

UNHCR Lebanon Operational Update

Syrian Refugee Response

April - June 2017



Preserve Access to Protection

- Ensure access to protection, legal stay and birth and civil status documentation for refugees, and their protection from refoulement

In March 2017, the Government of Lebanon adopted the long-awaited decision waiving fees for **residence permit renewal** of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR. To support refugees in renewing their residency permits, the Office expanded its reception capacity in the second quarter of 2017 to swiftly issue refugee certificates and housing attestations for refugees. During the first half of 2017, close to 40 per cent of the total Syrian refugee population registered with UNHCR in Lebanon had their housing certificate issued and/or their refugee certificates verified, updated and renewed. As of June 2017, the number of Syrians registered with UNHCR stood at 1,001,051 individuals.

Despite the progress in facilitating refugees' access to legal residency achieved through the waiver, challenges persist with regards to implementation and scope. The waiver remains limited to those who registered with

UNHCR before 1 January 2015 and who did not renew their residency permit based on tourism, sponsorship, property, ownership, or tenancy in 2015 or 2016. In addition, the implementation practice in several General Security Office (GSO) offices has been inconsistent with the circular. UNHCR received reports of refugees having to pay fees, having their documents retained, being asked to find a sponsor among other inconsistent practices. UNHCR continues to follow up closely with the Government on these issues and is working to support an increased capacity of the GSO to improve service delivery and coherence.

UNHCR and partners continue to provide **legal assistance** to refugees. Topics on which refugees regularly seek assistance include residency, legal status, tenancy, marriage and birth registration, child protection issues, SGBV, divorce and custody. By the end of the second quarter, a total of 23,957 refugees had received legal assistance in 2017 through different activities ranging from counselling to legal representation.

In its continuous efforts to **prevent statelessness**, UNHCR Lebanon counselled 6,070 individuals on how to register the birth of their newborn babies with the Lebanese civil



A UNHCR officer visits a family from Homs living in an informal settlement in the town of Mhammara, north Lebanon. Mahmoud, 38, and his sons (left to right) Suleiman, 12, Hussein, 9, and Youssef, 6, stand in front of their shelter with a friend. Mahmoud's occasional farming work pays just \$7 a day. The monthly cash assistance they receive from UNHCR helps pay their rent and buy vital medicine, food and clothes. © UNHCR/Martin Dudek

authorities in the second quarter of 2017, bringing the total number of persons reached by mid-year to 12,301. Counselling sessions in this regard are regularly held with refugees approaching UNHCR to add newborns to their files. To complement this, counselling and referral mechanisms are also in place through Outreach Volunteers from within refugee communities and other front-liners, including protection monitoring teams and health personnel.

In addition, to monitor the situation of refugees who have been detained and ensure that refugees are not forcibly deported to countries where they may face harm, UNHCR regularly visits **detention** facilities, including the GSO retention centre. Detainees of concern to UNHCR are provided with material and legal assistance in situ, as well as psychological support. During the first six months of 2017, a total of 2,630 persons of concern to UNHCR in detention in Lebanon were assisted. Material support included blankets, hygiene kits, food and clothes. In order to further improve dignity in detention, UNHCR provided two washing machines to a Lebanese prison. UNHCR also continued to advocate for continuous access to persons of concern and for all involved institutions to uphold relevant law to protect persons of concern from arbitrary detention.

UNHCR continues to monitor **cross-border movements** between Lebanon and Syria. Staff observe the admission of new arrivals at the main border crossing points and refers cases identified as meeting the humanitarian exception criteria to MOSA, while advocating for the expansion of the humanitarian admission criteria, to prevent refoulement and to promote protection-sensitive border management.

