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Lebanon Inter-Agency Response: Syrian Refugees

April 2013

 الجمهورية اللبنانية رئاسة مجلس الوزراء الهيئة العليا للإغاثة	
 UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency	 الجمهورية اللبنانية وزارة التربية والتعليم
 WFP wfp.org	
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 ACTION FAIM	
	
 PREMIERE URGENCE AIDE HUMANITAIRE INTERNATIONALE	
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 القطري Qatar Red Crescent	
 UN DP	 I O M O I M
	
 International Medical Corps	
 Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center	 NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL
 care	 UAE RED CRESCENT Care for Life
 UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States - Beirut United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH:

- Over 400,000 clothing vouchers, electric heaters, blankets, pillows, mattresses and other necessary household items were distributed this week;
- Over 310,000 World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers and food parcels were distributed to refugees across the country;
- Over 225,000 refugees benefited from more than 44,000 hygiene kits in addition to over 11,000 baby kits;
- More than 120,000 children have so far been vaccinated against measles and received vitamin A supplementation, as well as more than 45,000 vaccinated against polio;
- Over 15,000 refugees in need of primary medical care were seen in primary health care clinics throughout the country;
- Over 90,000 people registered with UNHCR this month.

DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2013



Funding is also received in private donations from the following countries:
China, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, and Spain.

¹ EU funding is received from DEVCO and ECHO.

REGISTRATION AND NEW ARRIVALS

Throughout the month, 4,200 on average approached UNHCR Lebanon offices daily to be registered. Despite the challenges in finding appropriate registration space throughout Lebanon, this month saw a marked increase in registration capacity.

In the month of April alone, over 90,000 refugees were registered bringing the total to more than 453,000 registered and awaiting registration (a more than ten-fold increase from the previous year). Waiting periods for registration have also decreased with an average waiting time of between 16-30 days throughout the country, save the south where the registration centre just became operational. There too, each week the waiting period decreases.

This is being done through the opening of the new registration centre, using enhanced registration mechanisms, maintaining individual protection interviews, providing transportation assistance and introducing evening and weekend shifts.

Given the rural spread of the refugee population (across over 1,200 villages) UNHCR's registration operation in Lebanon is one of the largest and most complex urban registration programmes in the world.

Current distribution of the registered population is as follows:

All Lebanon: 343,000
North Lebanon: 142,000
Bekaa: 122,000
Beirut and Mount Lebanon: 48,000
South Lebanon: 30,000

Despite increased capacity, there has been a rise in the number of refugees who failed to show up to their registration appointments. Assessments indicate security concerns and scarce financial means for transport as key reasons behind this phenomenon. Discussions between agencies on possible transport support (either through reimbursement or actual transportation) to vulnerable refugees are underway.

PROTECTION

The last week of April witnessed a significant increase in the number of new arrivals reported in the Bekaa with close to 1,000 families identified. According to local authorities, some 50 families are arriving each day due to the ongoing conflict in the neighbouring Syrian village of Qusayr, 90% of whom are women and children. Agencies have been coordinating daily with municipalities to ensure that immediate assistance is provided.

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) commenced protection counselling at the Bekaa registration centre this month, replicating an extremely fruitful practice from the Tripoli registration site. Expanded counselling at distribution sites is also underway by Elderly vulnerable individuals and those who have been tortured, children at risk of child labor or early marriage are among those who are being counselled and referred to different agencies for an appropriate follow-up.

Incidents of forced and child marriages as well as cases of prostitution/trafficking in Marjeyoun and Saida and cases of sexual harassment against women in Tripoli were reported this month. UNHCR and partners are following up in collaboration with local authorities with a view of providing assistance but also intensifying prevention mechanisms. In addition, efforts to maximize effective referral and response for sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) cases are on-going.

In addition to the two UNICEF-supported women and girls community centres in North Lebanon and Bekaa, a new centre was opened in Wadi Khaled in April. The centres are for survivors and those at risk of sexual and gender based violence. To date, over 1,200 women and girls have benefited from the three centres' activities through psychosocial services, including individual counselling, and emotional support groups.

On April 28, a Syrian teen was hospitalized in Beirut after setting himself on fire due to financial problems. UNHCR and partners in Mount Lebanon are following up on the family in order to ensure fast-track registration and psychosocial assistance.

On April 25, two tents in Al-Marj in the Bekaa were accidentally burnt by the mishandling of a cooking stove. Fortunately, nobody was injured. However all belongings were lost. UNHCR and partners assessed the damage and recommended the necessary support. Non Food Items (NFIs) will be released to the affected families during the first week of May.

Tensions between refugees and host communities were communicated by municipal leaders throughout the country this month. Efforts continue to be directed to provide as much support as finances allow to hosting communities in order to diffuse tensions and the burden on these communities.

