

Lebanon

August 2020

Operational context

Nine years into the Syria crisis, Lebanon continues to host the largest number of refugees per capita in the world, with the Government estimating that **1.5 million** Syrian refugees are present in the country. Lebanon also hosts more than **16,000** refugees of Iraqi, Sudanese and other origins, and more than 200,000 Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate. The presence of such a large refugee population in a small country facing a deepening **economic crisis**, high unemployment rates and pressure on an already fragile infrastructure increasingly risks affecting inter-community relations and social stability.

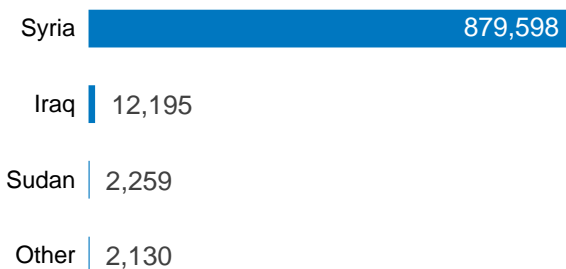
Beirut blast

On 4 August, Beirut was hit by a devastating explosion which damaged neighbourhoods and buildings across the capital and left hundreds of thousands of people homeless. More than 190 people were killed and 6,500 were injured. UNHCR responded with a phased approach focusing on **protection** and **shelter**. Affected populations of all nationalities received immediate assistance to respond to their most urgent needs. UNHCR partners distributed over 6,500 emergency weatherproofing kits to help families protect their houses from the elements and regain a sense of security and privacy. UNHCR is now ramping up medium-term programmes for housing as well as mental health and socio-economic support to enable a recovery centered around communities. The organization is also actively contributing to the long-term and sustainable recovery plan for the Lebanese capital.

For details on UNHCR Lebanon's response to the Beirut blast, please see [UNHCR Flash Update on Lebanon: Beirut Port Explosions](#).

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Country of origin (registered refugees)



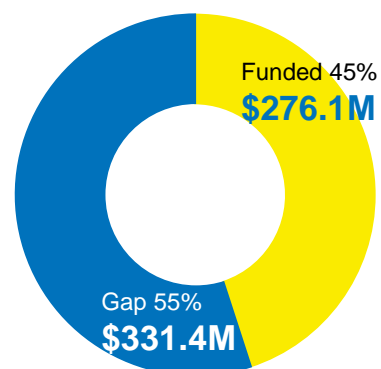
* Registration figures as of 31 August 2020

** UNHCR registration of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has been suspended since May 2015 through a decision by the Government of Lebanon

FUNDING

USD 607.5 M

requested for the Lebanon operation



*** Funding level as of 1 September 2020

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff

540 National Staff

105 International Staff

Offices

1 Country Office in Beirut

2 Sub-offices in Tripoli and Zahle

2 Field Offices in Mount Lebanon and Tyre

COVID-19

Since the onset of the global COVID-19 crisis, the Government of Lebanon (GoL) imposed various confinement measures to stop the spread of the virus. While these restrictions affected the implementation of some programmes, UNHCR adapted delivery of many protection services to respond to the needs of refugees. UNHCR expanded its availability through its call centres and hotlines to respond to increased protection, assistance and other queries, and individual case management was conducted by phone wherever possible. Key assistance programmes including cash-based interventions and health are ongoing. As of July 2020, all four UNHCR reception centres have gradually re-opened with precautionary measures in place to keep refugees and staff safe. In-person appointments for the most urgent protection, documentation, status determination and resettlement cases have also resumed.

In its response to the COVID-19 emergency, UNHCR is working within the framework of the Government, and in close collaboration with WHO and other partners, to ensure that refugees' needs are addressed in a coordinated, equal and coherent manner. UNHCR's contribution to the refugee component of the response falls within three main areas: community engagement and prevention; enabling quarantining/isolation of refugees living in overcrowded settings; and reinforcing testing and hospitalisation capacity.

More than 380,500 individuals living in informal settlements and other similar sites were reached with hygiene promotion and awareness sessions as well as hygiene kits distribution. UNHCR is also assisting communities and families to ensure the ability to self-isolate by providing support in setting up and/or equipping 10 level-3 isolation centres across the country. Moreover, UNHCR is expanding the capacity of the national health system to treat COVID-19 cases by providing up to 800 additional beds and 100 additional intensive care unit (ICU) beds in total to selected hospitals nationwide, including ventilators and other medical equipment.