Ensure Dignity in Exile

- **Preserve the dignity and well-being of refugees while in exile in Lebanon, with priority given to refugees with specific needs and vulnerabilities**

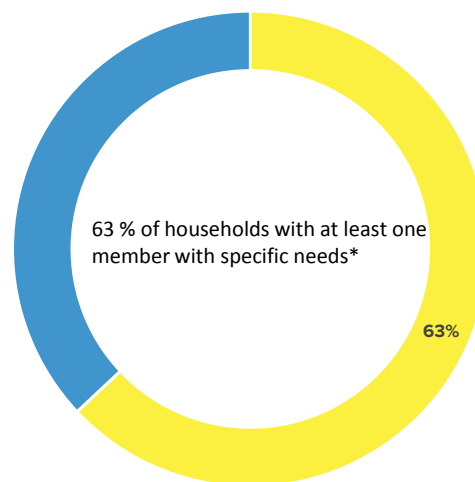
More than half of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon are female, and over half are children (under 18 years of age). Access to labour market for refugees at working age remains restricted. The 2016 iteration of the annual **Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees (VASyR)** indicates that some 71 per cent of Syrian refugees live below the poverty line and 53 percent below the extreme poverty line. The dispersed nature of the refugee presence in Lebanon across over 1,700 locations in the country requires extensive and innovative tools and services to ensure effective outreach to those in need and to enable the identification of persons at risk.

In the second quarter of 2017, UNHCR in collaboration with WFP and UNICEF initiated the 2017 VASyR. The assessment provides extensive data and analysis on the situation of Syrian refugees in the country. It establishes baselines while helping to account for progress and supporting the identification of gaps and needs for onward planning. UNHCR-led data collection was completed by the end of May 2017. Data Analysis started at the beginning of June

and preliminary results are expected by mid-July.

UNHCR supports refugees to enhance their own protection through a variety of community-based interventions which aim to identify, prevent, and respond to protection issues. Throughout the past years, the Office has built and trained a network of close to 600 **Outreach Volunteers (OVs)** from within refugee and host communities. Among them, 270 are now specialized and trained in the following areas: education (128), child protection and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (60), health (37), and paralegal matters (45). OVs share information with communities on available services, help mobilize communities to, for example, enrol children in school, and collect and provide feedback to UNHCR on issues of concern within the communities. OVs also support the identification of persons at heightened risk and their referral to relevant services and assistance providers.

Since the beginning of 2017, the general and specialized OVs have referred more than 12,000 persons at heightened risk to relevant services and partners. Particular emphasis is placed on **Persons with Specific Needs**. This includes persons with disabilities, LGBTI individuals, older persons, women at risk and unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). Identification is conducted through the UNHCR Reception Centres, home visits, outreach (including through OVs) and community centres. Assistance is tailored to the needs of each person and can include material assistance (cash or non-cash based), psychosocial counselling, health services, training and legal assistance.



*VASyR 2016. Specific needs are considered to be: (i) physical or mental disability, (ii) chronic illness, (iii) temporary illness or injury, (iv) serious medical condition, and (v) people who need support in basic daily activities.

During the first half of 2017, 2,455 refugees experiencing serious protection incidents were provided with assistance to bridge a period of extreme hardship, through UNHCR Lebanon's **Protection Cash Assistance Programme (PCAP)**. This included 760 new referrals, 56 per cent of whom are persons with specific needs, single heads of households, persons with medical conditions or disabilities, LGBTI persons, GBV survivors and UASC. PCAP aims to



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Lana had to quit school in Syria halfway through Grade 2 because of the deteriorating security situation in her hometown in eastern Ghouta. She and her family were displaced twice inside Syria before it was no longer possible for them to stay there. Their last sanctuary in Syria was the town of Maaraba in Damascus. Lana said she loved coming to the homework support groups because she has made friends and because she sometimes needs help in doing her homework. © UNHCR/Diego Ibarra Sánchez

assist individuals and families who have been, or may be, forced to resort to negative coping strategies such as worst forms of child labor, begging, survival sex or homelessness as a result of the protection incidents they face. Common protection incidents include SGBV, harassment and abuse, exploitation, injuries or detention of family members. Almost 20 per cent of PCAP beneficiaries are survivors of SGBV, almost all being women or girls. The majority have experienced domestic violence. PCAP is assisting these persons to break the cycle of violence, support their resilience and capacity to respond to their own protection needs and to tap into established safety nets to find sustainable solutions. In addition to PCAP, refugees facing urgent protection incidents are assisted by UNHCR and partners through one-off emergency cash assistance to address or mitigate serious harm. So far in 2017, 2,592 individual and families have been assisted with ECA.