In South Lebanon, coordination with government entities at the Kadaa (village cluster) level intensified this month highlighting the importance of information sharing regarding refugee numbers, living conditions and assistance. Discussions with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) were also launched in order to facilitate the transportation of refugees currently living in Chebaa to the Tyre registration centre.

SECURITY

Shelling from Syria across the Lebanese border was on the rise this month particularly in the northern area of Bekaa causing material damage .

Rockets hitting Hermel and the region led many Lebanese and Syrians living there to flee towards Baalbeck or to Beirut. These incidents marked the first time that shelling reached so far into the Lebanese territory affecting populated areas.

Shells also hit the Debbabiyeh village of Akkar damaging several houses and wounding one man and one young boy.

Due to the ongoing security situation in north Bekaa and the recent tensions between refugee and host communities in Wadi Khaled, UNHCR and partners were forced to temporarily suspend some activities this month.

DISTRIBUTION

UNICEF, UNHCR, DRC, Amel Association, Makhzoumi Foundation, Handicap International (HI), SHIELD, World Vision and Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre (CLMC) distributed winter clothes vouchers, electric heaters, blankets, pillows, mattresses, and hygiene and baby kits to over 400,000 people this month.

In addition, over 310,000 World Food Programme (WFP) food vouchers and food parcels were distributed to refugees across the country. This represents an almost 60 percent increase in the caseload from March.

Agencies also provided assistance to newly arrived refugees including food and non-food items as well as emergency kits to ensure their basic needs are met. Over 40,000 new arrivals were therefore assisted with food parcels, hygiene and baby kits countrywide.

A new distribution centre was established in Tripoli this month aimed at enhancing distribution activities in the area.



A Syrian refugee, leaving a distribution site in Tripoli. (c)UNHCR

EDUCATION

Following the resumption of classes in public schools after the one month strike which ended in March, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) instructed schools to increase school days from 5 to 6 days per week as of beginning April. The public schools will conclude the 2012-2013 school year on 12 June and official exams will be held from 22 June until 8 July. As the 2013 scholastic year comes to its end, retaining Syrian refugee children in schools is a major preoccupation as reports of the 2012 scholastic year revealed that 70 percent of the Syrian students enrolled in public schools dropped out before the end of the year. The high drop out rate was attributed to the fear of examination. To prevent the same experience this year, agencies are providing academic and psychosocial support to reduce the risk of students dropping out of their studies.

According to the Ministry, 205 Syrian refugee children lack the official academic documents from Syria to take official grade 9 and 12 exams in Lebanon. MOEHE along with UNHCR and UNICEF are currently working to identify means to secure needed documentation and thereby facilitate their access to this year's official examinations.

To date, UNHCR, UNICEF and partners are assisting over 5000 children with formal and informal educational services through remedial classes to children in schools who need support, as well as psychosocial support.

Similarly, NRC's Syrian response regarding education in community centres across Lebanon provided learning support, life skills trainings, awareness sessions and recreational activities to more than 1100 Syrian and host community children.

HEALTH

More than 120,000 children have so far been vaccinated against measles and received vitamin A supplements in the second phase of UNICEF's vaccination campaign, and more than 45,000 have so far been vaccinated against polio. The campaign which was initially planned to run from 18 to 31 March, was extended until the 20th of April. Vaccinations are being provided through schools, primary healthcare centres and through mobile teams at UNHCR registration points, in remote areas without easy access to primary healthcare centres and in informal tented settlements.

Due to limited funding levels, UNHCR and partner agencies were obliged to reduce support for health services for Syrian refugees this month. Until recently, UNHCR and partner agencies provided free primary health care, including consultations and diagnostic tests to vulnerable refugees. Under the new strategy, refugees have to pay a fee of 2 USD maximum per visit. UNHCR used to cover 85 per cent of secondary health care costs for emergency hospital care and life-saving operations. Under the new plan subsidies for such costs had to be reduced to 75 per cent. The funding situation is so acute, that even with these adjustments an additional \$20 million USD is needed.

This month, UNHCR, International Medical Corps (IMC), Amel Association, Makhzoumi Foundation and Caritals Lebanon Migrant Centre provided Primary Health Care (PHC) services to some 15,000 Syrian refugees including consultations, treatment, referrals, medication, vaccinations and diagnostic tests.

IMC's mental health unit was able to conduct more than 5,200 clinical and social consultations this month through both its outreach services and center-based services. The importance of health education was also stressed through the PHC centres and mobile visits in the North, the Bekaa and Beirut. Over 6,900 individuals received health awareness sessions which included topics related to mental health, health, GBV and early marriage.

