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RAPID NEED ASSESSMENT REPORT

Syrian Refugees – “Marj el Khokh” Informal Camp

Marjeyoun District, South Lebanon

3rd of April 2013



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Situation Overview

According to UNHCR, **only 471 refugees were registered in Marjeyoun as of 4th of April 2013**. During the assessment, AVSI Foundation team identified about 151 Syrian refugees families (i.e. 962 people) settled in an informal tented camp between the two municipalities of Marjeyoun and Ebl el Saki **not registered with UNHCR**. The number of Syrian refugees in this district is likely to increase significantly in the coming month due to (i) the increased influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon in general and (ii) the fact that the West Beqaa and northern districts are becoming increasingly saturated in terms of housing opportunities, resulting in an increasing number of refugees moving further into south and remote areas. At the moment, many Syrian refugees are staying in these “tents”/ temporary settlements in south Lebanon, often near farms or croplands in hopes of finding a temporary job as farmers. Refugee flows continue to increase with thousands of Syrians fleeing the country every day.

AVSI’s emergency team conducted a quantitative study through using a questionnaire with closed-ended questions. A total of 61 Syrian households were interviewed and one member from each family was interviewed depending on availability. Efforts were made to ensure the survey was completed by the head of household to capture as much data as possible.

Meetings conducted with UN agencies of different sectors of Shelter, Education, NFIs and Child Protection indicate that these needs are not covered in the assessed camp; the field assessment conducted by AVSI confirms these major gaps

Purpose

The purpose of the needs assessment conducted by AVSI Lebanon was to identify the most urgent needs of SR living in the informal camp of “Marj el Khokh” in terms of overall

livelihood needs in order to provide appropriate help and assistance.

Methodology

From 13 to 31st of March 2013 AVSI conducted an assessment in South Lebanon (caza of Marjeyoun). The assessment team was composed by a Social Worker, and two Emergency Experts.

Type of Study & Sampling

In order to assess the needs of the Syrian Refugees, a quantitative study was conducted using a questionnaire with mostly closed-ended questions and few subjective ones. This questionnaire was reviewed and adapted with the help of the outreach workers who were already in contact with the refugees through their work and hence had a general idea about their current situation. Data collectors were trained on the tool when the final questionnaire was ready.

A total of 151 households of SR were present in this camp. AVSI Emergency Team, with the representants of the Camp Committee decided to interview 61 Head of Households (about 33% of all families living in the camp).

In each one of the 61 families targeted, only the key person (generally Head of Family) was interviewed. The criterion for picking the households to take part in the study was mainly their availability and the geographical distance between settlements in order to ensure diversity in our sample (about 20 households from each East, West, North and South areas have been interviewed. Prior to the interview, the data collectors followed an already developed protocol that required them to introduce themselves and AVSI, and the purpose of the study with an indication that no direct benefit will be received as a result of their participation. An oral informed consent was taken. The information obtained was

anonymous and confidential. All the participants were SR currently residing in

Limitations of this study

a. By the time the data was collected and analyzed the situation of the SR might have already changed as the influx of refugees is increasing every single day. This might infer changing needs due to the changing situation.

b. Given the length of the questionnaire and the numerous questions, some questions had a very low response rate.

c. Data collectors were part of a humanitarian organization so respondents could have sometimes exaggerated their needs in the hope to get help.

Major Findings

Respondents informations

The respondents sample comprised 82% males and 18% female, with mostly the average age of 37. The family members varied in a range between 2 and 20 members with an average of 6,5 person per family. 83% of the respondents have school age children, 13% of the population are without children, while the remaining population (4%) is either single parents or widows.

Registration with National and International Organizations

An average 90% of the participants have claimed that they are not registered with any organization, while 4 refugees reported that they are registered with UNHCR, AVSI, UNICEF and AMEL. The other 2 participants didn't respond.

Stay in Lebanon

Lebanon. If the parents were absent, we made sure that the son/daughter to be interviewed.

All respondents reported that they have been staying in Lebanon for less than a year and have been living in tents in Marj El-Khokh Camp.

