



## August - September UPDATE

- August - September Developments
- Syrian Refugees in Lebanon Remain Vulnerable to Shocks and Reliant on Aid
- Supporting Education for all Children in Lebanon
- Older Persons in Lebanon
- Nori and Turkiya's Story



## FUNDING

Agencies and the Government of Lebanon have requested USD 2.48 billion in the 2016 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). As of 31 August 2016, agencies reported having received USD 979.3 million.

## REGISTERED SYRIAN REFUGEES

A total of 1,033,513 individuals are currently registered with UNHCR in Lebanon.

## INTER-AGENCY UPDATE

### AUGUST-SEPTEMBER DEVELOPMENTS

#### **UN agencies publish preliminary findings of annual vulnerability assessment: Syrian refugees in Lebanon remain vulnerable to shocks and reliant on aid**

The preliminary findings of this year's vulnerability assessment led by the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were published in September, revealing that the slide into deeper poverty for Syrian refugees in Lebanon is continuing although, as a result of additional aid, the deterioration has not been as sharp as last year. According to the survey, the refugee population remains highly vulnerable to external shocks and reliant on humanitarian assistance to survive.

The initial results from the annual survey, released on Monday 19 September, showed that 70.5 per cent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon continue to live below the poverty line.

The full survey findings will be published at the end of October 2016. More information on the preliminary findings can be accessed here: <http://www.unicbeirut.org/printnews.asp?id=5512>

#### **Ministry of Education and Higher Education Convenes Largest Partnership in Support of Education for All Children in Lebanon**

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) convened Lebanon's largest partnership in September in support of education under the slogan ('Ana Hader'/I Am Ready) to reaffirm its commitment to ensure free access to education for all children in Lebanon – Lebanese and non-Lebanese.

Under the leadership of MEHE, donors, four UN agencies (UNICEF, UNHCR, UNESCO and The World Bank) and more than 60 local and international NGOs are providing financial, operational and logistical support to expand on last year's success to ensure that children and youth from ages three to 18 are provided with free access to educational opportunities.

The efforts of MEHE with its partners aim to register at least 469,000 children in formal and non-formal educational opportunities. For refugee and other non-Lebanese children this means bringing in at least 45,000 more children than last year into formal education.

Registration is ongoing in public schools throughout Lebanon, with 330 schools offering second shift classes – 100 more than last year – to ensure availability of places for non-Lebanese students.

#### **Support to Public Institutions**

A mid-year report on the support to public institutions in Lebanon was published in September revealing that as of mid-2016, USD 120 million has been directed towards public institutions as part of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) – a USD 17 million increase since mid-2015.

Overall, 229 municipalities have received support in implementing their Municipal Action Plans with investments in public gardens, irrigation canals, water networks and solid waste management. Over 86 km of water networks have been rehabilitated or constructed, and 537,000 residents enjoy improved water supply. Some 214 Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) and maternity hospitals have been equipped to support maternal and reproductive health.

The full mid-year report on support to public institutions can be downloaded here: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=11657>

### **International Youth Day 2016: Eradicating Poverty and Achieving Sustainable Production and Consumption**

The UNESCO Office in Beirut marked International Youth Day this year with a workshop on ‘Youth Leadership and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Lebanon’ aiming to raise awareness among youths, including youth organizations and activists, about the UN’s agenda to achieve sustainable development by 2030. The workshop – which was held at UNESCO on 5 August – also provided space for the exchange of ideas around innovative ways to contribute to sustainable development within local communities in Lebanon.

A second workshop entitled ‘Youth Participation in Local Governance’ also marked the occasion. Led by UNESCO, the workshop aimed at enhancing the youths’ active collaboration with their municipalities with the view to further the development of their respective communities. Participants included youths, civil society groups, non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, media, mayors, as well as former Interior Minister Mr. Ziad Baroud.

### **Marking World Humanitarian Day 2016 in Lebanon**

World Humanitarian Day was marked this year by the launch of a new website by the UN’s Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) highlighting stories about and by humanitarian workers: [www.unocha.org/whd2016](http://www.unocha.org/whd2016). The site provides ways for viewers to spread the word about the day and volunteer their time.

OCHA celebrated the day – with the theme ‘One Humanity’ – through a multimedia exhibition on 19 August in Beirut and Baalbek. Five interactive multimedia stations displayed short videos featuring Syrian refugees talking about their experiences facing impossible choices.

