

The Lebanon situation

Operational highlights

- UNHCR provided emergency protection and assistance, including shelter, to some 750,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees in Lebanon during the conflict that started in July 2006 between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. The Office worked closely with the Government of Lebanon, local actors and other international agencies.
- Approximately 4,000 refugees in Lebanon, including Iraqis, benefited from UNHCR's humanitarian assistance during the emergency operation.
- UNHCR improved protection and assistance for approximately 30,000 vulnerable IDPs and returnees who did not receive basic assistance and services during the early phase of the emergency operation.
- In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNHCR distributed non-food items to more than 20,000 Lebanese refugees living either in collective shelters or with host families. UNHCR staff also monitored the border and intervened when appropriate at the four crossing points from Lebanon. Returnees were given relief packages at the border and those without the means to return on their own were helped with transport.



affected the Office's work towards building a more favourable asylum framework in the country.

The conflict that began on 12 July 2006 between the Israeli and Hezbollah prompted UNHCR to shift its operational focus from protecting and assisting refugees and others of concern to responding rapidly to an unexpected and fast-evolving humanitarian crisis. At its peak, the Lebanon conflict displaced up to one million people.

The cessation of hostilities on 14 August 2006 triggered a massive return movement. This included people displaced within Lebanon and refugees from the Syrian

Working environment

In 2006 UNHCR operated in a fragile political and security environment in Lebanon. This negatively

Arab Republic and beyond. UNHCR emerged as one of the main actors in the UN's inter-agency effort to assist the returnees. Both in Lebanon and in the Syrian Arab Republic UNHCR formed new partnerships with government bodies and NGOs to facilitate its work.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

UNHCR's main objective in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic was to ensure protection to asylum-seekers and refugees. However, during the humanitarian response operation, between July and October 2006, the Office focused on protecting and assisting the most vulnerable IDPs and refugees in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, including those refugees and asylum-seekers in Lebanon who were trapped in the country because of the conflict.

Protection and solutions

By the end of the year, some 730 refugees and 2,600 asylum-seekers were registered with UNHCR in Beirut. More than 75 per cent of the refugee population and over 90 per cent of asylum-seekers were of Iraqi origin. Other refugee groups included Sudanese and Somalis. UNHCR issued registration certificates to Iraqi asylum-seekers and carried out refugee status determination when appropriate for resettlement purposes. The Office also intervened to seek the release of detained Iraqi asylum-seekers and provide legal aid to them.

In 2006, resettlement remained the only viable durable solution for most refugees in Lebanon, and some 300 refugees were resettled over the course of the year. The Office also began discussions to persuade the Lebanese authorities to provide residence permits to some refugees whose bids for resettlement had not been successful. However, the outbreak of conflict in July delayed resettlement activities.

UNHCR was designated the lead UN agency for protection and emergency shelter within the cluster approach applied to the IDP situation in Lebanon. The organization's emergency mobile teams conducted rapid needs assessments in collective centres hosting some 150,000 IDPs, and followed up by distributing relief materials.

An estimated 250,000 Lebanese fled to the Syrian Arab Republic during the conflict. Of these, some 70,000 left the Syrian Arab Republic for third countries, while the remaining 180,000 stayed either with host families or in public shelters. UNHCR supported some 20,000 vulnerable refugees, asylum-seekers and persons of

concern by providing relief items in public shelters, to host families and at border crossings. Border monitoring teams were present throughout the day and night at all four border crossing points, particularly during the massive return movement, and intervened to protect vulnerable individuals as required.

Activities and assistance

Community services: Support for IDPs focused on addressing psychosocial needs through a community-based approach. Community-based activities, such as summer camps for children affected by the conflict in the south of the country and the southern suburbs of Beirut, were supported with tents and non-food items. Food items were also purchased and distributed to the most vulnerable individuals during the first phase of the emergency.

Domestic needs and household support: UNHCR met the direct household needs of some 150,000 vulnerable IDPs and host communities through the provision of emergency items such as blankets, mattresses, jerry cans, kitchen sets, lanterns and cooking stoves. It also distributed packages that included food, water, hygiene and sanitary materials, nappies, underwear, clothes and shoes.

Upon the cessation of hostilities, UNHCR extended its distribution of non-food items to South Lebanon through local officials and NGOs. UNHCR's field office in Saida covered the needs of some 50 villages and two large centres hosting IDPs, while its field office in Tyre assisted 68 villages.

Health and nutrition: UNHCR distributed complementary food to 500 displaced families.

Legal assistance: UNHCR conducted joint monitoring of the border area with an operational partner.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR supported partners to implement emergency activities for the displaced people in Lebanon.

Shelter and infrastructure: UNHCR met the emergency shelter needs of both IDPs and returnees in Lebanon and refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic. More than 7,000 canvas tents, 3,000 lightweight tents and large quantities of plastic tarpaulins were distributed.

Transport and logistics: Relief materials from UNHCR's regional stockpiles enabled rapid intervention and distribution. More than 1,600 tonnes of relief items were moved into Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic by air, sea and road. A number of donors helped to airlift relief materials from the various hubs. During the mass return of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and IDPs within Lebanon, UNHCR provided buses



UNHCR/A.Brathwaite

A returnee girl shortly after arriving at her apartment in the Lebanese village of Ayta-e Shaab.

linking the main cities in the Syrian Arab Republic with the main cities of return in Lebanon to aid those refugees who did not have the means to return on their own.