Agencies have initiated the initial stages of response to the spread of scabies and lice in Lebanon. UNICEF provided scabies treatment for over 6,000 children and over 2,000 adults has been dispatched, as well as lice treatment for over 1,600 beneficiaries. Treatment for 100,000 cases of scabies and 200,000 cases of lice has been purchased and will be distributed in tented settlements in the coming weeks. Similarly, leaflets have been developed and communication materials in Arabic on the detection, prevention and treatment of lice and scabies. Over 600,000 leaflets will be distributed at UNHCR registration centres, by the Ministry of Public Health at public healthcare centres and mobile treatment units, by the Ministry of Social Affairs in their Social Development Centres, and by WFP with their distributions.

IMC's health education teams have also launched an extensive prevention campaign with the distribution of hygiene kits, anti-lice shampoo, and anti-scabies lotion in collective shelters. More than 1,300 cases were identified in the North and in the Bekaa and assisted accordingly through medical mobile clinics.

SHELTER

According to a large scale shelter survey on Syrian refugees in Lebanon, launched by UNHCR and conducted by Statistics Lebanon Ltd., most refugees (62 percent) are living in apartments or houses. Whereas two years ago at the beginning of the influx, most refugees lived with Lebanese families, according to the survey the percentage today is six percent. In addition:

- 49 percent share accommodation with other Syrian families,
- 11 percent are living in tents,
- 9 percent in unfinished houses,
- 7 percent in garages/stores ,
- 3 percent in worksites and
- 2 percent in collective centres.

The survey also demonstrated that 6 percent of the refugee population share accommodation with Lebanese host families.

The increase in the number of spontaneous tented settlements across the country illustrates the challenges faced by refugees in finding appropriate shelter. As a result, UNHCR and response partners are identifying and assessing potential sites for transit centres that could accommodate 1,000 families (5,000 individuals) or more. Agencies continue to work on a mix of solutions to address shelter needs and improve living conditions, prioritizing urgent shelter assistance to informal settlements.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) reports that it has identified 80 locations in Aarsal where refugees could live with host families in case of increased influx. Meanwhile, NRC continues to sign contracts with new hosting families owning unfinished houses. As a result, more Lebanese families continue to host Syrian refugees in their homes.

In North Lebanon, DRC identified over 290 collective shelters and over 40 locations for shelter boxes in the suburbs of Tripoli and Zgharta bringing the total to more than 450 locations identified between the areas of Wadi Khaled and Biree/Halba.

Around 26,000 Syrians currently reside in more than 190 tented settlements in the Bekaa. Action Contre La Faim (ACF) and MEDAIR estimate that there could be over 50,000 persons living in tented settlements by July. Reasons include absence of other shelter options, high rents and the increase in seasonal agricultural work. Hence, the issues of water drainage and the provision of water and waste management are expected to increase.

Efforts to increase support host community in an attempt to ease tension between local and refugee populations continue to be prioritized. The Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) continues to support over 1,400 Lebanese families hosting Syrian refugees in Wadi Khaled and Akroum with a regular cash compensation and livelihood support. Similarly, the Polish Centre for International Aid and SHEILD assisted 95 and 80 host families respectively with cash for renovations.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

UNHCR, DRC, Action Contre la Faim (ACF), Premiere Urgence (PU-AMI), SHIELD and partners distributed more than 44,000 hygiene kits in addition to over 11,000 baby kits this month benefitting more than 225,000 Syrian refugees across Lebanon.

Other water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) initiatives included the distribution of more than 800 water tanks, the construction of over 150 latrines and the installation of more than 50 hand washing facilities across the Bekaa. Hygiene promotion sessions were also conducted in Mount Lebanon and the South targeting over 1500 refugees.

The cleaning campaign in the Ouzai collective shelter was implemented during the last week of April of last week by PU-AMI and Right To Play benefitting more than 150 families.

The completion of maintenance of WASH facilities in the North in April means that over 2,700 beneficiaries have been provided with access to appropriate toilets and sanitation services.

WHAT'S NEW ON THE WEB PORTAL

(<https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>)

UPDATES:

- SYRIA Situation 2013 Contributions - 4 April 2013
- NEW! 03 April 2013 - Inter-agency Needs Assessment Inventory
- NFI Distribution Tracking Matrix - Template v1.2
- Registration Information Note for Refugees - Arabic
- New Lebanon Contact List - Syrian Refugee Response 02 .04.2013

MAPS:

- Map - Syrian refugees by district in Lebanon 28 March
- Map - Rapid Estimate of Syrian New Comers in March 2013

STATISTIC:

- Lebanon Registration Trend Overview 28 March 2013

FUNDING:

- SYRIA Situation 2013 Contributions - 4 April 2013