For details of UNHCR Lebanon's response to COVID-19 and ongoing socio-economic crisis, as well as impact on regular programmes, please see [UNHCR Lebanon's COVID-19 Operational Updates](#).

Working in Partnership

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) is led by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) on behalf of the Government of Lebanon and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator. UNHCR co-leads the humanitarian refugee response component of the LCRP, while UNDP co-leads the resilience component, both agencies working in close collaboration with the Government of Lebanon and humanitarian and development actors in doing so. UNHCR also co-leads a number of thematic sectors, namely Protection, Basic Assistance, Health, and Shelter, and provides support to other sectors, including Education, Social Stability and WASH.

Main Activities

Protection

Advocacy aimed at preserving the protection and dignity of refugees while they remain in temporary exile in Lebanon is at the core of UNHCR's work. In an increasingly restrictive protection environment, where multiple measures are being taken to restrict (re-)entry of Syrians to the territory, the use of hard structures in shelters to protect against the elements, and access to livelihoods, **advocacy** grounded in international standards and the rule of law remains a central component of UNHCR's protection and solutions work.

UNHCR regularly verifies and updates the **data** of Syrian refugees who registered with UNHCR before the Government's instruction in 2015 to suspend registration, and registers and determines the claims of asylum-seekers of other nationalities. Accurate data is needed to inform planning and interventions, including eligibility for assistance, responses to refugees with specific needs, and the identification of durable solutions. In 2019, UNHCR fully verified 72% of registered Syrian refugees, while updating key changes in, for example, family composition, specific needs and contact numbers of additional case files, and regularly update the data of refugees and asylum-seekers of other nationalities.

Access to territory has remained restricted for Syrians since 2015 and become increasingly difficult in light of the closure of land, air and maritime borders as part of the GoL's COVID-19 'general mobilization' as well as the Higher Defence Council's and the Directorate General of General Security (GSO)'s April 2019 decisions further restricting refugees' access to Lebanon. UNHCR conducts border monitoring and advocates for a full and inclusive application of the narrow humanitarian admission criteria. UNHCR also intervenes to prevent refoulement and makes regular visits to prisons and places of detention to identify and assist persons of concern.

UNHCR advocates for policies and procedures that enable all refugees access to temporary **legal residency**, including through a full and even application of existing circulars targeting Syrians, and for the expansion of the residency fee waiver (issued in March 2017) to cover all categories of refugees. UNHCR supports the GSO to increase its capacity to process residency renewal requests from registered Syrian refugees, as well as to provide services to Lebanese citizens.

UNHCR provides **legal aid**, including counselling and representation, and implements awareness sessions and campaigns to raise refugees' knowledge on how to obtain legal residency, civil documents to certify births, marriages, divorces and deaths that have taken place in Lebanon, and access procedures relating to family issues, domestic violence, and civil or administrative disputes. While some of these services were affected by the COVID-19 lockdown measures, UNHCR and partners adjusted their modalities to provide legal counselling by phone and awareness sessions remotely. By 30 June 2020, a total of 20,679 refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons (incl. 20,200 Syrian refugees) were supported with legal aid.

Individuals and families with specific needs also receive tailored support to obtain marriage registration, which will facilitate birth registration of their children and increase the protection of women in case of later separation, divorce or loss of their husband. To this end, UNHCR is providing equipment and staffing to increase the capacity of the Personal Status Department within the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities. UNHCR continues to prioritize **SGBV case management** and other essential services for survivors during the unfolding pandemic. Local and institutional capacities are supported to prevent and address SGBV and **child protection**-related issues through community mobilization, counselling, outreach, strengthening of specialized services and promoting the engagement of men and boys in SGBV prevention and response. In 2020, UNHCR is supporting 24 community centres run by NGOs. These centres support refugees and Lebanese in receiving updated information about services, acquire skills through trainings and awareness through sessions, and receive psychosocial support. Due to the pandemic, most of these services shifted from in-person to online.

Consulting and engaging refugees

Whether through daily outreach activities, targeted focus group discussions or surveys, UNHCR seeks regular feedback from refugees on their concerns, needs and capacities, and their views on current and foreseen interventions to ensure that they respond to refugees' expectations and are effective.

Each year, UNHCR and key partners engage in dialogue with over 1,000 refugee women, men, girls and boys of Syrian and other origins, with diverse profiles, through a **Participatory Assessment** exercise. The

findings inform UNHCR's assessment and analyses of the protection situation, design of the country operations plan and prioritisation of activities and implementation of its programmes. In addition, UNHCR and partners conduct hundreds of community and individual face-to-face and online interactions each month, including with around 9,000 refugee women, men and youth mobilized to identify and respond to community concerns. Such interactions also inform UNHCR programmes and activities, as well as guide prioritization.



