

Lebanon

8 June 2020



“Testing campaign in informal settlements and collective centres commenced this week. With support from partners and refugee volunteers, UNHCR’s information campaign has been well-received and we are seeing a great response from refugee communities.”

- *Mireille Girard*
UNHCR Representative

Key developments

Positive COVID-19 cases

- As of 8 June, in addition to the previously reported single case who has since recovered, 18 Syrian refugees have tested positive for COVID-19, all of whom are living in urban settings; 17 are currently isolating at home and 1 older person is receiving hospital treatment. UNHCR maintains contact with the refugees to ensure they follow the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) guidance. In coordination with MoPH and the local authorities, UNHCR and partners in the Rapid Response Team (RRT) are providing the refugees in isolation with food and disinfectant kits as needed.
- UNHCR raised concerns about municipalities’ publication of names of persons who have tested positive for COVID-19, noting it could trigger stigmatisation, harassment and deter people from coming forward to be tested, in addition to the violating privacy and (health) data. The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MOIM) requested the municipalities concerned to remove the names and refrain from such practices and advised Governors to monitor this.

National testing campaign

- As part of the national campaign, sample testing of Syrian refugees in informal settlements and collective shelters, facilitated by UNHCR, and in collaboration with the MoPH and the NGO Amel, started on 28 May following the roll-out of an awareness campaign. Testing is targeting residents with symptoms as well as those with a high degree of public exposure (e.g. health and social workers, market sellers, among others).
- UNHCR and RRT partners, through community structures, social media and Community Health volunteers communicate in advance how this testing campaign fits within the national response, the purpose and benefits of testing, voluntariness of participation and confidentiality of results, as well as the dates and times of testing to refugees living in the selected locations.
- Two teams funded by UNHCR, comprising 2 nurses, 1 data operator, and 1 driver, along with a team from Rafic Hariri University Hospital (RHUH), will cover 154 testing sites in informal settlements and collective shelters across Lebanon over 4-6 weeks, with approximately 4,355 PCR tests to be conducted.