Community centres provide safe spaces where refugees and Lebanese can access services and activities such as language, literacy and IT classes and training sessions on upcycling, textile and artisan handicraft. Centres also provide psychosocial support activities and information sessions on birth and marriage registration, available

services, prevention of fraud and exploitation, SGBV prevention and child rights, among others. By the second quarter of 2017, some 34 UNHCR-supported community centres continued to provide a wide range of activities and services to more than 50,000 persons.

Risks of violations of **children's rights** including worst forms of child labour and early marriage increase in displacement settings. **SGBV**, and especially emotional abuse and physical assault, also exacerbate in such settings. UNHCR and partners work to prevent and respond to **SGBV** and child protection violations through a range of interventions. This includes strengthening the capacities of national and local actors to reduce weaknesses in case management and other key services. During the reporting period, case workers benefited from technical and soft skills trainings to better manage child protection and SGBV cases, especially with regards to managing cases of suicidal attempts and dealing with survivors of rape. The number of SGBV actors trained in 2017 reached 219 by the end of the second quarter. UNHCR also worked on strengthening the capacities of law enforcement agencies to ensure protection of SGBV survivors. As such, 26 Internal Security Forces (ISF) officers have been trained in identifying and

assisting survivors of human trafficking, especially those who are subject to sexual exploitation. Further trainings will be delivered to GSO staff as in previous years. Capacity building also included child protection case workers in particular with regards to children with specific needs, such as UASC and children exposed to early marriage, child labour and children with disabilities. Best interest determination procedures remain a key intervention to ensure the well-being and protection of children at medium and high risk. At the end of the second quarter, the total number of children assisted through specialized services as part of the case management process reached 1,907.

For Syrian refugee children, **education** in the Lebanese public school system is a vital lifeline in their pursuit of a brighter future. Based on figures provided by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), approximately 195,000 refugee children were enrolled in the 2016-17 school year, including in kindergarten, primary, and secondary schools. Refugee students have access to both the morning and afternoon shifts in Lebanese public schools. Through its partnership with MEHE, UNHCR covered the school fees of more than 39,400 refugee children in the first shift of the 2016-17 academic year.

Despite an upwards trend in enrolments, over 40 per cent of refugee children between the age of 6-14 remained out of school in the 2016-17 academic year. In addition, retaining enrolled refugee students remains challenging due to difficulties in adapting to a new curriculum and languages of instruction. Children often struggle to make up for missing years, and some are confronted with bullying or harassment. UNHCR has therefore continued to conduct homework support and Parent Community Groups (PCGs), which encourage the engagement of children and parents in schools, and support the retention of students. Upon the request of MEHE, additional trained refugee volunteers, have been assigned to second shift schools. These volunteers, called Education Community Liaisons (ECLs) are based in schools and work to identify and refer children at risk of dropping out of school to homework support groups, establish walking groups for those who have no other means of transportation, mediate in cases of bullying, pass messages from the school management to the PCGs and vice versa and contribute to a more protective environment in schools.

During summer, the homework support groups continue as recreational activity groups focusing on art, drama and foreign languages. The PCGs also meet despite schools being closed and participate in training sessions on topics such as “positive communication with children”; in some instances the PCGs themselves give trainings to other parents on basic literacy and numeracy (for illiterate parents). While schools are closed, ECLs were mobilized to do outreach alongside the OVs.