As per the survey, 16% of the families have been staying for less than a month, 23% for 1-3 months, 28% for 3-6 months, and 26% for 6 months to 1 year while 6% of the participants had no answer.



Food, shelter, WASH & livelihoods

Collected data on food reflected an urgent need for food. In general, most families reported that the members of their households eat 3 meals a day on average; only 1 household reported to have 1 meal per day.

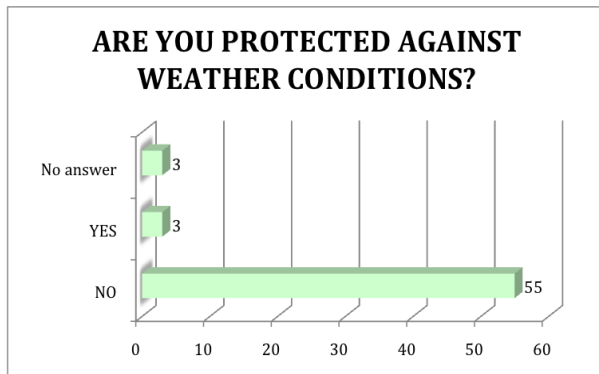
Thus, the majority of the respondents, almost 75%, reported that their most pressing need had been food; 13% of the respondents reported that they need shelter, while the remaining participants (12%) cared for health care and non-food items.

Furthermore, large percentage (90%) of the refugees preferred vouchers to receive food assistance and only a small percentage of SR

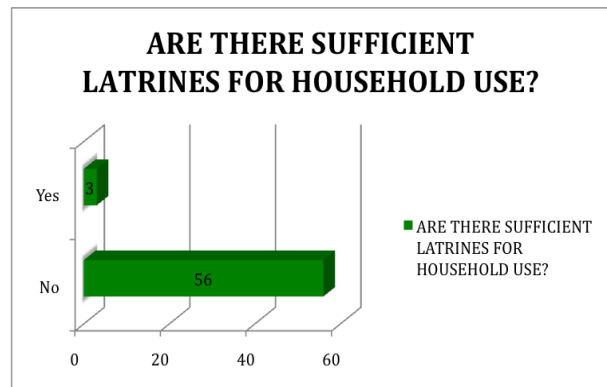
was indifferent in regard to food aid. Collected data reflected that 78% of the income earners in Syria were the head of the households (husbands) and had unskilled jobs work (agricultural, laborer, electrician...) while the rest reported that they were either jobless or retired.

In Lebanon, in the areas assessed, work opportunities for Syrians are rare but about 75% of the income earners is represented by the head of the household or in some cases their sons that have found a job in rural settings. However, also in this rural context, the number of people looking for a job are higher, thus leading to more competition to get a job. A very small percentage of wives and/or daughters are working in Lebanon. As for the issues related to the young boys and girls (14-18), 41 youths didn't respond and the rest were interested in continuing their education and securing decent jobs.

The tents conditions of Syrian families urgently need support to improve the insulation, most families said they're not protected from weather conditions and they must arrange their own tents after each rainy day. Also, about 15 of these families were evicted in the past two weeks from their previous accommodation and have been obliged to move in Marj el Khokh camp.



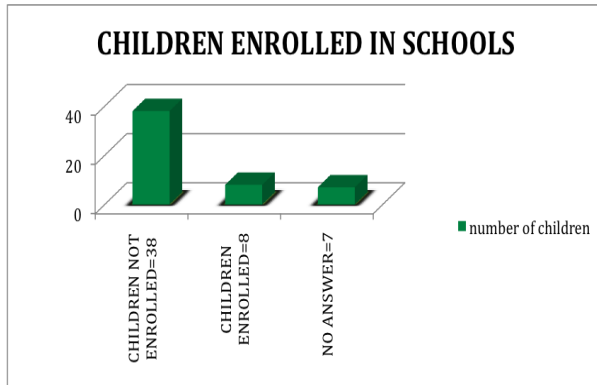
All families usually have access to common latrines near their dwellings but these are not connected to the sewage system. Latrines are often connected to a simple pit that needs to be emptied on a regular basis, or in worst case the drain is exposed at ground level. Cases of diarrhea, skin infections and fever were reported by a large number of respondents. These probably result from a combination of factors including the poor quality of water used for drinking, poor hygiene practices and inadequate sanitation in most part of dwellings.