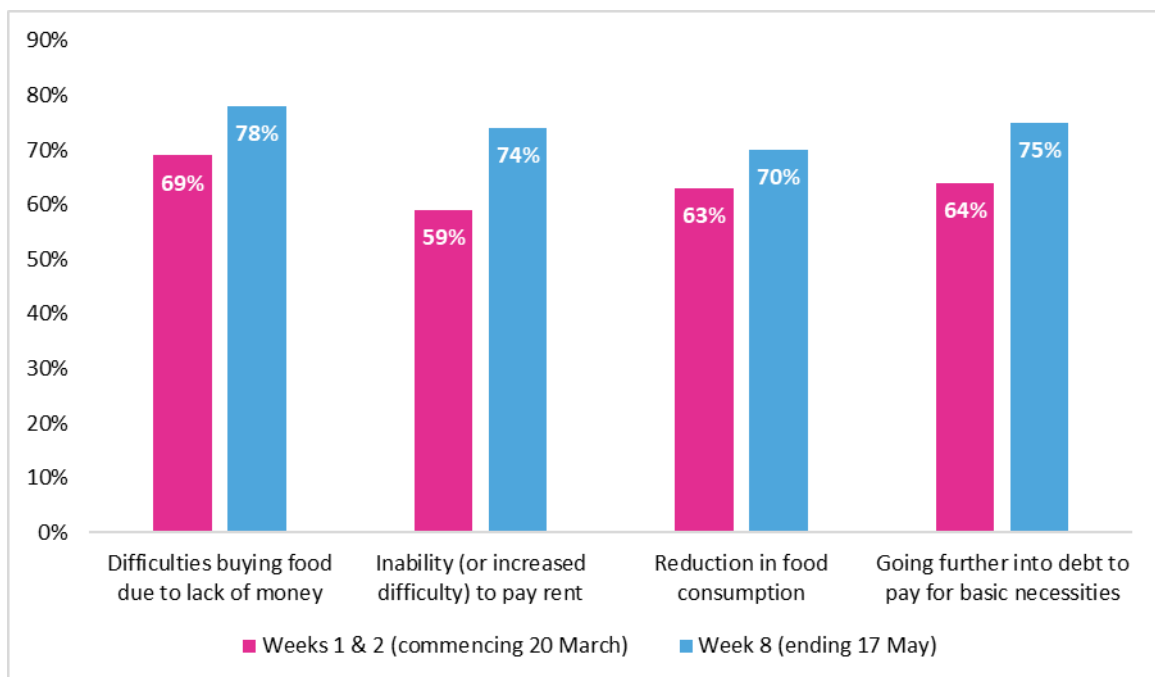


- As planned, testing commenced in the South on 28 May, and continued in Beirut/Mt Lebanon on 2 June, and in the North on 3 June. Given the cluster of cases identified in Majdel Anjar, testing teams were deployed in that municipality on 4 and 5 June. Below is an overview of locations and tests conducted between 28 May and 5 June:

Results: 28 May – 5 June		
Area	Sites covered	Samples collected
Bekaa	17	287
North	4	186
South	2	670
Beirut-Mt Lebanon	5	130
TOTAL	28	1,273

Protection monitoring findings (4-17 May)

- Ongoing protection monitoring conducted by UNHCR with partners shows that refugees continue to be profoundly impacted by the COVID-19 situation. 78% of families consulted report difficulties buying food due to a lack of money, 75% report going further into debt to pay for basic necessities, and 70% report reducing their food consumption as a coping mechanism. These percentages are consistent with those reported in the previous update, illustrating a lasting increase in the breadth of the crisis' impact on vulnerable families (as seen in the chart below).
- These findings coincide with the results of Wave II of UNHCR's Monitoring of the Effects of the Economic Deterioration on Refugee Households (MEED), collected in May, whereby 74% of the respondents reported reducing the number of meals consumed per day 4 days per week and 92% said that they relied on less expensive or less preferred food 5 days per week.
- The lack of food is particularly acute in south Lebanon (91%), and amongst the most vulnerable respondents, with the elderly, persons with disabilities and persons with a critical medical condition reporting that lack of food is their main problem (84%).
- Notably, across the eight weeks of collated protection monitoring data, two coping strategies were reported more frequently by women: reducing food consumption (72% for women vs. 65% for men); and reducing spending on health care and medicine (25% vs. 19%).



Cash assistance – June

In June, a total of **62,800** families have been targeted to receive cash assistance from UNHCR. In addition to the 34,500 Syrian and non-Syrian refugee families originally targeted to receive UNHCR's monthly multipurpose cash programme, this includes:

- **11,500** vulnerable families who are receiving temporary cash assistance as part of the COVID-19 response for three months, from May – July; and
- An additional **16,800** families included in the multipurpose cash assistance programme from June using funds made possible through the use of a humanitarian exchange rate.

GSO resumption of activities

- The General Security announced on 1 June 2020 that its regional centres would resume receiving applications, other than requests for entry into Lebanon.
- As previously reported, deadlines for birth registration and legal residency which fell during the period 18 October 2019 to 30 July 2020 will be subject to extension based on the period remaining at 18 October 2019.

Key Figures

- **18** positive COVID-19 cases among Syrian refugees (excluding **1** recovered)
- **3,453** refugee volunteers and **650** UNHCR and partner frontline staff trained on COVID-19 awareness.
- **More than 450** refugees with medical background mobilised as **Community Health Volunteers**.
- **Site community groups to support isolation** procedures established in **1,759 informal settlements** so far.
- **More than 307,000** refugees in **overcrowded settings** reached with hygiene promotion and materials (100% of the IS and CS population)
- **10,000 shelter kits in stock** for Level 2 isolation in informal settlements.
- **4 Level 3** isolation facilities under preparation out of **8** UNHCR-identified sites approved by the government.
- **MoPH COVID-19 hotline capacity expanded** with **10** additional operators (trained nurses) and technical equipment.
- Expansion and rehabilitation works underway at **5 public hospitals**.
- Medical equipment for **800 additional hospital beds** and **100 additional ICUs** have arrived in the country and are under clearance, to be distributed in batches.