At the end of the second quarter UNHCR and partners had established 425 PCGs, almost 300 homework support groups, and trained more than 180 education OVs and 148 ECLs. These structures support children to stay in school

by helping them to deal with the daily challenges they face pursuing their education.

In order to compensate for the limited access to self-reliance opportunities, UNHCR is providing **Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance** (MCAP) to the most severely vulnerable refugee families as a social protection safety net to reduce their socio-economic vulnerabilities and consequent exposure to exploitation and other protection risks.

To reach those most in need of such support, UNHCR applies an econometric targeting model. Based on a desk formula, this model identifies predictors of expenditure to rank and classify households according to their socio-economic vulnerability. This classification also informs targeting by WFP and influences the level of subsidy provided for hospitalization by UNHCR. In the second quarter, together with the American University of Beirut and WFP, UNHCR Lebanon engaged in the recalibration of the 2016 desk formula. As the desk formula is based on predictors of expenditure and thus socio-economic vulnerability derived from the VASyR, the formula needs to be updated on a regular basis for accuracy.

During the second quarter, UNHCR continued to work towards assisting its planned target group of 30,000 severely vulnerable households reaching 29,595 on average each month between April and June. In total, between January and June 2017, the average number of households assisted with MCAP stood at 31,115 at the end of June. The reduction from the first quarter is a result of the discontinuation of households no longer found to be severely socio-economically vulnerable, while new households were included to the extent funding permitted. Due to the unexpected closure of the Lebanon Cash Consortium (LCC) and the resulting lack of assistance for 13,842 households, UNHCR temporarily assumed the coverage of these households to allow for a notice period of two months before discontinuation. As a member of the Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-Cards (LOUISE) together with UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, LCC had previously provided assistance through the Common Card used by all LOUISE partners. As such, the interim assistance could be swiftly provided by UNHCR through the existing platform and Common Card. The first month of coverage for this additional caseload was June and the second one will be July.

In addition to the **health** care needs of any population, refugees may require additional support as their physical and emotional well-being is negatively affected by prolonged displacement and poor living conditions. The high cost of health care in Lebanon’s largely privatized health care network remains a major cause of refugee indebtedness. In response, UNHCR subsidizes access to comprehensive services at primary health care (PHC) centres across Lebanon, and covers 75 to 90 per cent of the cost of life saving emergency assistance in hospitals. By the end of the second quarter of 2017, UNHCR had supported 39,794 hospitalizations for lifesaving and obstetric care and subsidized 100,477 PHC consultations countrywide.



Syrian refugee Fatima shows the ATM card on which cash assistance is uploaded every month by UNHCR. Fatima and her husband Ali use the cash lifeline to buy medication for Ali's elderly father, pay rent, electricity, water, and buy food and clothes. © UNHCR/Martin Dudek

UNHCR continued to support 50 staff at the Ministry of Public Health to support the national service providers in dealing with the increased workload. This included 20 nurses and midwives at PHC centres.

Almost seven years into the Syrian crisis, refugees' **shelter** conditions remain a source of vulnerability. A majority of refugees still live in sub-standard shelters and have limited or no access to basic services. In response, UNHCR provides shelter assistance through the distribution of materials, toolkits and shelter upgrade interventions to those most in need, and works to improve sites in an effort to ensure a stable and safe living environment. In regard to evictions, UNHCR undertakes advocacy interventions and protection monitoring, and provides shelter and WASH assistance to refugees who have relocated and been assessed as needing such support.

By the end of the second quarter, 8,440 households (some 42,196 individuals) received shelter support through UNHCR and partners. Of these, 4,576 households (22,878 individuals) were reached in the second quarter alone. Assistance included the provision of shelter materials (weatherproofing, insulation, fire, and floor rising kits) for 2,901 households (14,505 individuals) of which around 2,000 had been evicted from their previous locations. Following the winter season, site improvement works in informal settlements including through gravelling and drainage improved accessibility to shelters for 960 households (4,796 individuals) living in 29 informal settlements in the Bekaa and Akkar. In addition, 715 refugee

households (3,577 individuals) living in substandard buildings benefited from works to upgrade their shelters to adequate standards in exchange for written occupancy agreements with landlords for a period of twelve months.

