

# UNHCR Lebanon Operational Update

## Syria Refugee Response

July - Sep 2016



As of 30 September 2016, more than 1.017 million Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR and are living in over 2,125 communities and locations across the country. Syrians approaching UNHCR for protection are counselled on the Government of Lebanon's instructions to suspend registration, and have their vulnerabilities assessed so that their critical needs can be addressed.

### PROTECTION

Ensuring access to residency renewal for refugees in Lebanon remains a priority for UNHCR due to the protection that legal residency offers. Successful UNHCR advocacy with the General Security Office (GSO) has resulted in the notarized pledge not to work, which refugees formerly had to submit when renewing their residency permits, being replaced by a declaration to abide by Lebanese laws. This new document is available at GSO offices free-of-charge. Additionally, under residency renewal regulations introduced in January 2015, Syrians registered with UNHCR used to be required to provide a housing commitment, signed by the Lebanese landlord and witnessed by a Mukhtar, in order to renew their residency permits. The GSO has now changed this requirement, replacing it with a UNHCR housing attestation. However, the USD200 residency renewal fee remains the biggest obstacle for most refugees. As of August 2016, household visits suggested that some 60 per cent of refugees lacked valid residency permits, and 89 per cent of households have at least one member without a valid residency. UNHCR thus continues to advocate for the waiving of the fee.

Securing the wellbeing and fair treatment of detained persons of concern remains a key objective of UNHCR. By the end of September, more than 3,800 refugees in detention, mainly detained for reasons of illegal entry and lack of valid residency, had received psychological counselling, legal support, core relief items and medical attention provided by UNHCR and partners. Release requests have submitted for refugees with specific vulnerabilities such as older persons, persons with disabilities, and LGBTI individuals. These efforts have resulted in the release of over 100 vulnerable persons of concern from detention in 2016.

UNHCR continues to follow-up with the Lebanese authorities on the remaining cases.

In an effort to prevent statelessness, more than 4,200 refugee families were counselled during the third quarter, to enable them register the birth of their newborns with the Lebanese authorities. To reach as many families as possible, counselling sessions are regularly held with refugee parents who approach UNHCR offices. These sessions are jointly developed and delivered by UNHCR and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA). Referral mechanisms are also in place through UNHCR's network of Outreach Volunteers (OVs), working in communities across Lebanon.

This quarter, refugees benefitted from fast and direct information through the communication tree that had been extended to include 6,400 members as of September 2016. Composed of OVs, community members, committees, representatives from MoSA, partners, enumerators, Shawish and Mukhtars, this tool helps refugees to make more informed decisions on the issues they face. Messages shared during this quarter included videos and Q&As to support the 'Back to School' campaign, information on residency renewal and the changes in requirements described above, as well as awareness messages to prevent injuries such as falls and burns.

In response to the growing use by refugees of social media platforms to share information and communicate on needs and challenges, social media monitoring was put in place. Protection and other critical issues such as fraud and emergency health cases are flagged to relevant focal points within UNHCR for follow up, ensuring rapid response and two-way communication with refugees. Meanwhile, teams that had participated at the 'Hackathon' event in June were able to further their work on the projects initiated at this event. Thanks to their efforts, a device to measure climatic conditions in informal settlements, an application to notify refugees of the assistance available to them, and a vaccination application developed jointly with the Ministry of Public Health and UNICEF are currently being piloted in selected refugee communities.



Children participating in a recreational activity at a Homework Support Group (HSG) during the summer holidays. UNHCR supported over 160 HSGs during the summer break to provide a safe space for children to play and learn, and to encourage retention in schools © UNHCR/M. Dudek

In recent months, UNHCR has been stepping up its support to frontline security sector actors. In August, 10 training sessions were conducted reaching approximately 250 Internal Security Forces officers. The officers, including both men and women, came from all regions in Lebanon for a one-day training session. The training modules were tailored to provide frontline officers with the tools and knowledge to better protect refugee rights. The trainings received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with a request from the ISF to conduct follow-up trainings in 2017. In September, UNHCR conducted a similar training for approximately 50 officers of the Lebanese Armed Forces, which also received a very positive response and a request for further capacity-building interventions.