### **UN Special Envoy Sees the Challenges of Lebanese and Refugees with Disabilities**

The Special Envoy for the UN Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, Lenin Moreno, visited the Bekaa valley on 25 August to see firsthand the daily struggles of disabled persons among Lebanese and Syrian refugee communities.

“I had the opportunity to see some of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities here, but also the excellent work done for them and with them to attend to their needs,” Mr. Moreno said. “It is essential that the services and the protection of rights cover all those in need, independent of their nationality, religion and legal status. It is a question of humanism, but even more importantly, it is a question of human rights.”



### **Refugee Team Makes History at Rio Olympics**

For the first time in history, a team of 10 refugees competed at the Olympics in August. They included two Syrian swimmers, two judokas from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a marathon runner from Ethiopia and five middle-distance runners from South Sudan. In the Paralympic games, two refugee athletes competed as well in September.

The president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Thomas Bach, said their inclusion would bring global attention to the magnitude of the refugee crisis and send a message to the world. “It is a signal to the international community that refugees are our fellow human beings and are an enrichment to society,” he said.

In order to bring the Rio Olympics closer to Lebanese and refugees, UNHCR organized football matches between Syrian and Lebanese youths in the Bekaa.

Participants included refugee volunteers, university students, Lebanese scouts and youths. All of them signed UNHCR’s #WithRefugees petition, calling on world leaders to act in solidarity and share responsibility for the global refugee crisis.

### **WFP and Mercy Corps Launch New Agricultural Projects**

The World Food Programme (WFP) launched new agricultural projects in collaboration with Mercy Corps, aiming to improve the basic agricultural capacities and food resources among both Lebanese and Syrian farmers.

The projects consist of several activities, including the provision of basic agricultural tools to Syrian refugees in various informal settlements, as well as training in field agriculture and micro-gardening. Lebanese and Syrian female-headed households were also trained on the financial management of food resources. Agricultural packages, toolkits and training sessions were provided for small-holder farmers to improve their production capacities and practices.



*Photo: ©WFP Lebanon*

Hanna, a Lebanese farmer in the Bekaa, received agricultural training and a greenhouse for his land. He has already been able to grow and harvest cucumbers with the help of five local employees. After the summer, Hanna will be able to use the greenhouse to grow lettuce, maximizing the output from his land.

### **Greek Volunteers Share UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award**

A 2,000-strong volunteer sea rescue team, credited with saving thousands of lives during the 2015 refugee crisis, and a passionate human rights activist who provided a safe haven for thousands of the most vulnerable refugees arriving on Greek shores, are the joint 2016 winners of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)'s Nansen Refugee Award.

Konstantinos Mitragas, on behalf of the Hellenic Rescue Team (HRT), and Efi Latsoudi from “PIKPA village”, a community-run accommodation area on the Greek island of Lesbos, were both chosen for their tireless volunteer work during the 2015 refugee crisis on Greece’s shores. The HRT was awarded for its round-the-clock efforts to save refugees and migrants in distress from the sea, and Ms. Latsoudi for her compassion and care for the most vulnerable refugees and migrants arriving on the island of Lesbos.

## OLDER PERSONS IN LEBANON

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The war in Syria has forced millions of Syrians to flee and seek safety in neighboring countries, including Lebanon. Older persons are amongst the most affected in the refugee population.

Cold and damp shelters can confine older people to their homes, restricting their independence, and their ability to access services and engage in livelihood and social activities.

Older people may have specific nutritional needs because of dental problems and different micronutrient requirements. Irregular and insufficient food intake can have severe health repercussions for older people and people with a chronic disease.

In addition, loss of status as a result of displacement (loss of homes and belongings, inability to provide for families) and the hardship of living as a refugee can have major psychological consequences. Whereas younger generations may be occupied with education or daily activities to take care of their dwellings if not occasional work in the fields, refugees with specific needs, including older people, are often excluded from communal activities and have more time to dwell on their plight.

In Jordan and Lebanon, more than 65 per cent of older people presented signs of psychological distress – three times more than the general refugee population.

The crisis has also left many older persons in situations in which they are unable to access or afford necessary regular medical treatment and medication. Given their limited mobility and increased vulnerabilities, some feel isolated, especially those who were separated from their families. Joint research between HelpAge International and Handicap International has found that 54 per cent of older refugees in Lebanon and Jordan have a chronic health condition.

### **Response: Engaging Older Persons**

A fundamental aspect of humanitarian actors' engagement with older persons is to ensure cross-generational inclusion. Older persons' experience and influence in the community should be acknowledged and valued.

