanded in 2012 as a result of the Syria crisis. There are currently 553 outreach volunteers around the country. Among them, 57% are women, 27% are youth and 3% are with disabilities.

## Common interests, one voice

UNHCR and partner organizations have set up more than 96 **community self-managed groups** who are linked to local institutions such as municipalities and social development centres (SDCs) to work together on issues of common concern. They decide on measures and solutions within the community to address the issues identified. These groups have been involved in a number of activities aimed at enhancing the protection environment of the communities in which they live. With support from UNHCR, they provide their community members with information about services and policies affecting them, and are directly engaging with UNHCR and its partners in the development of their programmes. Most of their members are women.

## Outreach volunteers

### Ratio of outreach volunteers to registered refugees



### Dr. Ahmad, Outreach Volunteer

When street violence spread through the Syrian city of Idlib three years ago, most residents shuttered their windows and stayed home while the fighting raged outside. Dr. Ahmed was not among them. Instead, the 45-year-old dermatologist and plant specialist ventured out to tend to the wounded. "When you see another human being lying in the street, you have to help," he says.

Today, Ahmed is still helping the needy, but from the sidelines rather than the thick of the Syrian conflict. He is a refugee volunteer for UNHCR in Lebanon, one of more than 500 in Lebanon who visit neighbourhoods and settlements where they provide refugees with practical information and a helping hand. Ahmed and his family fled to Lebanon in 2011 and he has been working as a volunteer since 2014.

Photo: Ahmed speaks with another UNHCR volunteer, also named Ahmed, in Tripoli, Lebanon. Credit: UNHCR/Ivor Prickett

## HOW REFUGEES ACCESS INFORMATION AND GIVE FEEDBACK



5 UNHCR regional counseling hubs  
7,000 counseled per month



4 UNHCR Hotlines  
4,000 calls per week



Whatsapp communication tree  
40,000 families reached through 4,500 focal points (refugees and partners)



Bulk SMS & 2-way SMS  
communicating with 270,000 families known to UNHCR



Facebook  
24,000 members in groups run by outreach volunteers



Outreach efforts  
household visits, network of 553 outreach volunteers, etc.



30+ partner information desks  
in community centres in every district



[www.refugees-lebanon.org](http://www.refugees-lebanon.org)  
45,000 unique viewers



Info Material:  
Handouts & videos



Radio  
1,000 radios provided to refugee focal points

### Visiting homes, one home at a time

Every month up to 10,000 families receive a visit to their homes to assess their vulnerability, allowing targeted assistance. These **household visits** gather information on all aspects of the life of the persons of concern to UNHCR: water and sanitation, food security, protection and the ability to purchase basic items. They also capture different coping mechanisms used by families such as decreasing food intake and sending children to work. As such, they are an important tool in designing and informing humanitarian programmes and, given that they are on-going throughout the year, allow a regular monitoring of the impact of UNHCR's interventions.

### Reporting abuse and fraud

A number of **complaint mechanisms** are available to persons of concern to UNHCR should they face any abuse or exploitation, including of a sexual nature, by UNHCR or its partners' staff or by third parties, such as service providers or individuals involved in some fraudulent activities against them. Complaints box and hotlines and desks have been set up throughout the country, in UNHCR offices and community centres. In addition to having been sensitized to the code of conduct to which each humanitarian worker is bound, UNHCR and partners' staff have been trained to report fraud, abuse and exploitation. Assessments are regularly conducted through focus group discussions with women, girls, men and boys to identify risk factors, categories of persons most at risk, and to refine safe reporting mechanisms. Anti-fraud information material and counseling are taking place throughout the year at the UNHCR reception centres, distribution sites, refugee settlements and shelters, hospitals, clinics, community centres, municipalities and more.

### Next Steps

UNHCR plans to continue strengthening and expanding its accountability to affected communities through the following next steps:

- Roll-out innovative tools through social applications such as Facebook and WhatsApp which provides automated replies to specific queries asked by refugees;
- Develop a broader training curriculum for OVs to constantly refresh and expand their skills;
- Continually enhance the diversity of the outreach volunteer programme by increasing the number of persons with disabilities and including various nationalities such as Lebanese to promote the exchange of views and best practices in peaceful coexistence efforts;
- Launch a 360-degree feedback mechanism to enhance quality, consistency, accountability and impact (QLAP) of the outreach volunteer initiative;
- Conduct a qualitative assessment of community groups in order to document good practices and develop standard operating procedures for setting them up;
- Conduct on-going participatory assessment and provide feedback on outcomes to communities;
- Solidify complaints systems, including against sexual abuse and exploitation, for service providers and community-based platforms and structures; and,
- Systematically assess the now broader array of social media used by refugees in order to understand information needs and trends, and to address misinformation circulating in the community.