The presence of high numbers of refugees continues to add pressure on the country's existing water and wastewater infrastructure. UNHCR's **WASH** strategy targets the needs of refugees in informal settlements, and more particularly urban and peri-urban settings through implementation of water and wastewater projects that strengthen and/or rehabilitate existing infrastructure. These interventions are identified in coordination with the Lebanese authorities at central as well as at governorate and municipal levels. They range from the rehabilitation of storm water channels to the construction of reservoirs and the drilling and equipping of boreholes.

By the end second quarter, UNHCR Lebanon's WASH interventions to improve and maintain sanitation infrastructure have led to improved sanitary conditions (including solid waste) for close to 110,000 individuals in 2017. Access to safe water has been provided to 10,084 refugees, and 10,952 refugees have benefited from hygiene promotion activities, aimed at assisting them to adapt their hygiene and sanitation practices to conditions of displacement. The rehabilitation of nine water supply systems in the Bekaa and North Lebanon continued in the second quarter of 2017. To date, more than 137 km of pipeline have been installed including some 4,767 household connections. The construction of

three reservoirs and drilling of four boreholes is ongoing. Upon completion of these projects, over 192,000 Lebanese and refugees will gain better and more reliable access to potable water.

Secure Continued Hospitality

- Preserve the hospitality of Lebanese host communities and overall social stability

As part of its efforts to ensure that the humanitarian response also benefits host communities which provide protection space to refugees, UNHCR continued to support Solidarity Initiative (SI) projects. These projects aim at supporting both refugee and host communities to address their own protection concerns. After identifying a protection risk that could affect both refugees and hosts, communities are encouraged and supported to submit proposals to UNHCR for small grants. SI projects contribute to social cohesion by allowing members of the host and refugee community to bond around the joint work to address a common issue of concern.

By the end of the second quarter, a total of 12 SI projects had been completed to respond to protection risks. This includes projects focusing on child protection; combating marginalization of specific groups, including older persons living alone and LGBTI; reducing tensions between Lebanese and Syrians; integrating out of school children, including those with hearing impairments; and combating discrimination based on nationality, gender-based violence and substance abuse. SI projects have a high participation of youth and local community members, and promote the empowerment of persons of concern since the projects are directly implemented by adolescents and youth, women groups and OVs.

UNHCR also continued to work closely with local authorities and within the Social Stability Working Group co-led by MOSA, UNHCR and UNDP to identify challenges and needs in communities around the country. The support to the GSO is also an investment into the capacity of the country's law enforcement agencies.

Realize Solutions

- Facilitate refugees' attainment of durable solutions in form of settlement and complementary pathways to third countries, while preparing for voluntary repatriation once possible in safety and dignity

UNHCR does not currently facilitate or promote **refugee returns** to Syria because conditions for voluntary, safe and dignified returns are not in place. The level of destruction of housing and infrastructure, basic services, social safety nets, and livelihood opportunities inside Syria is massive, the security and humanitarian situation remains volatile, and

displacement continues. Refugees are expressing concerns about obstacles to return such as recruitment by armed groups, conscription, arbitrary arrest and detention, and other forms of physical violence. Significant improvements in security and the overall protection environment as well as access to services, HLP rights and livelihoods need to be in place before large scale returns could take place. Nevertheless, small-scale, self-organized return movements by refugees, are occurring. UNHCR anticipates that self-organized returns will continue to take place. UNHCR advocates that it is important that refugee returns are based on a free and informed decision. Ensuring access to territory and safety and the ability to remain in host countries for refugees who do not wish to return remains critical. Throughout the second quarter of 2017, UNHCR continued to seek refugees' views and concerns with regards to return. UNHCR also monitors cross-border movements to the extent possible with a view to assessing the voluntary and informed nature of decisions to return at this stage.

