

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



1 in 63

Persons of concern, aged 12 years and above, is involved in community activities.



79

Community centres provide counseling, skills training, recreational activities and awareness sessions across Lebanon to over 150,000 persons.



654

Outreach volunteers from within refugee and host 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.



485

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



10

Different communication means such as SMS, hotlines, information desks and social media have been set up to provide information and receive feedback.



Over 2,000

Lebanese, Syrian and other refugee women, men, boys and girls have been consulted in 2017 through focus group discussions and participatory assessments.

Putting people first

UNHCR's longstanding commitment is to ensure that refugees and others of concern, including communities affected by displacement, are at the centre of all that we do.

Putting people first requires that women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds have **equal access** to services and **participate equally** in the making of decisions that affect their lives, families and communities. It also means ensuring transparency by continuous communication.

Participation entails that refugees and others play a critical role, as partners, in **assessing their needs**, and in **designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating** the solutions to address them, including through their own involvement. Through such meaningful participation, UNHCR ensures that protection and assistance programmes are **effective and accountable** to persons of concern, all in partnership with government, civil society and affected communities.

Commitments to accountability in Lebanon

In Lebanon, UNHCR ensures that Syrian and other refugees of all gender, ages and backgrounds are regularly consulted, and that their needs, views and priorities inform interventions. UNHCR also builds on their capacities, experiences and aspirations. This is being done through the following:

Seeking regular feedback, for responsive programmes and activities

Whether through **outreach efforts, focus group discussions or phone surveys**, UNHCR seeks feedback from refugees on their concerns and needs, as well as on their views on current and foreseen interventions to ensure the most efficient and appropriate ways to better protect them. Each year, UNHCR and humanitarian actors consult with over 2,000 Lebanese, Syrian and other women, men, boys and girls of diverse backgrounds through a participatory assessment. The results inform our activities and direct interventions. In addition, UNHCR and partners conduct some 200 community and individual **meetings** each month.

Up-to-date information

UNHCR communicates with communities based on their preferred means of communication, which in Lebanon are through SMS, phone and face-to-face. **More than 37 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 agencies to communicate instantly with the entire refugee population. Individuals can call a **UNHCR/WFP call centre** to inquire about cash, winter or food assistance and to update their contact details. Protection and emergency health calls, including threats, evictions and violence related issues are also processed and referred to dedicated UNHCR and partner staff.

Social networks and the internet are key communication tools for people on the move. Community-led Facebook groups with over 152,000 followers, monitored by UNHCR and a dedicated website with information on services and policies affecting refugees have been established. Persons can contact UNHCR through a dedicated e-mail address, the website, Facebook or via a WhatsApp communication tree that includes over 8,000 focal points, including refugees, partners and Lebanese representatives. Protection issues from information, comments and questions posted are referred for appropriate follow-up to UNHCR protection team, basic assistance, health etc., in line with established standard guidelines. Key information and comments from refugees and emergency cases, in need of referral gathered from the call centre and social networks, are compiled by UNHCR in weekly reports ("Voice of the Refugees") in order to understand and monitor refugees' needs, and to address eventual fraud, rumors, and/or misinformation circulating in the community.

One-stop shops for information, answering queries and increasing knowledge

Community centres run by the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNHCR partners are open places where people come to **receive information, raise concerns, seek support and learn new skills**. These centres provide updated information through awareness sessions and information desks to refugees and host communities, guiding them to specialized service providers, when necessary. Over 150,000 persons approached such centres in 2017, of whom over 60% are women and children. Centres also provide a platform for UNHCR and its partners to continuously exchange with persons they serve about their needs and the quality and appropriateness of the services provided.

Refugee to refugee, implementing effective solutions

UNHCR builds on the capacities and skills of refugees to promote protection. This is done through community-based interventions while ensuring that women, girls and persons with specific needs actively participate

Outreach volunteers, two-way communication and protecting persons with specific needs

UNHCR supports volunteers to conduct outreach visits into their own communities where they relay 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 and provide solutions to them. They also provide insights into 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. Outreach volunteers are effective in maintaining close contact with 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. There are currently 654 outreach volunteers around the country, of whom 60% are women. Efforts are made to monitor and support the inclusiveness of the Outreach Volunteer programme to persons with disabilities, older persons, refugees of different origins, and host communities.

Solidarity initiatives, protecting persons with specific needs within the community

Solidarity initiative projects have enabled communities across Lebanon to jointly find solutions for the protection challenges that they themselves identified. Refugees have actively participated in designing, planning and implementing 98 projects in 2017. This includes particularly refugees with specific needs, including, but not limited to, marginalized groups such as LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, older persons and youth groups. The projects involved 70% children and youth, 31% were women, of whom 40% were local community members. This was done in close collaboration with local organizations and decision-making authorities. Within each project, participants were supported technically and financially to implement activities that benefit both refugees and vulnerable local communities. Assessments have shown that such initiatives have a good impact on **reducing social tensions** and thus **enhancing social stability**.