Outreach Volunteers (OVs) play an essential role in working in communities and reaching out to the most vulnerable. There are currently 553 OVs mobilized throughout the country, of whom 20 per cent are youth and 63 per cent are females. Thanks to their efforts, more than 24,000 cases of persons with specific needs, such as older persons and persons with disabilities have so far been referred to UNHCR and partners. The three most common types of referrals provided by OVs in the third quarter of the year are specific legal and protection cases (especially referrals on birth registration, residency and marriage), children-at-risk, and individuals with serious medical conditions.

In this quarter, Protection Cash Assistance (PCAP) was provided to assist refugees relocate away from sources of harassment and abuse, overcome SGBV incidents, and to prevent the worst forms of child labour, such as working or begging on the street. As of September, PCAP had been provided in 1,285 cases reaching more than 3,000 individuals.

Resettlement remains an important protection tool and durable solution for refugees in Lebanon. By the end of the third quarter, UNHCR had submitted over 18,000 Syrians for resettlement consideration to twenty countries. Resettlement and other humanitarian and legal pathways offer refugees the safety, protection and support needed to help them to rebuild their lives. So far this year, UNHCR Lebanon has received over 23,500 resettlement pledges, 98 per cent of which are for Syrian refugees.

## HEALTH

Refugees can access subsidized secondary health care at 53 hospitals across Lebanon. Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR

has supported 51,618 hospitalizations for deliveries and lifesaving care, as well as more than 210,000 subsidised Primary Health Care (PHC) consultations through NGO partners. UNHCR continues to provide direct support to the public health care system through financing 55 staff, including 20 nurses and midwives, to strengthen capacity at the Ministry of Public Health and at PHC centres across the country.

Following the application of the new desk formula for socio-economic vulnerability assessment, the number of refugees assessed to be 'severely vulnerable' increased to approximately 50 per cent, which has subsequently increased the number of persons benefitting from 90 per cent coverage of hospital bills. This is in line with UNHCR's revised Standard Operating Procedures for Referral Care issued in March 2016.

The preliminary results of the 2016 VASyR indicate that 17 per cent of Syrian refugees in need of primary health care services within the last six months had difficulty accessing the care they needed; the most commonly reported reason being cost. This is similar to the results in 2015 where 15 per cent of Syrians reported difficulties accessing healthcare. In September, UNHCR also conducted the annual Health Access and Utilisation Survey. Preliminary results indicate that knowledge of available health services among refugee communities is relatively good. However, 20 per cent of respondents reported difficulties accessing required care due to cost barriers.

Finally, mass communication on healthcare access was successfully coordinated with the 'Back to School' campaign. NGOs and schools distributed health leaflets in schools to all families during enrolment to give them helpful information on accessing healthcare services.

## EDUCATION

There are currently more than 465,000 school-age Syrian refugee children in Lebanon, between three and 17 years of age. For the 2015-2016 school year, UNHCR has provided funds to support the enrolment fees of 41,000 children in the first and second shifts. These efforts contribute to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's (MEHE) strategy of 'Reaching all Children with Education in Lebanon (R.A.C.E.)', which aims to provide all school-aged children in Lebanon, including over 200,000 refugee children, with formal education opportunities.

### Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR)

In September, the preliminary results of this year's VASyR were released. The study, conducted annually by UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF, showed that the slide into deeper poverty for Syrian refugees in Lebanon is continuing although, it is understood that as a result of additional aid and other factors, the deterioration has not been as sharp as last year. The initial findings suggest that the population remains highly vulnerable to external shocks and are reliant on humanitarian assistance to survive.

Some 70.5 per cent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon continue to live below the poverty line, a slight increase on the 2015 figure. There was also a rise compared to 2015 in the number of refugee families living under the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), a measure of items essential for a household's survival.

The study's key findings indicate worrying trends concerning food intake and the quality of nutrition consumed due to dwindling resources, with 34 per cent of refugee households found to be moderately food insecure, compared to 23 per cent a year earlier. There was an 11 per cent increase in the number of households that reduced their food expenditure and a 7 per cent increase in those purchasing food on credit.

