

## LIBYA SITUATION

### OPERATIONAL UPDATE

August 2015

#### KEY FIGURES

**455,671**

People of concern to UNHCR (including an IDP population of 418,803)

**60,000**

Persons of concern received life sustaining items from UNHCR partners

**9,976**

Individuals received medical assistance from UNHCR partners

**197,942**

USD provided in cash assistance to refugees in Libya (2015)

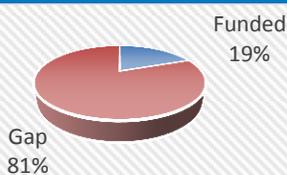
**2,560**

Refugees and asylum seekers provided with hygiene items

#### Funding

**USD 20.1 Million**

Requested by agencies for the operation



#### PRIORITIES

- IDP data consolidation; needs assessments; capacity building.
- Distribution of NFI s to newly displaced and vulnerable IDPs and host community families.
- Humanitarian assistance for individuals intercepted/rescued by the Libyan Coastguard.
- Detention monitoring, NFI provision and seeking alternatives to detention. Provide documentation for refugees/asylum seekers; enhance outreach and protection monitoring; provision of legal; social assistance.

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- A new round of political dialogue is set to take place mid-September in Geneva after a productive UNSMIL-led dialogue in Skhirat (Morocco) on 27-28 August, though concrete outcomes were limited. This comes after several rounds of UN-led talks since January.
- UNHCR is supporting the development of an information sharing mechanism with the Libyan Coastguard and other stakeholders to ensure the timely provision of humanitarian assistance and support to persons rescued or intercepted at sea. Libya continues to be the main transit and departure point for irregular sea migration to Europe from North Africa.
- In August, UNHCR distributed aid to nearly 25,000 people in Tripoli and other coastal areas and inland towns.
- As of 31 August, about 115,500 refugees and migrants arrived by sea in Italy, mainly from Libya. Nationalities include Eritreans (27%), Nigerians (12%), Somalis (8%), Sudanese (6%) and Syrians (6%).



*A 70 year old man receives critical life sustaining items at a distribution for displaced individuals from Warshafaini on 16 August. He supports seven family members and shares a house with a host family. August/IMC*

- Incidents at sea continue in the Mediterranean, including off the coast of Libya. On 27 August, two boats carrying roughly 500 individuals capsized off the coast of Libya; hundreds of individuals are feared dead. UNHCR partners are providing medical assistance and hygiene kits to survivors.

#### Population of concern

A total of **455,671** people of concern



## UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

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### Operational Context

The UNSMIL led dialogue in Skhirat (Morocco) on 27-28 August was said to be productive however it ended with no concrete outcomes. A new round of talks is set for mid-September in Geneva. It remains unclear as to whether the General National Congress (GNC) will be present in the upcoming talks. The Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) for Libya, Bernardino Leon, continues to drive the dialogue with the aim of establishing a Government of National Accord. The importance of reaching an agreement before the House of Representatives (HoR) sitting in Tobruk mandate expires in October of this year has not been overlooked. At the local level, conflict since the 2011 uprising has left thousands displaced, signed reconciliation agreements, notably between Em Aljirsan and the Mashashia, as well as Zintan and the Kikla tribes.

The current conflict in Libya has uprooted and displaced nearly 420,000 and possibly as many as 440,000 persons. The majority of IDPs require varying degrees of support, including non-food items, medicine, and alternative shelter for those accommodated in schools and other public facilities. The most affected area continues to be Benghazi. Many affected families in Libya face multiple displacements. In the absence of efficient protection mechanisms and a lack of rule of law and functioning institutions, refugees and asylum-seekers are subjected to harassment, arbitrary detention, limited freedom of movement, and other human rights violations. Continuous threats of mass arrests and detention are common, particularly for Sub-Saharan Africans.

Libya continues to be the main transit and departure point for irregular sea migration to Europe from North Africa. In 2014, over 170,100 persons arrived in Italy and of whom some 141,484 departed from Libya. In 2015, thus far 115,500 arrivals to Italy have been reported, mainly from Libya. So far in 2015, over 2,700 refugees and migrants are estimated to have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean Sea. The death toll continues to rise as hundreds of persons drown or are reported missing during the crossing, mainly close to the Libyan coastline. Others perish because of the hardship of the journey. A dramatic incident occurred a few miles off the Libyan Coast on 28 August, where over 100 bodies were retrieved by local authorities and around 100 people were reported missing. According to survivors, the fishing boat was rescued nine hours after its departure.

The total number of detainees currently held by the Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM) is over 4,000 people, among them more than 360 women and 100 children. Most of detainees are West Africans, Bangladeshi, or from Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chad, Syria, and Sudan. DCIM has reported that a new centre has been established in Tripoli to detain individuals entering the country illegally or refugees/migrants who attempt to cross the sea to Europe. Those rescued/intercepted at sea are then disembarked and transferred to a detention centre.

The UN Country Team in Libya continues to work from Tunis as a result of the evacuation of international staff in July 2014. UNHCR national staff in Benghazi and Tripoli continue to work from home; UNHCR works closely with partners for implementation of programme activities through remote management.

### Protection Achievements

- A significant achievement has been the **establishment of an information sharing forum to improve Libya's response to boats in distress** off its coast by streamlining information sharing and coordination with international organizations. UNHCR coordinates the forum with the aim of harmonizing information to boost the response capacity to incidents of distress at sea, improve the access to humanitarian assistance upon disembarkation, minimize loss of life among refugees and migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean from Libya and ensure (dead) body management. The contact group, including Libyan officials responsible for search and rescue, border security and detention centres for rescued or intercepted boat people was established at a workshop held in July organized in Tunis by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration. The forum will meet at least three times over the next nine months and will also provide training in areas such as information management, communications, body

retrieval and identification of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. The EU has provided funding. The contact group will gather officials from the Libyan Coastguard, the Port Security Department, the Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM) and the Libyan Red Crescent. The international organisations participating in the contact group will initially include UNHCR, the IOM, the ICRC and the International Medical Corps. The EU border management agency, EUBAM, attended the launch meeting. The contact group will help improve coordination and communication between the Libyans and international actors active in maritime rescue and interception at sea.