Community mobilization and outreach volunteer initiative

As a result of COVID-19, community groups supported by UNHCR increased significantly in 2020 from the 153 pre-existing groups which include women, youth and older person groups, to 2,252 **community groups**. The latter include site community groups and community health volunteers at informal settlements and collective shelters to raise awareness on the pandemic and promote safe practices. Moreover, UNHCR engages with more than 640 general and specialized **outreach volunteers** (OVs), of whom 59% are women and 19% are youth, from the refugee and host communities. OVs provide practical information to refugees, raise awareness on relevant topics, visit the most vulnerable and refer those with specific needs to UNHCR and other response partners for help. Since the imposition of the lockdown by the Government, community structures focused on virtual outreach, through which OVs and community groups reached 330,000 people with COVID-related awareness messaging that they helped to develop.

Durable solutions

UNHCR works towards securing durable solutions outside Lebanon for persons of concern as local integration is not an option provided by the Government. UNHCR has determined that more than 10% of the registered refugee population in Lebanon will be in need of **resettlement** or humanitarian admission in 2020, vastly outnumbering the resettlement places likely to be available. UNHCR will therefore continue to advocate for states to increase the number of resettlement places available to refugees in Lebanon. Although in-person resettlement interviews were suspended for the majority of 2020 so far due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resettlement processing continued at a reduced frequency through remote interviewing modalities, which were designed and implemented for certain categories of non-complex cases. As a result, 3,140 Syrian refugees and 385 refugees of other nationalities were submitted for resettlement from Lebanon by Q2. While UNHCR is currently not organising **voluntary repatriation** of refugees to Syria, support is provided to refugees who wish to return, through the provision of information on the importance of having identity and

civil status documents prior to return, and the availability of community centres and services in Syria. In coordination with relevant actors, refugee children returning are also provided with school diplomas and vaccinations. UNHCR and our partners are also present at every staging and departure point across the country during GSO-facilitated group return movements. However, the latter official returns stopped after the border closure in March. Since 2017, UNHCR has conducted regular surveys to gauge refugees' intentions and perceptions in relation to return, in order to inform advocacy and other interventions aimed at creating enabling conditions for safe, dignified and sustainable return. On average, 86% of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon express a longing to repatriate to their home country.

Multi-purpose cash assistance

UNHCR Lebanon has pioneered the provision of humanitarian assistance through cash and ATM cards, and implemented a multi-purpose cash assistance programme since 2013. Apart from strengthening the capacity of the benefitting families to cover their own basic needs, such as rent, food and medicines, and reduce their vulnerability to exploitation and harmful coping strategies, UNHCR's multi-purpose cash programme has enabled refugees to contribute to the local economy by purchasing directly from local markets and shops. In 2020, UNHCR has expanded its cash assistance programmes, already covering 34,500 severely vulnerable refugee families, in response to the ongoing socio-economic crisis and gradually increased the number of beneficiaries and the amount transferred. In August 2020, a total of **69,614 families** are targeted for assistance. In addition to regular MCAP recipients, this includes:

- An additional 12,000 vulnerable families who are receiving temporary cash assistance as part of the COVID-19 response (during the months from May to July, 11,500 families were assisted); and
- An additional 23,114 families in the multipurpose cash assistance programme using funds made possible through the use of a humanitarian exchange rate (families were added to MCAP starting June).

Winter assistance

For the 2019-2020 winter season, UNHCR provided winter support through cash assistance to close to 870,000 refugees and some 20,000 vulnerable Lebanese to help them meet additional needs and costs due to the harsh winter weather. UNHCR's winter programme also includes core relief items and shelter improvement kits. In light of the major economic crisis currently affecting Lebanon, UNHCR's winter assistance reached more vulnerable Lebanese families than in previous years. Moreover, in January 2020, UNHCR donated 3 months' supply of diesel fuel to 17 public hospitals across Lebanon in the network where UNHCR subsidizes secondary health care. This was determined as essential to ensure continuity of operations and service delivery for refugee and Lebanese patients.

