

UNHCR Lebanon Operational Update

Syria Refugee Response

Oct - Dec 2016



In the fourth quarter, the operational focus has been on assisting refugee communities to withstand Lebanon's harsh winter conditions. UNHCR's Winter Support Plan 2016-2017 was launched in November and will last until the end of March. It aims to assist 178,000 highly and severely vulnerable Syrian refugee households with cash, shelter and core relief items such as stoves and blankets. Reliance upon assistance is heightened during winter as work becomes harder to find, and household expenses grow to cover heating and other winter costs.

Refugee families in need of assistance have been identified through the application of the new desk formula for socio-economic vulnerability. Developed by UNHCR in collaboration with WFP and AUB, the formula applies variables available in UNHCR's proGres database to assess refugees' vulnerability, and their subsequent need of assistance.

In October, refugees eligible for winter cash assistance were contacted via two-way SMSs to inform them of their eligibility and verify whether they were in possession of an ATM card and PIN. Those who did not have a card or PIN were invited to a distribution site to pick one up. In November, the first tranche of cash transfers were made to the cards of eligible refugees. Vulnerable refugees received either USD147 per month or a USD75 per month top up if they were already in receipt of multi-purpose cash assistance.

By the end of the year, close to 109,000 vulnerable Syrian households had received USD147 per month, and over 42,000 families had received winter cash assistance at USD75. In addition, some 8,420 vulnerable families living in Aarsal, where ATM machines are not present, received fuel vouchers amounting to USD100 per month. UNHCR will continue to add vulnerable refugee families to its winter assistance as the season continues.

Refugees this winter received extra shelter materials, such as timber, plastic sheeting and insulation kits, to weatherproof

and insulate their homes. Shelter support is provided based on assessments of shelter conditions, as well as the altitude of settlements. By the end of the year, 96 per cent of the informal settlements received weatherproofing support.

Core relief items have also been provided to refugee families, and stocks of blankets and stoves have been pre-positioned in strategic locations to enable a rapid response to deteriorating weather conditions.

UNHCR's Winter Support Plan has been complemented by innovative mass communications tools aimed at keeping refugees informed of available assistance, and to help prevent fraud and abuse. In addition to the two-way SMSs, UNHCR has also established a dedicated call centre to answer the refugees' questions in relation to winter assistance. As of the end of the year, the call centre was answering an average of 1,500 questions a day.

PROTECTION

As of 31 December 2016, more than 1.011 million Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR and are living in over 2,125 communities and locations across the country. UNHCR and partners continue to provide legal counseling and assistance to refugees, in particular regarding residency and civil documentation. In 2016, close to 20,000 individuals benefitted from legal counseling. At the same time, UNHCR continued its advocacy with government counterparts on ways to ease the requirements for renewal of legal residency. Unaffordable fees have resulted in growing numbers being unable to maintain legal stay in Lebanon. This year's Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) showed that only one in five households reported all members holding legal residency, and 29 per cent of households reported having no members with legal residency.



Syrian refugee Nawal, 3, and her sister Soundens, 4, stand at the entrance to the shelter where they live with their parents at an informal settlement near Terbol in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon. The settlement is home to 55 families, who come mostly from the Homs and Raqqa areas. This winter, vulnerable communities across Lebanon have faced freezing temperatures, high winds and heavy rains. UNHCR aims to assist some 178,000 Syrian refugees with cash, shelter and core relief item support between November-March © UNHCR/David Azia

Thanks to the efforts of UNHCR and the Government of Lebanon, with the support of the international community, an increasing number of refugees are obtaining birth certificates from the Mukhtars (heads of local governments) and are able to register them with the Nofous (Civil Registry Office), within a year of their child's birth. This constitutes an important step in order to meet the one year deadline, after which a judicial procedure is required to register a birth. According to annual surveys conducted by UNHCR, in 2016 some 52 per cent of refugees registered the birth of their new-borns with the Nofous, compared to 32 per cent in 2015. However, birth registration with the Foreigners' Registry, which is when the actual registration occurs, decreased in 2016 to 14 per cent compared to 22 per cent in 2015, mostly due to a lack of legal residency of refugee parents. By the end of the year, close to 30,000 refugee families had been counseled on how to register the birth of their new-borns. To reach the highest number of families, counseling sessions are regularly held with refugees approaching UNHCR to add new-borns to their files. To complement this, referral mechanisms are also in place through Outreach Volunteers (OVs) and other front-liners.

