


Operational update

July- August 2025



"What we're going through brings back the same trauma as when we had to flee from Syria. Now we are displaced once more. The children were very afraid". A Syrian refugee family forced to be displaced are now living in a collective shelter in northern Lebanon. © UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

Operational context

Since October 2019, Lebanon has endured overlapping crises, including its worst economic collapse and a prolonged political vacuum, with a President elected in January 2025. Hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah escalated in September 2024, causing significant destruction, loss of life, and displacement, including across the South, Bekaa and Beirut before a ceasefire took effect on 27 November. Ongoing violations and access restrictions continue to affect southern Lebanon, with sporadic bombing in the South and Bekaa.

The collapse of the Assad regime on 8 December 2024 triggered further instability, including conflict in coastal Syria, resulting in increased cross-border movements. By **August 2025, approximately 100,000 Syrians had newly arrived in Lebanon**, to both the east of the country in Baalbek Hermel and Bekaa, as well as the Northern and Akkar regions.

At the same time, movements back into Syria have been observed all through 2025. To support those who opt to return, Lebanon's General Security waived exit fees and penalties on 1 July, and UNHCR launched complementary return programmes: the **Self-Organized Voluntary Repatriation** in the same month, and the Organized Voluntary Programme with IOM in August. By end-August, almost **115,000 individuals had expressed interest in facilitated returns**, with Homs the most common intended destination. Meanwhile, **UNHCR has inactivated over 238,000 refugees from its records** this year to reflect verified or presumed returns, and a present headcount exercise is underway to update population figures given the ongoing dynamic movements in and out of Lebanon. Decisions to return remain highly individual and often gradual, with many families testing conditions through pendular movements or "go-and-see" visits before deciding to stay. Concerns over housing, education, livelihoods, and security continue to weigh heavily.

Drastic lowering of funding available in 2025 has meant that UNHCR Lebanon was forced to phase out of all education and primary healthcare support by July, as well as making changes to our operational presence. By August the operation was only 26% funded against its needs for 2025.

Key figures

716,312 Syrians

known to
UNHCR Lebanon

97,627 Syrians

estimated arrivals since
December 2024

272,135 individuals

estimated to have crossed from or via
Lebanon into Syria since December 2024

238,120 individuals

Syrian individuals inactivated in 2025 from
UNHCR's records in Lebanon

114,996 people

who expressed interest in the
return programme

6,270 individuals (1,190 families)

received return cash grant

HIGHLIGHTS

UNHCR officially launched the **Self-Organized Voluntary Return Programme**, establishing clear procedures and safeguards for refugees choosing to return through official crossings. Within the first month, **expressions of interest rose to over 115,000 individuals**, mainly from Bekaa, Baalbek and Hermel (37 per cent), with Homs as the most cited destination (46 per cent). So far, **6,270 individuals (1,190 families) have completed the process and received return cash grant**. To meet growing demand, UNHCR is reinforcing staffing capacity, streamlining procedures and introducing remote modalities to accelerate processing, while ensuring adherence to international protection standards.

In parallel, **UNHCR and IOM also launched the new Organized Voluntary Repatriation Programme**, providing transport and health screening support for those wishing to return in organized movements, though most continue to opt for self-organized returns.

UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Kelly T. Clements concluded **a five-day visit to Lebanon and Syria**, where she first met with Prime Minister Nawaf Salam to discuss cooperation on the voluntary, safe and dignified return of Syrian refugees. She also met Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Tarek Mitri, General Security Director General Maj. Gen. Hassan Choucair, and Minister of Social Affairs Ms. Haneen El Sayyed, **expressing appreciation for Lebanon's generosity** in hosting refugees despite severe economic and social pressures. With over 200,000 refugees having returned from Lebanon this year and many more expressing their intention to return, she underscored UNHCR's commitment to support the Government in managing the process while assisting those who remain. In Syria, Clements met officials and returnees, visited projects providing shelter and documentation, and inaugurated a rehabilitated registry office in Idlib. She **urged the international community to step up support for stabilization and recovery in the region**.

The **Lebanon Response Plan (LRP)** Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Prime Minister and the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, **endorsed the 2025 LRP**, appealing for USD 2.99 billion to assist 3.6 million vulnerable people across Lebanon. For the first time, the LRP includes a dedicated **Returns Chapter, coordinated by UNHCR and the Ministry of Social Affairs**, with partner requirements of USD 150 million. The Steering Committee also approved a one-year extension of the LRP until end-2026, ensuring continuity of the integrated humanitarian and stabilization response. Members stressed that while needs are rising, resources are shrinking, urging the **donor community to provide predictable, flexible, and multi-year support** to sustain life-saving and stabilizing interventions.