An estimated 4.6 per cent of children were assessed as underweight, against 2.6 per cent in 2013, the last time a similar comparison was made. More girls were found to be underweight than boys. Cumulatively, this will have further negative long-term consequences on youth, education and the health of the community at large, unless a sustainable solution is found.

To increase retention in schools, UNHCR continued supporting over 160 Homework Support Groups (HSGs) during the summer holidays with an emphasis on the last academic year's objectives, as well as recreational activities. HSGs create a safe space for students to do homework, and are facilitated by parents, community volunteers and Outreach Volunteers specialized in education. Most university students benefitting from UNHCR's scholarships also volunteer in these groups, assisting the students and acting as positive role models. HSG facilitators are provided with educational and recreational material allowing them to create fun and engaging learning experiences for the students. HSG facilitators have also been capacitated with training sessions delivered in partnership with the British Council and by Lebanese public school teachers.

In terms of support for tertiary refugee education, UNHCR launched a call for applications to the DAFI and HOPES scholarships. UNHCR aims to support 310 students to pursue their Bachelor degrees, and 50 students at Master degree-level at Lebanese universities during the 2016-2017 academic year.

## SHELTER

During the third quarter, approximately 35,700 individuals or 7,140 households were assisted with various modes of shelter support. Among these, more than 28,000 individuals living in informal settlements and substandard buildings received shelter materials, including kits for weatherproofing, firefighting, and floor raising. Over 600 households benefited from the rehabilitation of their accommodation in exchange for zero rent, rent reductions or freezes. In addition, close to 4,300 individuals have benefitted from site improvements, which aim to improve access to and within settlements, prevent flooding, fire and health risks resulting from wastewater stagnation and other environmental factors.

The VASyR 2016 preliminary findings indicate no major change in the shelter distribution of the refugee population. About 60 per cent of refugee households live in rented apartments, often sharing small basic lodgings with other refugee families; the remaining 40 per cent are scattered in fragile environments such as tents in informal settlements, and sub-standard shelters including garages, worksites, and unfinished buildings. These shelter conditions will become increasingly harsh as the winter months approach.

In preparation for the upcoming winter season, UNHCR is going to intensify its weatherproofing activities during the fourth quarter, and is planning to assist an additional 77,000 individuals living in informal settlements and substandard buildings with shelter materials and toolkits distribution. This activity is targeting some difficult-to-reach areas such as Aarsal and Hermel. Additionally, rehabilitation activities are still ongoing for over 1,700 vulnerable families, and works are expected to be completed before the end of the year.

## WASH

By the end of September, UNHCR's WASH interventions had led to improved sanitary conditions for more than 88,000 refugees. Access to safe water had been provided to almost 33,600 refugees. In addition, over 23,350 refugees benefited from hygiene promotion activities, during which they learnt how to best adapt their behaviour to living conditions during displacement, avoid hygiene and related health hazards, and manage waste and waste water in the most sanitary way possible.

The construction of nine water supply systems in the Bekaa and North Lebanon is underway. More than 103km of pipeline has so far been installed, with 3,384 household connections being made, and the construction of two reservoirs. Upon completion, over 192,000 Lebanese and refugees are expected to be provided with better and more reliable access to potable water.

## BASIC ASSISTANCE

By the end of the third quarter, a total of 28,928 Syrian refugee families were supported with monthly multipurpose cash assistance. The significant increase in the coverage of cash assistance, as compared to 22,722 families in the second quarter, was due to the adoption of the new desk formula. Accordingly, more than 125,000 families are now considered severely vulnerable and in need of assistance, of which 51,000 families are currently assisted by various agencies with cash on a monthly basis.

As a result of the joint tender between the Lebanon Cash Consortium, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, one financial service provider was identified to provide common cards. During the reporting period, the four agencies worked closely together to develop joint guidelines and standard operating procedures for the distribution of cards, training and communications. The common card acts like a debit card for the most vulnerable Syrian refugees in Lebanon. With it refugees can access a pool of humanitarian assistance, thus saving them time and money spent traveling to separate distribution sites. Efficiency savings are also made by the participating agencies, eliminating costs related to the provision of in-kind assistance. In addition, through such programmes, money is directly injected into the local market, boosting the economy. Distribution of common cards will begin in the fourth quarter.