Older persons can be identified through different channels. This includes reception centres or community development centres, through outreach volunteers, as well as specialized partners. Various efforts are currently underway to protect, assist and engage older persons.

Among the volunteers who collaborate with UNHCR as liaison between refugees and aid agencies, four are older persons. Their role is to support their peers, relay their problems to specialized agencies, and raise awareness within their communities about healthcare and available services.

Older persons are involved in several vocational training efforts, language classes, and regular information sessions in community centres across Lebanon. This helps to increase their social engagement and enhance their psychosocial well-being.

Youth groups established by UNHCR over the past three years across Lebanon and involving both Lebanese and Syrian members are increasingly developing projects for and with older persons.

Additionally, community groups targeting older men and women have been formed in multiple regions throughout the country. These community groups aim to identify older persons' needs, interests and capacities. The groups have succeeded in engaging older persons in activities that meet their specific interests, such as cooking, skills-sharing, sports, and gaining knowledge about relevant health issues. These groups have also succeeded in building social cohesion between refugees and Lebanese older persons.

### **Addressing Psychological Distress among Older People**

In order to ensure the well-being of older persons and help them feel safe, agencies are working to provide accessible and elderly-orientated medical and psychosocial services.

Amel Association International and HelpAge International have embarked on a project that provides psychosocial services and rehabilitation of victims of war and conflicts.

The project aims to improve the psychological well-being of 800 refugees aged 50 and over in the villages of Mashghara and Khiam, in the Bekaa and the South, and to improve the physical well-being of 320 refugees aged 50 and over in the same towns.

Since the launch of the projects two years ago, interviews and group discussions with beneficiaries were conducted, and assessments of the available services were also completed. This helped inform the response which included the refurbishment of centres to make them old-age friendly, the training of staff involved in the project on the psychological and social needs of older people and how to address their need, the training of community workers and volunteers on how to support older people, the identification of volunteers and key community people to promote the project activities and engage with the community, as well as the training of community volunteers on how to develop a community network of older people.

UNHCR, along with its partners, provides mental health support for extremely vulnerable refugees, as well as medical support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

### **Providing Access to Healthcare**

Recognizing the critical gap in the provision of healthcare, HelpAge International developed a health programme to help older Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese to receive adequate treatment and management of chronic illnesses, with a focus on diabetes type II and hypertension. Treatment of these conditions

was prioritized as they are especially prevalent in the region and can lead to rapid deterioration in health, and even death, if left untreated.<sup>1</sup>

Together with Lebanese partners Amel Association International, YMCA, Makassed Foundation, and Imam Sadr Foundation, HelpAge International continues to work to improve access to healthcare and related services for older patients with hypertension and diabetes. Services are delivered both in the contracted clinics and through mobile medical units in remote locations or for patients with limited mobility.

UNHCR provides emergency cash for eligible older persons to support to mitigate protection risks. UNHCR and partners highly encourage participation of older persons in decision-making processes and life skills activities.

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<sup>1</sup> The WHO 2014 country profile for Lebanon shows that 85 per cent of all deaths are the result of chronic conditions. Research by HelpAge in early 2014, 'Hidden victims of the Syria crisis', revealed that 54 per cent of older refugees surveyed living in Lebanon were affected by a life-threatening chronic condition, most commonly diabetes type II or hypertension.



**NORI AND TURKIYA'S STORY**

*Photo: UNHCR/Sebastien Rich*

Older refugees, like Nori (80 years old) and his wife Turkiya (75 years old), can play an important part in helping their family members cope with the painful difficulties of exile. They also transmit to the younger generations, some of whom were born away from home and uprooted too early in their lives, the sense of belonging to a common heritage.

Nori and Turkiya fled their home in Aleppo four years ago. They currently live in an informal settlement in the Bekaa valley along with their son, daughter-in-law, and five grandchildren, all under the age of 10.

Through UNHCR's partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs, they have access to the Government-led social development centres, where UNHCR is seeking to establish a supportive social network for older people and other vulnerable groups.

"Without the assistance provided, I can't imagine what would have happened to us. We would have been completely dependent on God", Nori said.

**AGENCIES THAT HAVE CONTRUBTED TO THIS UPDATE**

Amel Association International, HelpAge International, OCHA, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and the World Bank.

## DONORS

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Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America.

Contributions have also been received from the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) as well as from private donors.