UNHCR PRESENCE IN LEBANON



COORDINATION & WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Since 2024, Lebanon has been operating under the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP), a two-year humanitarian-stabilization framework co-led by the Government of Lebanon and the United Nations. Building on the LCRP and 3RP, the LRP provides a unified platform to respond to the needs of displaced Syrians, including new arrivals and returnees, alongside vulnerable Lebanese. A dedicated Returns Chapter, co-led by UNHCR and the Ministry of Social Affairs, guides support for voluntary repatriation in line with protection principles, while UNHCR leads the Protection, Shelter, and Basic Assistance sectors, co-leads the GBV sub-sector and Cash Working Group, and steers the Durable Solutions Working Group on return.

UNHCR has been present in Lebanon since 1962, maintains a country office in Beirut and field offices in Tripoli and Zahle. In 2025, it is working with 21 partners, including 13 international and eight national organizations, to implement protection and assistance activities across Lebanon. UNHCR also works closely with national institutions to strengthen response capacity and ensure complementarity with government efforts. However, with resources increasingly constrained, its ability to sustain these programmes will depend on urgent donor support. Without renewed commitment, the impact on refugees and host communities amid Lebanon's fragile context will be immense.

PROTECTION

- UNHCR continues to support refugees in Lebanon who, after receiving accurate and up-to-date information, voluntarily decide to return to Syria. Information is publicly accessible through the [UNHCR Help Page on Return to Syria](#), while individual counselling is provided via the National Call Centre. Refugees also have access to the “[Syria is Home](#)” portal, which addresses common concerns around documentation, assistance, and conditions upon return. Flyers on return are also distributed in communities. To strengthen staff ability to deliver timely and consistent information, two trainings for newly deployed staff took place focusing on communication with communities and addressing common queries. [Processing capacity has increased by 282% by the end of August.](#)
- Since 8 December 2024, [97,627 Syrians have been monitored as new arrivals in Lebanon](#), the majority concentrated in Bekaa and Baalbek-El Hermel (65,070) and Akkar and the North (10,911), with an additional 10,911 reported in other areas, including Beirut and the South. Numbers continue to fluctuate due to onward internal movements and the fluidity of the displacement environment, while identification of new arrivals in some governorates is ongoing.

In response, hygiene kit distributions to new arrivals in collective shelters in Baalbek-El Hermel are ongoing. In addition, 1,722 households across 73 of the 116 targeted sites have received these kits. The GBV Working Group also discussed a coordinated response for new arrivals in Bekaa including survivors needs. The meeting emphasized strengthening survivor-centered approaches and ensuring safe access to services for newly displaced populations.

- UNHCR continues its nationwide presence verification exercise in 2025 to update and verify refugee records in light of ongoing cross-border movements. The exercise ensures accurate data for protection and assistance targeting in the current operational and funding landscape, while also serving as a continuation of registration activities.
- Due to funding cuts, registration has been streamlined and centralized to Beirut, following the closure of the Al Qoubaiyat office and reduced staffing in Zahle and Tripoli. Refugees have expressed concerns about traveling to Beirut for registration and renewal appointments, citing checkpoints and transportation costs. In response, UNHCR is deploying mobile teams across the country, ensuring accessibility and continuity of protection and assistance services despite resource constraints.
- According to the last [Protection Monitoring report in 2025](#), refugees in Lebanon continue to face significant socio-economic hardships and protection risks. The findings highlight widespread reliance on debt to cover basic needs, persistent barriers to accessing healthcare and education, and ongoing child protection concerns. Many households also reported challenges linked to lack of legal residency, which restricts freedom of movement and access to services, while intentions to return to Syria remain very limited due to insecurity, lack of shelter, and livelihoods constraints. The monitoring exercise, conducted through household surveys and key informant interviews, is essential for understanding the evolving protection environment and ensuring that programming remains evidence-based and responsive to needs. These insights reinforce the importance of sustaining assistance in Lebanon to help refugees meet their basic needs and maintain access to essential services.
- UNHCR continues to coordinate the protection response for refugees across the country. During the reporting period, 27,000 individuals benefited from legal aid and civil documentation support. Over 13,000 persons facing protection risks and persons with specific needs at heightened risk, including persons with disabilities and older persons have been assisted through protection case management while psychosocial support services reached 9,000 people, and child protection interventions assisted 65,000 children at risk. In addition, prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV) remained a priority, with 3,500 survivors receiving case management and specialized services.