UNHCR's winter programme will commence in the fourth quarter. More than 123,000 vulnerable Syrian households will receive USD 147 per month through the common card to help them to cope during the five months of winter starting in November. Some 55,000 families already receiving multipurpose cash assistance will receive an extra USD 75 during winter. Families eligible for winter cash assistance will be provided relevant information via a two-way SMS system and those requiring a new or replacement card will be invited to attend distribution sites across the country.

### Back to School Campaign – 'Ana Hader' / I Am Ready

On the eve of the new school year, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) convened Lebanon's largest partnership 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.

This campaign aims to register at least 469,000 children in formal and non-formal education. For non-Lebanese and refugee children this means enrolling at least 45,000 more children than last year into formal education.

This year, UNHCR is further expanding its outreach efforts to encourage children to enrol in public schools, following successful pilot programmes implemented last year. UNHCR is also working closely with MEHE to encourage refugee youths to enrol in vocational education in areas such as accounting and nursing.

# UNHCR Lebanon Achievements at a Glance

Syria Refugee Response  
January - September 2016



## KEY FIGURES 2016

1,017,433

Registered refugees

453m

UNHCR funding requirement (millions USD)

58%

Funding level

49

Partners



Funding for UNHCR Lebanon was also received through private donations from Canada, Italy, Netherlands, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States of America



### PROTECTION

Reached January - September

Target if Fully Funded

Monitoring visits	40,309	43,000
Legal counselling	15,765	14,700
Individuals participating in life-skills activities	9,622	9,500
Number of individuals benefitting from individual counselling and case management	7,852	18,824
Individuals trained and engaged in community-based protection	5,881	18,824
Persons submitted for humanitarian admission and resettlement	18,364	19,100
Detention visits	3,826	3,500
Children assisted through case management	2,110	3,450
Individuals accessing PSS in safe spaces	520	65,346
GBV actors trained	101	65,346
Specific needs cases referred through volunteers	24,221	65,346
Outreach Volunteers mobilized	553	600
Community centres established	29	28
Individuals participating in community centre activities	48,856	55,930
Individuals receiving emergency and protection cash	3,053	18,824
Individuals receiving information on birth registration through individual counseling	21,231	11,160



### EDUCATION

Children supported for primary education in school year 2015/2016 through co-financing support to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE):

1st and 2nd shift	41,000	118,983
Children supported for vocation education in school year 2015/2016	1,070	3,000



## BASIC ASSISTANCE

Reached January - September

Target if Fully Funded

Households assisted at least once with multipurpose cash grant	28,928	70,000
Individuals receiving seasonal support (winter 2015/2016)	142,827	Fully Funded
Households receiving fuel vouchers and/or in-kind items (winter 2015/2016)	8,757	Fully Funded



## HEALTH

Individuals receiving primary health care (including reproductive and mental health)	210,218	310,000
Individuals benefitting from life-saving and obstetric referral healthcare	51,648	98,861



## SHELTER

Individuals receiving shelter support	81,319	272,020
Weatherproofing, Shelter and site improvement in informal settlements	71,634	184,300
Weatherproofing and Minor rehabilitation for substandard buildings	3,126	54,430
Free rent/rent reduction provided in rehabilitated buildings	6,559	30,040



## WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

Sanitation infrastructure, maintenance, desludging	88,235	670,206
Hygiene promotion campaigns, hygiene items	23,357	120,160
Access to safe water	33,599	473,692

CSP

## INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

2015 Allocated Budget

2016 Planned Budget

Institutional support (rehabilitation of infrastructure, staffing and training, equipment, supplies, medications and vaccines)	28.5 million	15 million
Community-based projects (health, education, livelihoods, WASH, roads and communities facilities)	10.5 million	18.5 million
Total invested	39 million	33.5 million



Workmen fill in a ditch housing a water supply system being constructed by UNHCR thanks to European Union funding. A total of nine water supply and storage systems will be built through this support in the Bekaa Valley and North Lebanon ©UNHCR/M. Dudek