In 2016, UNHCR stepped up its support to frontline security sector actors to enable them to better address the challenges affecting communities in Lebanon, and adapt their responses to take into account the specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of refugees. In October, UNHCR organized a workshop on human and refugee rights for senior General Security Office (GSO) officials. Also, jointly with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR organised a training for mid-ranking GSO officials serving at Lebanon's land and sea entry points. This training also covered human and refugee rights, as well as IOM and UNHCR's mandates. In addition to the substantive knowledge delivered, these initiatives have also provided an opportunity to build positive and productive relations between front-line UNHCR and GSO staff.

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. In 2016, some 587 OVs referred more than 171,300 persons at heightened risk to assistance providers. OVs provide a vital bridge between refugees and the assistance they require. In 2016, UNHCR has observed an increase in individual self-referrals and a better capacity of OVs to identify cases in acute need of assistance; there has thus been a slight decrease in OV referrals as compared to 2015. In the fourth quarter, some 88 UNHCR-supported community centres continued to provide training sessions on topics such as mobile phone maintenance, heating and ventilation repair, arts and textiles. Literacy classes for adults, IT classes, and basic and advanced language classes were also offered. These centres not only provide practical and empowering professional training, but also offer an opportunity for interaction between refugees and vulnerable Lebanese who use these community centres to gather and learn new skills, thereby supporting social cohesion efforts.

Also in an effort to empower refugees to enhance their own protection, Protection Cash Assistance (PCAP) was provided in the fourth quarter to assist refugees relocate away from sources of harassment and abuse, overcome SGBV incidents, and prevent the worst forms of child labour such as working or begging on the street. By the end of the year, PCAP had been provided in 2,048 cases.

Resettlement is an important protection tool and durable solution for refugees in Lebanon, and is a symbol of global responsibility

sharing. By the end of 2016, UNHCR had submitted close to 23,500 Syrians for resettlement consideration to 20 countries. Resettlement and other humanitarian and legal pathways offer refugees the safety, protection and support needed to help them to rebuild their lives. In 2016, UNHCR Lebanon received over 24,400 resettlement pledges, some 96 per cent of which were for Syrian refugees. The resettlement needs for refugees from countries other than Syria remained high however, as the quotas given by resettlement countries for these refugees were limited compared to the needs. By the end of the year, UNHCR had submitted 928 refugees from countries other than Syria for resettlement consideration.

UNHCR employs a variety of innovative tools to communicate with refugees on changes to assistance and other useful information. In the fourth quarter, messages shared with refugees included on winter assistance and weather tips, information on a new third-party administrator for health care, and awareness videos on preventing burns, falls, car accidents and drowning. Close to 60,000 individuals were reached with these messages through the refugees-lebanon.org website, and 45,000 refugees were reached through a WhatsApp communications tree. Finally, UNHCR employs social media monitoring to keep abreast of any emerging issues and to identify protection cases in need of assistance.

BASIC ASSISTANCE

The desk formula, which was rolled out in third quarter to identify the vulnerability level of each refugee family in Lebanon, has been the basis for the inclusion of the most severely vulnerable households into the multipurpose cash programme. As per the

Introducing LOUISE

On 1 December, the Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organisational System for e-Cards (LOUISE) was launched jointly by UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and the Lebanon Cash Consortium.

LOUISE establishes a series of collective initiatives which aim to harmonise strategies, systems and activities in the field of cash-based assistance. These initiatives include a common assistance targeting system, an integrated system for the management of a common cash card, and a single call centre to respond to questions and queries of refugees.