UNHCR is also working on issues such as civil status documentation and birth registration to ensure that, when conditions in Syria permit, refugees are able to smoothly reintegrate, following their voluntary repatriation. As housing, land and property is one key factor, together with birth and civil status documentation, UNHCR records copies of relevant documentation in its database for refugees who would like this information to be safely stored. This can mitigate the impact of potential loss or theft. It also gives UNHCR a clearer picture of the situation of Syrian refugees with regards to their land and property rights in Syria and to plan legal aid programmes in the future.

While conditions are still not conducive for return to Syria in safety and dignity and local integration in Lebanon is not an option provided by the government, **resettlement** remains an important protection tool for the most vulnerable, and a key durable solution. Alternative pathways are a useful complement to the resettlement programme. Resettlement is a concrete expression of international solidarity with Lebanon, which is hosting more refugees per capita than any other country in the world. In 2017, UNHCR is working to submit at least 12,000 refugees for resettlement, while advocating with States to increase resettlement quotas to at least match 2016 levels (more than 23,400 submissions were made by UNHCR Lebanon in 2016). By the end of the second quarter, 7,734 Syrian refugees have been submitted for resettlement and other humanitarian admission programs to 20 different resettlement countries. These Syrian refugees are given the opportunity to rebuild their lives in third countries, after – for many of them – years of displacement and insecurity. Reductions in resettlement quotas – already below the 10 per cent target – are of major concern since it is important that resettlement, as well as other complementary pathways, continue to be the main truly durable solution available to refugees at the moment.

UNHCR Lebanon Achievements at a Glance

Syria Refugee Response
April - June 2017



KEY FIGURES 2017

1,001,051

453 M

31%

34

Registered refugees

UNHCR funding requirement (in USD)

Funding level

Partners



Funding for UNHCR Lebanon was also received through private donations from Italy, Kuwait, Singapore, and the United States of America



PROTECTION

Reached Jan -Jun

Target if Fully Funded

Legal counselling	23,957	37,000
Persons submitted for humanitarian admission and resettlement	7,908	12,000
Persons of Concern assisted in detention	2,630	1,800
Children assisted through case management	1,907	5,000
GBV actors trained	219	500
Specific needs cases referred through volunteers	12,696	51,100
Outreach Volunteers mobilized	595	1,000
Community centres supported	34	50
Individuals participating in community centre activities	51,149	240,000
Individuals receiving emergency and protection cash	5,929	6,200
Individuals receiving information on birth registration through individual counseling	12,301	20,500



EDUCATION

Children supported for primary education in school year 2016/2017 through co-financing support to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE):

1st and 2nd shift	39,488	50,000
Children supported for vocational education in school year 2016/2017	1,563	10,000



HEALTH

Individuals receiving primary health care (including reproductive and mental health)	100,477	300,000
Individuals benefitting from life-saving and obstetric referral healthcare	39,794	100,000



BASIC ASSISTANCE

Reached April - June

Target if Fully Funded

Average number of households assisted with monthly multipurpose cash grants	31,115	82,000
Households receiving seasonal support (winter 2016/2017)	164,673	168,000



SHELTER

Individuals benefitting from the provision of weatherproofing and shelter kits	33,677	233,390
Individuals benefitting from an occupancy agreement in rehabilitated buildings	3,723	73,050



WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

Sanitation infrastructure, maintenance, desludging	110,700	145,500
Hygiene promotion campaigns, hygiene items	10,952	93,237
Access to safe water	10,084	350,000

CSP

INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

2017 Planned Budget

Institutional support (rehabilitation of infrastructure, staffing and training, equipment, supplies, medications and vaccines)	22 million
Community-based projects (health, education, livelihoods, WASH, roads and communities facilities)	14.5 million
Total invested	36.5 million

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