Constraints

The conflict in Lebanon delayed UNHCR's efforts to develop a protection regime for asylum-seekers and refugees. The promising discussions with the Lebanese authorities on a more lenient interpretation (and possible amendment) of domestic laws in favour of refugees had to be postponed. However, a significant breakthrough was achieved on 19 June 2006 when the Ministry of Justice, at UNHCR's request, instructed Lebanese judges and prosecutors not to deport refugees from the country.

The delivery and distribution of relief supplies during the conflict was severely hampered by the precarious security situation. Damascus served as an initial hub for logistical supplies via land routes. Access by land had been hindered by aerial bombardment and the destruction of roads, prompting UNHCR to establish additional logistical supply lines by air and sea. In addition to the volatile and unpredictable security environment, the widespread presence of unexploded ordnance, particularly cluster bombs, posed serious

dangers to staff moving relief materials. Furthermore, the wide dispersal of unexploded ordnance on roads and in residential areas prevented some returnees from moving back into their homes.

Financial information

In response to the emergency crisis, UNHCR issued a supplementary appeal in July 2006 for a total budget of USD 18.8 million, which was also included in the UN Lebanon Crisis Flash Appeal. This appeal received a very generous response from donors and was fully funded.

Organization and implementation

Management

In addition to its staff already present in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic before the crisis, UNHCR deployed 74 emergency personnel to the region. It also established a presence in Saida and Tyre, and set up five mobile field teams to reach out to affected communities in Jbeil/Kesrounae, Metn/Beirut and Choud/Alley. The mobile units served as rapid response

teams in areas of mass return. In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNHCR opened additional offices in Tartus, Homs and Aleppo.

Working with others

UNHCR worked closely with the General Security Office, its main governmental counterpart in Lebanon. Its NGO partners were Caritas, the Middle East Council of Churches and the Chaldean Charity Association.

In response to internal displacement, UNHCR helped strengthen the emergency relief coordination mechanism in Beirut by working closely with the Higher Relief Council, the overall coordination body of the Government of Lebanon.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, much of the assistance was directly provided by the Office in close coordination with the Government and other partners. Government counterparts included the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry for Red Crescent Affairs and the Ministry of Health. The Office also worked closely with the members of the UN country team. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the Aga Khan Foundation also helped UNHCR distribute relief items and monitor the border.

Overall assessment

UNHCR evaluated its response to the crisis in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic during the emergency phase from July to September 2006. This was carried out as part of UNHCR's commitment to review emergency operations. The evaluation aimed to identify lessons learnt and seek examples of good practice.

Nearly a million people fled their homes in southern Lebanon, south Beirut and the Bekaa Valley during the conflict, and the majority returned home after the cessation of hostilities on 14 August 2006. Both mass movements took place in a period of 34 days, which tested the emergency response capacity not only of UNHCR, but also of the Government of Lebanon and other international and national actors.

While UNHCR's reaction to the crisis was swift and largely satisfactory, there were particular challenges in coordinating activities with all the partners involved. As a result of its evaluation, UNHCR made some 29 recommendations to strengthen its emergency response capacity.

Partners
Lebanon
Implementing partners
NGOs: Aid Lebanon/Civil Campaign for Relief, Al-Liquid/Samidoun Relief Centre, Caritas Lebanon (Migrant Centre), Chaldean Charity Association, Danish Refugee Council, Middle East Council of Churches.
Operational partners
Government agencies: General Security Office, High Relief Council, Ministry of Social Affairs.
NGOs: Acted, <i>Action Internationale Contre la Faim</i> , Catholic Relief Services, Frontiers, Intersos, Japanese NGO Consortium, <i>Médecins du Monde</i> , <i>Médecins Sans Frontières</i> , National Aids Programme, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, <i>Première Urgence</i> .
Others: OCHA, UNDP, UNHABITAT, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNMASS, UNRWA, WFP.
The Syrian Arab Republic
Implementing partners
NGOs: Aga Khan Foundation, Syrian Arab Red Crescent.
Operational partners
Government agencies: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry for Red Crescent Affairs and the Ministry of Health.
Others: IOM, OCHA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNRWA, WFP, WHO

Budget, income and expenditure (USD)

Supplementary programme budget				
Final budget ¹	Income from contributions ²	Other funds available ³	Total funds available	Total expenditure
17,794,812	17,103,437	(1,736,226)	15,367,210	12,418,733

¹ The budget does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

² Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

³ Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	SB - Current year's projects						
	Regional activities	Cyprus	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	Headquarters	Total
Protection, monitoring and coordination	0	70,015	38,105	1,031,863	147,912	0	1,287,895
Community services	39,924	0	0	6,600	0	0	46,524
Domestic needs and household support	2,920,746	0	0	411,301	0	0	3,332,047
Health and nutrition	3,322	0	0	0	0	0	3,322
Legal assistance	21,747	0	0	0	0	0	21,747
Operational support (to agencies)	1,387,810	0	0	305,128	0	0	1,692,938
Shelter and infrastructure	2,015,684	0	0	0	0	0	2,015,684
Transport and logistics	1,284,581	0	0	708,778	0	0	1,993,359
Instalments with implementing partners	29,155	0	0	402,425	0	0	431,580
Sub-total operational activities	7,702,969	70,015	38,105	2,866,095	147,912	0	10,825,096
Programme support	303,193	0	38,104	1,031,862	147,911	72,567	1,593,637
Total expenditure	8,006,162	70,015	76,209	3,897,957	295,823	72,567	12,418,733
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure							
Instalments with implementing partners							
Payments made	29,155	0	0	513,624	0	0	542,779
Reporting received	0	0	0	(111,199)	0	0	(111,199)
Balance	29,155	0	0	402,425	0	0	431,580