The new system brings together existing assets, programmes and investments made by LOUISE partners. It establishes a synergetic approach through common governance, integrated business processes, technology and systems which aims at maximising value for recipients of cash-based assistance. Finally, LOUISE has an integrated system of checks and balances, through its IT system, steering committee and case management structures, which ensures transparency of transactions and accountability for refugees and other cash recipients.

In line with the Grand Bargain, LOUISE recognises the need to pool expertise and make efficiency savings by working effectively together. Speaking at the launch of LOUISE, Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator noted that "UN agencies and the Lebanon Cash Consortium have come together in a much-needed effort to make the delivery of aid as straightforward as can be for vulnerable refugees in Lebanon."

formula, 50 per cent of the Syrian population were found to be severely vulnerable, and 21 per cent highly vulnerable. Some 931 severely vulnerable families were included in the multipurpose cash programme during the last quarter of 2016, reaching a total of 29,859 families for the whole year.

HEALTH

The high cost of health care in Lebanon's largely privatised health care network has been shown to be a major cause of refugee indebtedness. According to this year's VASyR, healthcare is the third biggest expense, after food and rent, for refugees living in Lebanon. In response, UNHCR provides access to subsidised secondary health care at 53 hospitals across Lebanon. By the end of 2016, UNHCR had supported a total of over 73,000 hospitalizations for deliveries and lifesaving care, as well as close to 270,000 subsidised Primary Health Care (PHC) consultations.

The Syrian Refugee Crisis has also had a serious impact on Lebanon's health infrastructure, with increased caseloads at the primary and secondary health care levels, longer wait times for appointments, and faster depreciation of medical equipment and facilities. In recognition of this, UNHCR has been providing institutional support to the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) through the payment of salaries of 50 staff including staff working at the MoPH centrally, and 20 nurses and midwives at Primary Health Care centres. UNHCR has also replaced vital medical equipment such as a Magnetic Resonance Imaging and Computerised Tomography scanners recently provided to the Rafic Hariri University Hospital in Beirut.

The open competitive tendering process for Third Party Administrator services for hospital care was completed in the fourth quarter, and the company NextCare Lebanon was selected based on capacity and cost effectiveness. NextCare is due to take over services from MediVisa as of 1 January 2017. Several training sessions were conducted with the new company on UNHCR's standard operating procedures governing referral care. Refugees and partners were informed of the upcoming change, and the new hotline numbers for referral care were disseminated through updated mass communication materials.

EDUCATION

The enrollment in the 2016-17 school year started in October and resulted in over 195,000 refugee children being enrolled. This is a significant increase on 2015's enrollment figure of approximately 158,500, thanks to the efforts of OVs, partners and donors, who made a successful Back to School campaign possible.

Refugee students have access to both the morning and afternoon shifts in Lebanese public schools. UNHCR, in coordination with the Ministry of Education of Higher Education (MEHE), supported formal education for 27,418 refugee children in the first and second shift in the 2015-16 academic year. Through its partnership with MEHE, UNHCR plans to cover fees of more than 35,700 refugee children in the first shift of the 2016-17 academic year.

Only half of Syrian refugee children between 6-14 years old are enrolled in Lebanese public schools. Retention also remains problematic as children face difficulties adapting to a new curriculum and languages of instruction, struggle to make up for missing years, and for some, to cope with bullying or harassment. In 2016, UNHCR established more than 180 parent

community groups, almost 300 homework support groups, and mobilised and trained some 170 Education OVs and 58 Education Community Liaisons. These structures and individuals encourage the engagement of children and parents in schools, and help with the retention of students by dealing with the daily challenges they face trying to get an education.

SHELTER

During the last quarter of 2016, more than 101,000 individuals, or approximately 20,200 households, were assisted with various types of shelter support, bringing the total for 2016 to over 182,000. Among these, over 89,000 individuals living in informal settlements and substandard buildings received shelter materials and tools, including weatherproofing and insulation kits enabling them to reinforce their shelters during winter, and maintain them at liveable standards. Some 5,300 individuals living in substandard buildings have benefited from repair or rehabilitation works in exchange for free rent, rent reduction or rent freezes negotiated directly with landlords.