Story from the field – Solidarity campaign launch

UNHCR and local partners launched a nationwide solidarity campaign to help thousands of refugee and Lebanese families during Eid. Food parcels and COVID-19 related hygiene kits were distributed to vulnerable families who are not receiving any regular assistance, to help them cope during this difficult period.

The campaign was endorsed by two high-profile religious leaders, Sheikh Khalil Al Mays (Mufti of Zahle and the Bekaa), and Archbishop Issam John Darwich (Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Zahle and Farzol) in a video message shared on social media (pictured above, available in [Arabic & English](#) / [Arabic & English](#)).



Social media highlights

Recent social media highlights have included:

- a [video telling the story of Nahawend](#) on Eid al Fitr, who has struggled this year to provide for herself and her daughters;
- a message from the UNHCR Lebanon Representative explaining isolation measures ([Arabic & English](#) / [Arabic & English](#)); and
- promotion of the UNHCR-supported hospital expansions currently underway ([Arabic & English](#) / [Arabic & English](#)).



Response

UNHCR is working within the framework of the Government's response to the COVID-19 emergency, 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:

- **Prevention** through community engagement and awareness-raising (Pillar 2 – Risk communication and community engagement);
- **Containing transmission** by supporting refugees to adhere to mitigation measures and enabling quarantining/isolation of refugees living in overcrowded settings (Pillar 6 – Infection prevention and control);
- **Treatment and case management** by reinforcing testing and hospitalization capacity, including by fully covering (100%) for the cost of COVID-19 testing for refugees conducted according to MoPH guidelines, as well as treatment for COVID-19 positive cases (Pillar 7 – case management).

Advocacy messages

In the context of the COVID-19 response, UNHCR is advocating for:

- One **coordinated and coherent national response** to the COVID-19 emergency, led by the Government with technical support from relevant partners, within which all Lebanese and non-Lebanese in the country have equal access to information, testing and treatment based on our common objective to save lives;
- **Non-stigmatization** of any individual or community based on real or perceived infection, by emphasizing that the virus does not discriminate based on nationality or other status, and by noting that fear of stigmatization, arrest or other risk may inhibit people's readiness to report symptoms and constitute a public health risk;
- **Non-discriminatory** application of movement restrictions and curfews announced by the central and local authorities, including by allowing refugees to undertake necessary movements to shops, pharmacies, ATMs and health care facilities with due respect for the precautionary and prevention measures;
- Allowing refugees with medical background to be engaged in health activities to reinforce the **health care response capacity**;
- A **moratorium on evictions** by landlords or municipalities of refugees and Lebanese unable to pay their rent, or for other reasons, as homelessness can exacerbate the risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission;
- Scaled up support and access to **basic assistance** as the COVID-19 emergency affects refugees and Lebanese families' already diminished livelihoods and ability to survive.

COVID-19 requirements

- UNHCR Lebanon's total requirements to deliver new activities in 2020 responding to COVID-19 is USD 91 million. This includes both additional 2020 financial requirements published in the UNHCR Global COVID-19 Appeal (USD 85 million), and COVID-19 activities for which UNHCR Lebanon reprioritized from its regular 2020 budget but are still not funded (USD 6 million).

Don't miss

- [UNHCR Global COVID-19 Emergency Appeal](#)
- [UNHCR Middle East and North Africa COVID-19 Situation Overview](#)
- [UNHCR COVID-19 Situation](#) reporting (including operational and funding updates)

Thanks to our donors

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed in 2020 to the Lebanon operation, including through the COVID-19 appeal, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds and private donors, including:

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