



April UPDATE

- April developments
- Accountability to Persons of Concern
- Asmaa'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 March, agencies reported to having received USD 468 million.

REGISTERED SYRIAN REFUGEES

A total of 1,048,275 individuals are currently registered with UNHCR in Lebanon

LEBANON

INTER-AGENCY UPDATE

APRIL DEVELOPMENTS

Trafficking of Syrian Women

Between Sunday 27 March and Wednesday 30 March, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) raided several locations in Maameltein, Jounieh. The raids resulted in the uncovering of a women trafficking network.

While the ISF consider that approximately 75 women had been held against their will and forced into prostitution, only 45 women were brought to the police station. Both law enforcement and judicial authorities considered the women to be trafficking victims in accordance with the Lebanese anti-trafficking law passed in late 2011; the survivors are not under investigation and have no detention order against them. Investigators found that the majority of the women had entered Lebanon from Syria (both legally and illegally) with an understanding that they would be hired in other forms of employment.

Of the 45 victims identified, two are Palestinian refugees from Syria, one is Iraqi, and the remaining 42 are Syrian. All of the women are above 18 years of age.

The women reported being held captive upon arrival and forced to engage in prostitution for varying lengths of time – some have arrived two weeks before, others having been held captive as long as six years. All reported extreme physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse, and have suffered from the physical effects of lack of sunlight and captivity. Many reported being subjected to forced abortions performed under unsanitary conditions, resulting in health complications.

UNHCR, KAFA, INTERSOS, Caritas, the International Medical Corps (IMC) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) activated a response plan as soon as they were alerted of the presence of the survivors by the security forces. The plan followed the pre-established inter-agency Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) response. The SOPs comprise referral pathways, including the safety and protection of survivors, healthcare, psychosocial support, legal aid and livelihoods.

The immediate solution was to host the women in safe shelters. Specialized agencies took care of the survivors and ensured they received the medical and psychosocial support that was required. Psychologists conducted individual assessments to provide support and assess their needs for more specialized psychiatrist support.

Specialized personnel have also been conducting group psychosocial support sessions two hours per day, to help survivors cope with stress, trauma and fear. Additionally, the women participated in pre-existing social activities at the shelters. A number of women were determined to require psychiatric assistance, which is being followed up.

Counseling is being provided by UNHCR to all survivors on the status of the criminal case, their rights in accordance with the anti-trafficking law and information on documentation.

UNHCR is working with the survivors regarding their wish for the future, to ascertain whether security and other considerations require a referral for resettlement, and to find the safest and most appropriate solution for those wishing to return to Syria or to remain in Lebanon for now. Partners are meeting on a regular basis to assess progress and the remaining needs of the women.

WFP Targeting Mechanism: Who is Eligible for Food Assistance?

Targeting of food assistance by the World Food Programme (WFP) began in late 2013, moving from supporting all Syrian refugees to the most vulnerable 75 percent. Those efforts continued in 2015, using a tighter targeting methodology that was based on the results of individual household visits. Data collected was used to ensure the most vulnerable households were prioritized for assistance.

In late 2015, the American University of Beirut (AUB) collaborated with WFP to further refine the targeting methodology, building on data available in the 2015 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR), in UNHCR's database and through household visits. The aim was to rapidly and accurately classify the vulnerability of all refugee families without a household visit.

By early 2016, all registered Syrian refugee households were ranked by vulnerability. The ranking takes into consideration the strong correlation between food insecurity and poverty found in the 2015 VASyR. With this ranking, WFP is now able to identify and prioritize assistance for the most vulnerable households. WFP used its knowledge and capabilities to run a successful series of analyses and studies, confirming the accuracy of its new targeting approach.

In early April, WFP informed beneficiaries about their food assistance eligibility for May based on the results of the revised targeting mechanism. From May, households in the lowest categories of vulnerability will no longer receive assistance from WFP, whilst households currently not receiving assistance yet falling within the highest vulnerability categories will begin receiving food assistance. Additionally, from May onwards, WFP will stop capping assistance at five household members, thereby providing USD 27 per month to all in the most vulnerable households.

WFP will remove and add households based on their vulnerability ranking in two phases. Phase one, in April and May, will involve the removal of 24,000 less vulnerable refugees while adding around 90,000 refugees previously excluded because of the capping policy. During phase two, in June and July, a maximum of 55,000 less vulnerable people (to be determined as referrals continue) will be removed, while 119,000 more vulnerable refugees will be added. Once the exercise is complete, the final number of refugees benefiting from food assistance will be around 750,000.

ASMAA'S STORY

WFP© /Dina ElKassaby

Following a generous contribution from the Government of Germany, WFP restored its e-card value to the full intended amount of USD 27 a month in March. That followed one year of reductions to as low as USD 13.5 per person.