Education

Given the importance of accurate data for planning and the design of effective programmes, maintaining updated information on trends and individual data on the education acquired by the refugee children in Lebanon, including those children out-of-school, is a core activity. At the community level, 109 **Education Outreach** Volunteers work to identify out-of-school children and youth and provide counselling and awareness sessions and community-based solutions for those at risk of dropping out. They also disseminate education-related information to the refugee community, raise parents' awareness on COVID-19, and support children and parents with distance learning. The latter started in March, following the suspension of all in-person education activities in line with the GoL's and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's guidelines. As of mid-year, a total of 1,747 children received remote homework support. Additionally, remote communication networks were established for parents in 198 Parent Community Groups to discuss

education-related matters and foster parental engagement in their children's learning. Furthermore, given the closure of schools, UNHCR's 370 Education Community Liaisons (ECLs) were re-assigned to ensure continuous communication between schools and parents and reinforce the refugee community's commitment to education, even during lockdown. Despite the suspension of in-person non-formal education, Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN) classes continued remotely. Education-related allowances, such as for transportation, were redirected in 2020 into connectivity bundles to ensure students' access to distance learning courses. Moreover, some 2,000 university students are receiving **full scholarships** to study in Lebanese universities, complemented with language, guidance, skills support and monthly allowances to help students with transportation and other expenses. 235 of the higher education students are part of the UNHCR/DAFI scholarship programme and are engaged in different volunteer activities within the community, including rehabilitation efforts after the Beirut Blast. UNHCR also facilitates scholarship programmes allowing refugee students to travel to third countries to pursue or resume their higher education. However, due to COVID-19, alternative education pathway programmes were suspended, while students in the pipeline remain in regular contact with scholarship providers, pending their departure dates.

In addition, in order to increase the capacity of public schools to accommodate the large number of Lebanese and refugee students, UNHCR **rehabilitated and expanded** 15 schools across the country, 13 of which were finalized in 2019, and a further 2 schools expected to be handed over later in 2020. The works include measures to enhance the physical accessibility of children with disabilities.

Health

UNHCR is coordinating the COVID-19 response with the Ministry of Public Health. In addition, UNHCR's regular health care programme is ongoing to ensure adequate care is provided to refugees in need.

While refugees have non-discriminatory access to public and private health facilities in Lebanon, the Lebanese health system is mostly privatized and user fees present a significant barrier. UNHCR supports refugees' access to comprehensive **primary health care** (PHC) services, including child and maternal health, sexual and reproductive health, care for non-communicable diseases and mental health services, through subsidizing health services and medication, including vaccinations, at primary health care centres, hospitals and mobile health services. From January-August 2020, UNHCR supported more than 37,200 PHC consultations for refugees.

While UNHCR is one of many actors supporting PHC centres, the organization remains almost the sole supporter of **hospital care** for refugees apart from *ad hoc* services by other actors. To improve access, equity and affordability of health care services for persons of concern, UNHCR covers a large part of the cost of life-saving and emergency interventions. From January-August 2020, UNHCR supported more than 39,100 life-saving care referrals. In total for 2020, UNHCR plans to support around 73,000 hospitalizations.

Shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

An integrated, area-based approach is taken to responding to refugees' acute shelter needs in informal settlements and through sustainable rehabilitation of substandard buildings. Poor urban neighbourhoods and rural areas in need of support are identified and receive targeted assistance through an integrated shelter/WASH response. During COVID-caused lockdown, many of UNHCR's non-essential shelter activities were temporarily suspended to curb the spread of the virus. Nevertheless, by mid-year 2,425 refugees had received **shelter kits** to reinforce or rebuild their shelters following flooding, evictions or fire incidents. Shelter activities resumed in June, including shelter rehabilitation and collective site improvements. The latter allowed 77 individuals to move to **upgraded shelters** and benefit from secure tenure through free occupancy for one year.

As for residents of informal settlements, they benefit from desludging services to prevent public health risks; access to **safe water** through quality-monitored water trucking or through connection to water sources; and sensitization on hygiene practices adapted to the displacement conditions.

Following the Beirut blast, focus was shifted to distributing emergency weatherproofing kits to those most severely affected by the explosion, with more than 6,500 households reached with assistance. This will be followed by rehabilitation and repair works for damaged buildings.