Education & Child Protection issues

In regard to children's school attendance, the survey sample showed that only 13% of the children had been attending schools; over 70% of the children weren't enrolled in schools due to high school fees and costly transportation. This result shows that the children in most of the families visited are not attending school. Although the financial aspect is important to understand this issue, other factors have to be considered such as the impossibility for children from new comer families to join school in the middle of the school year.

It's also worth to mention that about the 60% of the families showed interest in psychosocial activities and vocational training (as an alternative option) available in their area of living; while the rest were not interested in getting involved in any activity.



Identification of most vulnerable

In regard to the identification of at most risk groups/individuals inside the community of SR, 40 participants didn't answer. Among those who responded, 2 persons reported having physical disabilities, 2 with mental disabilities, 9 chronically ill, 1 unaccompanied minor, and 5 single parents.

Needs

The main needs expressed by the Syrian families during the assessment are:

- Accommodation: tents and temporary settlements are unsafe and unhealthy, the risk of eviction is high and they haven't the capacity to pay a rent for a house.
- Food and other essential needs (clothes, carpets, blankets, hygiene sets...) These categories of Syrian families do not benefit from any

standardized support, they are not willing to be registered with UNHCR and only charity of local organization have been a source of help so far.

To cope with this situation, the Syrian families use livelihood strategies that are either unsustainable (dependence on humanitarian assistance or on host communities, taking exploitative jobs with low wages..) or negative (livelihood erosion) such as running into high debts, using savings, selling assets, limiting the expenses on health and education. In the coming months, it is expected that more refugees will come from Syria into the assessed areas that are almost at the point of saturation in terms of accommodation. The influx of refugees will lead on the one hand to an increase in the prices of rent for unhygienic and crowded accommodation and on the other hand to a higher competition for sources of income. The Syrian crisis also has a negative impact on the host communities with vulnerable households facing competition for work opportunities and for rents.



Conclusions and recommendations

The following assessment on their needs allowed us to pinpoint the most pressing needs according to the refugees themselves. The first factor to consider is their living conditions in general. Indeed, the unsafe and unhealthy dwellings where people are living are seen as one of the biggest problems for them. Most of the time, more than one family is living per household, yet the majority reported to be living in one or 2 rooms hence suggesting conditions of overcrowding. Overcrowding and unsafe excreta disposal increase the risk of poor hygiene and diseases, it is

imperative to see if options other than living in tents are available for the refugees. This can be done by collaborating with the municipality in the area. The second area to act on relates to food. Given that food provision was mentioned among the top problems by the families, action is needed at this level; the main barrier to food provision being financial, it is a duty to provide a variety of food items by the mean of food aids but we need to take into consideration that parents reported to be cutting down on meals or choosing less preferred items to make sure

their children would have enough food to eat. This suggests that food aids are not enough to feed the whole family during a month hence the need to reconsider the quantities being provided.

What's noticeable from the major problems that were cited by the Syrian refugees is that they're all basic needs for survival. Indeed, to be able to survive families would need a proper shelter, food, hygiene sets and basic NFI for the coming summer months.

Moving on to explore other problems, education is an area where some recommendations can be provided: indeed the most part of children is not attending school this year. Hence, there is a need to find solutions to insert these children into the formal and informal education system as they're the preferred schooling methods for parents. This can be done by accounting for the perceived barriers with the financial barrier being at the top (e.g. transport fees). In addition, parents are badly informed about educational opportunities in their areas which might call for a better coordination and closer work between the municipalities, organizations and refugees to help them become aware of the opportunity to them. With less children going to schools and a higher financial burden imposed on Syrian refugees, the emergence of child labor can be perceived. Although low percentages of working children were noted in this study, cases of child labor are present and will probably increase as the number of refugees augments. With mostly boys helping fathers to earn income by working through physical and manual work

(farmers, casual workers), the need for child protection at work becomes essential. This area should be carefully followed up to track the number of underage children and seek for ways to protect them.