Tabna, a 100-year-old Syrian refugee, chose to return to Syria after 13 years of displacement in Lebanon. She is among those supported by UNHCR through the Self-Organized Voluntary Return programme, launched on 1 July 2025 in coordination with the Government of Lebanon. Under this programme, refugees receive counselling, guidance on exit procedures, and a cash grant of USD 100 per family member to help cover return-related costs and ensure the journey takes place through official border crossings in safety and dignity. © UNHCR



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE

- A total of 26 Community Development Centres (CDCs) are currently operating across the country, providing services to refugees, Lebanese displaced, and host community members. Between July and August, more than 60,000 individuals have received protection, legal, social, and learning services at the centres and through mobile activities. These centres serve as hubs where women, men, boys, and girls of diverse backgrounds. In addition, 2,300 people have been reached by 485 outreach volunteers (OVs) through information and awareness sessions covering available services, prevention of early marriage and gender-based violence (GBV), and feedback and complaints mechanisms, including protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). More than 50,000 people benefited from skills trainings, ranging from artisanal crafts and photography to coding and electronics maintenance. CDCs are also reinforcing its capacities to assist refugee expressing their intention to return through in-person assessments and the issuance of return forms.
- A new note on [Key Principles for Community-Based Organizations \(CBOs\) Supporting Voluntary Returns](#) has been released, outlining guidance to strengthen community-based protection in the context of return. The document highlights the vital role of CBOs, whose proximity to refugees and links with local authorities position them to support informed decision-making while safeguarding voluntariness, safety, dignity, and family unity. It emphasizes that CBOs should provide neutral and accurate information, refer vulnerable cases to UNHCR for specialized support, and help families prepare documentation and medical needs before departure. These principles complement the ongoing use of CDCs as part of reinforced capacities to assist returns, ensuring that community engagement remains protection centered.



HEALTH

- Between July and August, UNHCR supported more than 4,000 people were referred for hospital care under the secondary healthcare programme, including life-saving treatment and obstetric emergencies. UNHCR also enabled access to mental health and psychiatric care at two specialized centres for 13,000 people. Moreover, at the Government's request, UNHCR has integrated measures into its Referral Health Care Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to guarantee that new arrivals can access life-saving hospital care



SHELTER

- In Baalbek, distribution of shelter kits has started, with 650 shelter kits reaching over 3,000 people across 126 informal tented settlements (ITSs). Following meticulous technical assessments, and through a participatory approach, kits distributed are categorized as 'Light', 'Medium', and 'Heavy', tailored to repair and reinforce shelters based on identified needs in each particular area targeted
- In the South, rehabilitation and repair works are progressing in 48 shelter units, improving conditions for vulnerable families.
- In Central and West Bekaa, the Unified Assessment is ongoing, with 9,371 tents assessed in August, hosting 57,000 refugees. This assessment will contribute to the continue planning and implementation of activities in the ITSs. The Unified Assessment involves UNHCR and its partners jointly assessing the housing conditions and needs of refugees to determine eligibility for assistance. Assessments cover issues like water leakage, structural damage, and fire/flood risks in tents and apartments, utilizing methods such as household interviews and site visits to provide evidence-based recommendations for shelter interventions.



BASIC NEEDS AND CORE-RELIEF ITEMS

- In July and August 2025, UNHCR delivered monthly multi-purpose cash assistance (MCAP) to 408,737 refugees (101,767 households), including individuals with protection-related needs, ensuring timely financial support for the most vulnerable to address their urgent basic needs.
- Between July and August, a total of 134,000 core-relief items – such as blankets, mattresses, jerry cans, kitchen sets, and solar lamps – were distributed in all Governorates within Lebanon, including some 11,200 in the North, in response to the needs of new arrivals.

Impact of underfunding

UNHCR, together with the wider humanitarian community, is facing an unprecedented decline in funding in 2025. Uncertainty around funding flows and limited visibility on future projections are already forcing UNHCR Lebanon to make difficult decisions on the scope of its activities, with a focus on lifesaving and core mandate interventions. At the same time, in light of cross-border movements triggered by the conflict escalation and the fall of the Assad regime in 2024, UNHCR launched a nationwide presence verification exercise in 2025 as part of its population data management strategy. This effort aims to ensure accurate data for protection and assistance targeting within the new operational and funding landscape.

Despite the generous support of donors, UNHCR's response in Lebanon has been consistently underfunded, with less than 60 per cent of the USD 545.2 million required in 2024 covered. In 2025, the situation has worsened significantly: as of 31 August, only 26 per cent of the resources needed have been received.

A number of those in need will no longer receive support, while crucial activities around supporting return and those still in Lebanon may be deeply affected if more funds cannot be found:

- 64,000 people no longer receive Emergency Protection Cash Assistance, an 80% drop in assistance from 82,000 to 18,000 people.
- 347,000 individuals were discontinued from UNHCR's cash assistance programme, a drop in coverage of 60% since January.
- UNHCR cash for shelter programme was drastically cut by 90% from reaching 95,000 to 11,000 in need, meaning 83,000 people no longer receive cash for shelter. 42,000 people will also no longer receive shelter kits or improvements, a cut of 20%.
- UNHCR will fully phase out of secondary healthcare at the end of the year, meaning 45,000 refugees, including pregnant women, will no longer receive secondary healthcare as of December 2025.
- UNHCR has already fully phased out of primary healthcare, affecting 40,000 refugees.
- UNHCR is fully phasing out education assistance: 15,000 children will no longer benefit from community-based learning and education retention support.
- Return-related activities for up to 400,000 people may be in jeopardy if adequate funding is not received.

Thank You!

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