Support to Lebanese host communities and national and local responders

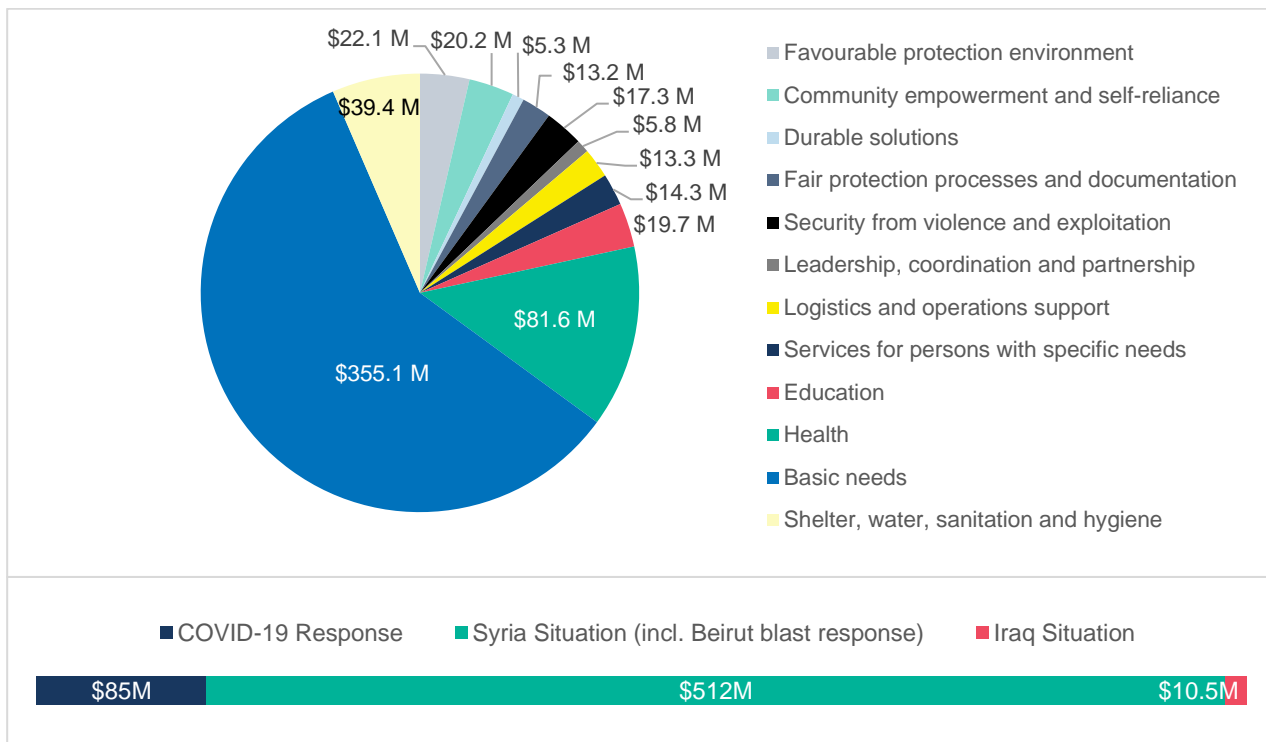
As part of UNHCR's efforts to preserve the hospitality and social stability of host communities, **institutional support** is provided to central and local authorities to increase their capacity to respond to the needs of refugees and Lebanese communities affected by the presence of refugees. This support includes equipment, training, supplies, and operational staffing costs.

A number of projects to promote peaceful coexistence amongst Lebanese and non-Lebanese communities, as well as sectoral interventions targeting host communities (e.g. public infrastructure) are implemented and supported by UNHCR. Since the onset of the Syria crisis in 2011 to date, a total of 500 **community support** projects were implemented by UNHCR in Lebanon. In 2020, UNHCR planned seven community support projects, two of which are already ongoing, including on water and wastewater management, which aim at mitigating the impact of deteriorating public services and rising poverty among Lebanese families. In addition, UNHCR continued to work on validating proposals of Solidarity Initiative projects, with 7 proposals received by mid-year, out of which 6 were validated and are in the process of implementation.

Preventing and eradicating statelessness

In line with UNHCR's Global Campaign to end statelessness by 2024, UNHCR Lebanon's multi-year strategy aims to better identify stateless populations and those at risk of statelessness, and to prevent and reduce statelessness in Lebanon. In 2020, UNHCR will continue to support the Personal Status Department to facilitate the registration of births and other vital events of refugees and Lebanese, which is key to preventing and reducing the risk of statelessness. UNHCR will continue to support the removal of gender-discriminatory nationality provisions, and the inclusion of stateless persons into national and humanitarian assistance programs and plans. UNHCR will also provide technical support to the Working Group on Statelessness, and continue working closely with UNICEF, in the context of the joint Global Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality, to promote joint advocacy initiatives to prevent and reduce childhood statelessness.

2020 financial requirements



Thank you to UNHCR Lebanon's donors in 2020



Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked and other softly earmarked funds in 2020

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Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America | Private donors