- In August, **UNHCR delivered assistance to almost 25,000 people in Tripoli and other coastal areas** in the west as well as the inland towns of Wadi Shata and Jufra. This is despite some of the heaviest fighting in the country's south since civil war resumed in May 2014.
- UNHCR continues to provide **emergency registration of asylum seekers and renewal of UNHCR attestations** to strengthen legal protection and ensure access to education and health. UNHCR partners continue to operate medical/social mobile teams consisting of two medical staff, three social workers and one legal advocate (an increase from 2 staff in April).
- **Nine hotlines managed by UNHCR and partners** provide easily accessible information and counselling to people of concern on protection services and community services, and responding to requests for assistance from those who have been arrested due to lack of documentation in order for UNHCR to advocate for their release.
- UNHCR's partner IMC has systematized **monitoring in seven of the 18 detention centres** run by the Department for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM). IMC conducts regular visits to the centres and provides medical assistance and distribution of non-food items to persons held in detention.
- **UNHCR monitors rescue at sea/interception operations** carried out by the Libyan Coast Guard and where possible, provides life sustaining items and medical assistance to those disembarked. UNHCR provided the Libyan Coast Guard authorities with an emergency hotline, which is used to give information on rescue operations to the UNHCR Field Protection team in Tripoli. UNHCR partners, such as IMC, monitor the situation of people of concern who are disembarked and detained in Libya, collect disaggregated data where possible, and monitor for deportations. On an ad-hoc basis the Office is able to advocate for those in detention to be released into the community in order to provide an appropriate response to their protection and needs.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Given the security conditions in the country, refugees in urban areas often rely solely on UNHCR for assistance. Due to the evacuation of international staff and restricted movement for national staff, UNHCR relies heavily on partners to ensure the continuation of basic services. While life-saving activities continue, UNHCR's ability to implement its operational plan is impacted by the lack of access to persons of concern and the overall insecurity in the country. Registration of new claims for asylum has been largely unmet.
- Faced with growing needs and limited resources, the Office has had to prioritise providing essential relief items to vulnerable persons or in exceptional circumstances.
- UNHCR is exploring access to additional detention centres through the verification with DCIM headquarters and within the Detention sub-working group. IMC, UNHCR's partner IMC can access seven DCIM run detention facilities for detention monitoring, and is investing additional staff resources, medical supplies and logistical support to establish a presence in the south and east of Libya, subject to security considerations.
- Delivery of essential items is hampered across Libya as a result of ongoing fighting. While UNHCR partners are able to access some areas, other locations are completely inaccessible.

## Working in partnership

UNHCR leads the following sectors in Libya:

1. Protection Sector for the on-going IDP response
2. Shelter/NFI Sector for the on-going IDP response
3. Refugees/Migrants Sector (Co-led by IOM)

- **PROTECTION WORKING GROUP:** Established in August 2014, the PWG is the primary source of protection information and coordination on the Libya Crisis. The PWG meets bi-monthly in Tunis for information sharing and coordination of protection activities in Libya related to refugees/asylum seekers, IDPs, and migrants. A key area of intervention for the PWG is the development of an IDP data strategy to support humanitarian intervention, which was endorsed by the UNCT and establishes the figure of IDPs in the country and developing standards on IDP data collection and analysis.
- **DETENTION SUB-WORKING GROUP:** The Detention SWG was established in April 2015 to provide a coherent policy around engagement in detention centres. The group is currently working on a consolidated list of active DCIM detention centres and profile of the current detention population, which is updated regularly from information sourced from DCIM headquarters in Tripoli and partners who visit detention facilities regularly. The objectives are to coordinate humanitarian assistance and individual protection interventions, and seek alternatives to detention.
- **SHELTER/NFI WORKING GROUP:** UNHCR leads the Shelter/NFI sector in Libya. A working group was set up in early May 2015 and initial discussions centre on the need to coordinate distributions to avoid overlap and to assess gaps. A common understanding of vulnerability is being developed to ensure a coherent NFI response.
- **IDP WORKING GROUP BENGHAZI:** This group reports to the PWG. It is the only in-country coordination forum and is based in Benghazi. It meets weekly to discuss IDP data/NFI coordination of national and international organizations established in Benghazi, with CESVI attending on UNHCR's behalf due to restricted movement of national staff. Other participants include CIL/ACTED, IMC, ICRC, Libyan civil society representatives, and municipality officials. Currently the group is compiling all data into one Benghazi IDP database (an initiative that UNHCR spearheaded).

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to some **US\$ 3.97 million**

UNHCR is grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to their activities with un-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the operation.

### Donor who have contributed to the operation (USD)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	1,800,000
CERF	1,491,012
EUROPEAN UNION	680,272

Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2015: United States of America (160 M) | Sweden (80 M) | United Kingdom (53 M) | Netherlands (45 M) | Norway (44 M) | Denmark (28 M) | Australia (24 M) | Priv Donors Spain (22 M) | Japan (18 M) | Switzerland (16 M) | France (14 M) | Canada (11 M)

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#### Links:

Survivors tell harrowing tales of fight for air on "boat of death" off Libya, <http://www.unhcr.org/55e04df56.html>