Lebanese shop managers like Abdullah (pictured) immediately noticed a difference: Syrian refugees were able to buy more food throughout the months of March and April rather than just visiting his shop once or twice a month.

Asmaa, a Syrian refugee mother, explained that she can finally buy her children milk and cheese – two products that they have missed for several months because she had to use her limited funds to buy just the basics to survive.

“Share The Meal”

ShareTheMeal, the mobile application developed by WFP, is switching its fundraising efforts to support Syrian refugee children in Lebanon. ShareTheMeal’s fundraising goal in Lebanon is to support 1,400 refugee children aged three to four in Beirut for a full year. The children’s parents receive funds transferred to their regular WFP electronic food cards, allowing them to buy the food they need in local shops, thus also supporting host communities and the Lebanese economy.

Through the app (available on the App Store, Google Play for android users and on Amazon), smartphone users can join thousands of other people in support of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and monitor the campaign’s progress. For each meal shared, the user will hear about a child in need who receives support from WFP. Donations can range from USD 0.50 - the global average for feeding a child for a day - to a monthly gift.

UNRWA Cash Assistance

As of March 2016, UNRWA was able to resume its cash assistance programmes to eligible Palestine Refugees from Syria. Monthly cash assistance of USD 27 per person for food will continue until the end of the year. Monthly cash assistance of USD 100 per family for basic needs, including housing, also resumed in March 2016 and will be provided on a monthly basis until June 2016.

UNRWA continues to be committed to improving the living conditions of Palestine Refugees from Syria in Lebanon and will continue exerting its fundraising efforts to extend its cash assistance to a longer period.

EU Support to Improve the National Health System for all in Lebanon

In response to the Syrian crisis in Lebanon, the European Union and the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) celebrated on 20 April the successful closure of the first phase of their cooperation in the health sector and the launch of the next phase. This cooperation has been anchored by MoPH, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), UNHCR, UNICEF and International Alert.

The achievements of the first phase and the activities to be undertaken during the second phase of the programme were presented at a press conference hosted by Minister Wael Abou Faour and Ambassador Christina Lassen, Head of the European Union Delegation to Lebanon, in the presence of the WHO, UNHCR and UNICEF representatives in Lebanon.

Steered by MoPH, the partner organizations have worked together over the past years to help improve service delivery and access to health care at the community level. The main goal of the partnership has been to enable the Ministry to meet the increased challenges of serving the populations living in Lebanon, through strategic institutional support to the Lebanese primary healthcare system.

The key achievements of the coordinated programme include the provision of vaccines at Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) in Lebanon; the provision of essential medications for acute and chronic diseases to 430 PHCs across the country; the provision of medical equipment to 11 governmental hospitals and 200 national PHCs; establishing eight water laboratories across Lebanon enabling hospitals to monitor the quality of water and stay alert for any potential outbreaks of water-borne diseases; and training health workers to deal with stress and enhance their communication skills.

A Review of the Winter Assistance Programme

In 2014, humanitarian agencies initiated a targeted seasonal support programme to help refugees cope with the additional burden related to winter through shelter activities, the distribution of core relief items, and winter-specific cash assistance.

In 2015, winter assistance partners doubled the winter cash assistance from the previous year to account for the increasing vulnerability of Syrian refugees.

The inter-agency winter support plan for the winter season of 2015-2016 was concluded at the end of March 2016 with a high implementation rate: 252,364 out of the 257,250 targeted families were reached.

Although provision of shelter assistance is an ongoing activity, it holds particular relevance during the winter months, when cold weather and precipitation can have severe impacts on substandard shelters and informal settlements. The provision of weatherproofing kits for informal settlements was a priority, and over 32,000 families were reached with this assistance over the winter months. Another 10,775 families residing in substandard buildings also benefited from weatherproofing repairs. Over 4,900 families were helped with site improvements in informal settlements which are prone to flooding due to rain and snow. Site improvements entail graveling to facilitate the drainage of water and the movement of people, and digging trenches to improve water drainage.

In total, over USD 85.5 million was injected as cash assistance to 182,364 vulnerable refugee and Lebanese families this winter.

An inter-agency winter programme lessons learned workshop was held in April giving a chance to agencies to present their most important findings. UNHCR conducted a post-distribution monitoring exercise to assess the provision and impact of winter assistance.

The majority of the survey respondents found the modality of cash distribution to be effective; almost all surveyed refugees expressed having no problems withdrawing cash from ATMs. Over 70 percent of families said they used the winter cash assistance mainly for heating material, food, health and medical expenses.

Over 81 percent of families however reported that winter cash assistance was not sufficient to meet their needs in winter. Many said they were facing difficulties covering basic expenditures, resorting even more to debts to meet their needs during winter.