Finally, fire preparedness and prevention activities have been conducted in informal settlements, mainly in the Bekaa Valley, through the provision of fire suppression materials and awareness sessions provided to refugee households and communities. During the fourth quarter, approximately 190 awareness sessions were conducted and some 1,600 firefighting kits were distributed.

WASH

The added pressure on infrastructure brought about by the influx of Syrian refugees has severely affected water and sanitation systems in many parts of Lebanon. UNHCR's WASH strategy aims at assisting both refugees and the communities which host them. In 2016, UNHCR's WASH interventions have led to improved sanitary conditions for more than 100,000 refugees in Lebanon. Access to safe water has been provided to almost 27,000 refugees, and more than 34,000 refugees have benefited from hygiene promotion activities, during which they learnt how to best adapt their behaviour to living conditions during displacement.

The construction of nine water supply systems in the Bekaa and North Lebanon continued in the fourth quarter. To date, more than 110km of pipeline has been installed, with some 3,170 household connections being made, while the construction of three reservoirs and drilling of three boreholes is on-going. Upon completion, over 192,000 Lebanese and refugees are expected to be provided with better and more reliable access to potable water.



A Homework Support Group (HSG) in an informal settlement in the Bekaa Valley. In 2016, UNHCR has supported 300 HSGs © UNHCR/Sebastian Rich

UNHCR Lebanon Achievements at a Glance

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KEY FIGURES 2016

1,011,366

Registered refugees

453m

UNHCR funding requirement (millions USD)

68%

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 - December

Target if Fully Funded

Monitoring visits	53,417	43,000
Legal counselling	19,829	14,700
Persons submitted for humanitarian admission and resettlement	23,498	19,100
Detention visits	5,142	3,500
Children assisted through case management	3,103	3,450
GBV actors trained	385	150
Specific needs cases referred through volunteers	34,273	50,000
Outreach Volunteers mobilized	587	600
Community centres established	30	28
Individuals participating in community centre activities	77,100	55,930
Individuals receiving emergency and protection cash	4,425	18,824
Individuals receiving information on birth registration through individual counseling	29,830	11,160



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	35,717	50,000
Children supported for vocational education in school year 2016/2017	1,563	3,000



BASIC ASSISTANCE

Reached January - December

Target if Fully Funded

Households assisted at least once with multipurpose cash grant	28,859	70,000
Households receiving seasonal support (winter 2016/2017)	150,205	168,686
Households receiving fuel vouchers and/or in-kind items (winter 2016/2017)	8,420	10,000



HEALTH

Individuals receiving primary health care (including reproductive and mental health)	269,466	310,000
Individuals benefitting from life-saving and obstetric referral healthcare	73,229	98,861



SHELTER

Individuals receiving shelter support	182,643	272,020
Weatherproofing, shelter and site improvement in informal settlements	163,444	184,300
Weatherproofing and minor rehabilitation for substandard buildings	10,003	54,430
Free rent/rent reduction provided in rehabilitated buildings	9,196	30,040



WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

Sanitation infrastructure, maintenance, desludging	107,925	670,206
Hygiene promotion campaigns, hygiene items	34,580	120,160
Access to safe water	26,935	473,692

CSP

INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

2016 Allocated Budget

Institutional support (rehabilitation of infrastructure, staffing and training, equipment, supplies, medications and vaccines)	16.5 million
Community-based projects (health, education, livelihoods, WASH, roads and communities facilities)	10.3 million
Total invested	26.8 million

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UNHCR Lebanon Field Associate talks with Syrian refugee Raffaa, 28, about the shelter kit she has just received. Raffaa, her husband and their four children come from Homs, Syria. They left four years ago with only the clothes on their back and now live in a small shelter in the middle of banana fields, along with Raffaa's mother-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law. UNHCR and its partner have provided support including additional walls and a shelter kit, to help protect the family against the elements. "The walls protect us from extreme heat, extreme cold and the rain. They also give us a sense of privacy. We feel much more comfortable here now that we are under this roof," said Raffaa.