Education community liaisons, supporting school children

UNHCR, together with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, is supporting the participation of refugees in life at school. Known as education community liaisons, their role is to promote a safer school environment, support retention of students and refer children at risk to specialized agencies. Their activities include identifying children for school walks, following-up on absenteeism and referring children with academic difficulties to retention/language support groups. There are currently **348 education community liaisons** located within more than 256 public schools, or 80% of second shift public schools.

Community groups, common interests with one voice

UNHCR and partner organizations have set up a total of **485 community groups** linked to community and social development centres, civil society or local institutions such as municipalities, to work together on issues of common concern. These groups include women, men, older persons and LGBTI groups, as well as groups organized around thematic issues, such as parent groups. The groups include **more than 4,500 Lebanese and refugee community members**, among whom more than 70% are women and girls. The groups identify issues and challenges within the community, including schools, and decide on measures and solutions with the community to address issues identified. They have also been involved in a number of activities aimed at enhancing the protection environment of the communities with information about services and policies affecting them, and are directly engaging with UNHCR and its partners in the development of their programmes. The participation of both host and refugee community members within these groups has contributed to decrease the social tension among them.

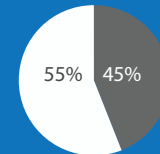
Profile of outreach volunteers



60%
women



18%
youth



Outreach volunteer focus:
55% general
45% specialized

Photo: Kadiriya in Al Marj, Bekaa, November 13th 2017. Credit: UNHCR/Dalia Khamissy.



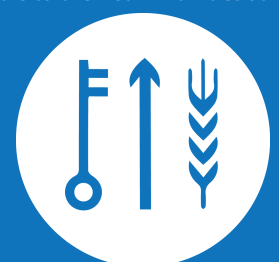
Kadiriya, outreach volunteer

With a welcoming smile, 32-year-old Kadiriya encourages women to speak up and share their stories in a community centre –where refugee women and women from local communities meet to talk about their experiences.

“Through these discussions, we can learn from each other and support one another”, says Kadiriya, a refugee herself from Daraa, Syria.

Kadiriya is one of over 600 outreach volunteers (OVs) who help UNHCR provide up-to-date information on services available to their communities as well as raise awareness on a range of topics.

UNHCR Lebanon's Outreach Volunteers programme is a key initiative through which meaningful refugee participation is ensured. The Outreach Volunteers logo was developed in consultation with Outreach Volunteers themselves, and other concerned actors. The symbols reflect the main aspects of the programme.



OUTREACH VOLUNTEERSM
منتطوع وصول

HOW REFUGEES ACCESS INFORMATION AND GIVE FEEDBACK



5 UNHCR reception centres and information desks
7,000 counseled per month



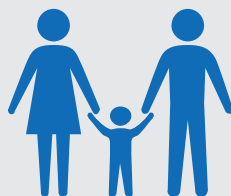
4 UNHCR Hotlines
8,500 calls per week



WhatsApp communication tree
60,000 families reached through 8,000 focal points (refugees and partners).



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



Outreach efforts
household visits, network of 654 outreach volunteers, etc.



Facebook
Over 152,000 members in groups run by outreach volunteers



25+ information desks
More than 1,000 persons access info desks per month in community centres across the country



www.refugees-lebanon.org
Over 320,000 unique viewers



Info material: Handouts & videos



Call Centre
40,000 calls per month on food/winter/cash assistance.

Preventing and reporting abuse and fraud

A number of complaint mechanisms are available to persons of concern should they face any abuse or exploitation, including of a sexual nature, by UNHCR, its partners' staff or by third parties (e.g. service providers or individuals involved in some fraudulent activities against them). Complaints boxes, 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 and categories of persons most at risk, and to refine safe reporting mechanisms. Anti-fraud information material is available at, and counseling is taking place throughout the year at UNHCR reception centres, distribution sites, refugee settlements and shelters, hospitals, clinics, community centres, municipalities and more.

UNHCR and partners also work to ensure that mitigation measures are integrated into community-based interventions such as ensuring that volunteers and groups have clearly defined roles, training volunteers and staff on core topics such as protection, humanitarian principles and code of conduct, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, conducting and monitoring spot checks internal reviews of community-based programmes, drafting guidance notes, setting up SOPs to respond to queries and feedback, and increasing visibility (branding) of community-based interventions among the community.

Next Steps

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

Increase refugee engagement

- Enhance qualitative analysis from the information available from community structures (participatory assessments, outreach volunteers and community centres) and in the social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp) used by refugees in order to better understand information needs and trends;
- Monitor the extent to which programmes and activities reflect refugee perspectives and views, using an age, gender and diversity approach, and work towards ensuring that refugees are actively engaged throughout the UNHCR programme cycle; and
- Implement, with the active involvement of refugees and host community, systematic monitoring and evaluation of community-based interventions to enhance quality, consistency, accountability and impact;

Strengthen community complaints and feedback mechanisms

- Establish a comprehensive tracking and monitoring ticketing system at country level in order to ensure each refugee query submitted through the various existing tools (call centre, hotlines, information desks, social networks, etc.) is recorded and followed up by UNHCR and partners dedicated staff;
- Solidify complaints systems, including against sexual abuse and exploitation, for service providers and community-based platforms and structures; and
- Roll-out innovative tools through social applications such as Facebook and WhatsApp which provide automated replies to specific queries asked by refugees.