Beneficiaries identified food, rent and health expenditures as the most important needs that remained unmet during the winter months, in addition to winter-specific needs including heating material and clothes.

Considering that over 70 percent of families used winter assistance to purchase heating materials, it can be considered that this assistance helped to meet seasonally specific needs. However, given that food, medical expenses, rent, and debt repayment were all significant expenditures using this assistance, in practice, the targeted winter assistance was used as multipurpose cash to meet exacerbated basic needs in winter. This may also be a reflection of more limited economic opportunities during winter months, precluding alternative sources of income as Syrians have access to seasonal work primarily in the agriculture or construction sectors.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO PERSONS OF CONCERN

What is Accountability to Affected Populations?

Communication with communities is an essential part of any humanitarian operation. Aid agencies in Lebanon are working to ensure that affected populations not only have the right to participate in making decisions that affect their lives, but also receive the information they need to be protected and have access to services and support. Communication with communities is defined as a two-way communication between persons of concern and humanitarian actors. The objective is to listen to the communities in order to understand their priorities and discuss the best ways to address them. During these discussions, the programmes are evaluated and suggestions for improvements are taken into consideration.

Accountability to affected populations is highlighted as a key undertaking in the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP); all partner agencies are to ensure the engagement of the affected populations, both refugees and vulnerable Lebanese communities, in the planning and implementation of their programmes. Communication processes, during which affected populations can ask questions, provide feedback and contribute to discussions on current and long-term strategies, are a must. Agencies that are under the LCRP umbrella adhere to a set of core transparency and accountability principles and commitments.

Agencies operate a wide range of tools and activities to provide affected populations with accurate information about programmes, including modern technologies, outreach volunteers, and community consultations through focus group discussions. Outreach volunteers are key in disseminating accurate and up-to-date information in a culturally appropriate way as well as directing their communities to the right services. They allow humanitarian actors to cross-reference the information they collected directly and maintain contact with refugees and host communities in remote areas where access can be challenging. They are instrumental in receiving complaints and providing feedback - partners record the complaints and manage the feedback through referrals, either within their own organization or by channeling the complaint to relevant partners.

Active participation by affected populations is most commonly managed through different committees. Committees under the coordination of the protection sector include collective site management committees, parent committees, youth groups and committees, women committees, neighborhood committees and municipal committees.

Community Development Centres (CDCs) and Social Development Centres (SDCs) provide safe and public places where persons with diverse backgrounds can meet. They are established with the main objective to empower both refugee and Lebanese communities to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Active participation of the communities helps actors design programmes that answer to the populations' needs. An LCRP priority that demonstrates how accountability to affected populations practically translates into assistance is the cash programme. A number of agencies provide cash assistance to refugees, as

well as poor Lebanese communities. Post-distribution monitoring indicates that refugees feel empowered as they are given a choice over how they best address the needs of their families. This demonstrates how assistance can be provided with dignity under a freedom of choice for the beneficiary.

Similarly, municipal interventions are prioritized based on participatory planning processes within the municipalities through the Municipal Risk and Resource Mapping process. This increases the participation of local authorities and communities to self-identify their needs and influence programme design.

Roundtable discussion

AMEL organized a roundtable to discuss accountability to persons of concern on 18 April. The roundtable discussion, entitled “Accountability in Lebanon: Theory, Practices and Perspectives”, was held as a first step in discussions on ways to operationalize accountability of affected populations. The roundtable sparked an interest for more coordination on such issues; the participants agreed to continue with more open conversations with regard to operationalizing accountability to affected populations

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

An in-country PSEA Network is established in Lebanon under the leadership of the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, with support from UNIFIL and UNHCR. The Network has worked with each UN agency to identify PSEA focal points and establish internal procedures for reporting and investigating complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse. To facilitate this process, a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) was developed.

Assessments are conducted through focus groups discussions with women, girls, men and boys to identify risk factors, categories of persons most at risk, and safe reporting mechanisms. Through these discussions, partner agencies also assess the level of awareness among communities.

Code of Conduct and Fraud Prevention

NGO and UN staff are bound by a Code of Conduct that must be signed upon recruitment and is regularly revalidated through training and refresher sessions. Partnership agreements between UN agencies and NGOs also include references to agencies’ codes of conduct. Agencies and NGOs sign their own Code of Conduct and have safeguards against fraud in place, including their own investigation dedicated unit.

Anti-fraud information material and counseling are amongst the anti-fraud measures that take place year-long at the UNHCR reception centres, distribution sites, refugee settlements and shelters, hospitals, clinics, community centres, municipalities and more.

Agencies that contributed to this thematic update

ACTED, Action Contre la Faim (ACF), AMEL, Solidarités International, UNHCR, World Vision Lebanon.

DONORS

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Union, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Luxemburg, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, 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.