



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR Lebanon

Who We Are and What We Do



Spring 2018

Cover photograph: Joweher, 65, affectionately hugs Nisreen, a UNHCR field staff, while walking through the banana plantation near where she is living in a village near Tyre, South Lebanon. Older persons can be particularly vulnerable in times of displacement. UNHCR staff visit vulnerable refugees to check on their needs and inform them of available services. © UNHCR/Sara Hoibak



Syrian refugee Aya, 8 years old, centre, and her handicapped sister Labiba, 11 years old, with a UNHCR staff member in their home in an informal settlement in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon. © UNHCR/Shawn Baldwin

GLOBAL OVERVIEW

Created by UN member states to care for the world's refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began its work in 1951, and established its first office in Lebanon in 1964. Today, its almost 11,000 national and international staff work in 130 countries worldwide to help over 65 million persons of concern, including refugees, displaced and stateless persons.



UNHCR IN LEBANON

For most of its five decades in Lebanon, UNHCR's operations were relatively modest, centred on helping a few thousand refugees and asylum-seekers annually from elsewhere in the Middle East and Africa. As recently as 2010, UNHCR's Lebanon office was focused primarily on meeting the needs of some 10,000 mostly Iraqi refugees.

When the crisis in neighbouring Syria erupted in early 2011, tens of thousands – and later hundreds of thousands – of refugees were forced to flee across the border into Lebanon.

Refugee women take part in an awareness session held inside a tent in an informal settlement in South Lebanon. © UNHCR/ Martin Dudek

Syria's ongoing war, with 6 million people displaced internally, and nearly 5.6 million living as refugees in the surrounding region and beyond, has made the Middle East the world's largest producer and host of forced displacement. A little less than one million Syrian refugees are in Lebanon, giving it the highest per capita proportion of refugees in the world, and placing enormous pressure on the country and its people.

Lebanon is now UNHCR's largest single-country operation, with five offices countrywide and one field unit.

The challenges are enormous. Lebanon has neither a legislative nor an administrative framework for addressing the needs of so many refugees. In fact, refugees who enter the country without prior authorization or who overstay their residency are considered illegal and face possible arrest, detention and deportation.

Nevertheless, Lebanon has been remarkably generous in its humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee situation. Refugees have benefited from assistance from the Government, host communities, UNHCR and numerous international agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In early 2015, however, as the presence of so many refugees stretched the country's infrastructure and economy, various new restrictions regarding entry and residency were introduced by the Government, which has sharply reduced the number of Syrians entering and made it more difficult for those who remain to renew their residency.

Who We Help

As of 28 February 2018, 991,917 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in Lebanon. About three-quarters of them are women and children. In addition, there are almost 20,300 refugees and asylum-seekers in Lebanon with nationalities other than

Syrian, primarily Iraqis. The majority of them rent accommodation in Beirut and its suburbs. Although the exact numbers are not known, it is generally accepted that many thousands lack a recognized nationality in Lebanon and the problem is growing. There is a risk that young refugees become stateless if they fail to prove their entitlement to Syrian nationality through their Syrian father. Stateless persons may also pass this status onto their children.

As the Syrian refugee crisis has grown and placed increasing strains on Lebanon's economy and infrastructure, UNHCR has devoted more resources to aiding affected host communities. Since the start of the crisis, it has provided more than USD 217 million in assistance to the Government and affected Lebanese communities and vulnerable families and individuals. In all, these programmes were implemented in over 280 localities and through Government institutions including schools, hospitals and social centres.

How We Help

UNHCR works closely with the Government of Lebanon and numerous other national and international partners in providing protection and assistance to refugees as well as to Lebanese communities and stateless persons affected by the crisis.



UNHCR staff member Imane assists a Syrian refugee with documentation. © UNHCR/Sarah Hoibak

PROTECTION

The protection of displaced and/or stateless people is UNHCR's core mandate. It carries out its protection duties in many ways, including by working with governments and non-governmental partners to ensure that basic human rights are respected, that refugees have access to fair and efficient asylum procedures and that they are not forcibly returned (refoulement) to territory where their lives or liberty are in danger. UNHCR promotes both the legal and physical protection of refugees with particular emphasis on the specific needs of women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Refugee Status Determination

Refugee status determination (RSD) is a process that examines whether an individual who has applied for asylum or expressed a need for international protection is indeed a refugee under the applicable definition. In Lebanon, UNHCR conducts individual RSD interviews for Syrians who face exceptional protection concerns and may require consideration for resettlement to a third country. For asylum-seekers with nationalities other than Syrian, UNHCR conducts RSD to identify needs for international protection and durable solutions.

Durable Solutions

Durable solutions for refugees in Lebanon are limited to voluntary repatriation, when conditions allow, and resettlement for cases with specific protection or other needs that cannot be addressed in Lebanon. The position of the Government is that local integration is not an option in Lebanon. UNHCR provides counseling to those who willingly decide to return to their country, or to move on their own to third countries. From 2011 to December 2017, UNHCR submitted the files of over 78,000 refugees from Lebanon. More than 52,000 departures took place in the same period.

Legal Services

Protection staff and partners throughout Lebanon provide a range of legal services for refugees including awareness raising, individual legal counseling and representation in front of administrative bodies and courts. The main areas of assistance relate to residency renewal, births and civil registration, prevention of statelessness and support for those in detention.

Syrian refugees Maisan, her husband Mohamed and their four children attend an orientation session to prepare for their resettlement to Canada. © UNHCR/Haidar Darwish



Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness

Although the exact numbers are not known, many thousands are estimated to lack a recognized nationality in Lebanon, and the problem is growing. Stateless persons pass the status onto their children. There are three main causes for the absence of a recognized nationality in Lebanon: (i) historical (exclusion from the 1932 national census); (ii) legislative (gaps which deny nationality to some) and (iii) administrative (inability to provide proof of right to citizenship). The consequences of statelessness are severe. They include lack of access to public services, such as education and health care, and an inability to travel, marry, or work legally for lack of official documents. Stateless persons also do not enjoy basic political rights, such as voting or running for public office.

In addition to public awareness campaigns, parents are counseled on the steps they must take in order to register their children's birth. UNHCR also works with the Government and civil society on simplifying the procedures, harmonizing administrative practices, and promoting changes in the Lebanese nationality law to ensure, for example, that mothers can pass on their nationality to their children.

Child Protection

A range of programmes, services and activities are aimed at helping refugee children at risk or those who have been victims of violence. These include: rapid identification and safe referral including by public institutions to psychosocial, medical and legal services; and strengthening capacities of refugees and frontline workers to better respond to children's needs, notably promoting participation in education.

Education

Tens of thousands of Syrian children are missing out on quality education. Financial and other support is provided to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) to ensure access for refugee children to public schools. Support is also provided for access to secondary and vocational education, as well as scholarships for higher education. UNHCR also helps to identify and refer children who have been out of school to be included in its Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) and other activities that prepare children for eventual access to certified, quality education as approved by the Government. Parents receive support to ensure the enrollment of children. And during term time, students receive



Refugee girls reading a book provided by UNHCR's mobile library in North Lebanon. © UNHCR/Martin Dudek

homework support through volunteers, who also liaise with school staff to address issues related to retention, such as bullying and corporal punishment.

SGBV Prevention and Response

Activities for the prevention of, and response to, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are carried out in close cooperation with other UN agencies and NGOs. UNHCR also works closely

with the Government to combat SGBV, in particular with social services, security forces and the judiciary. Services aimed at SGBV prevention and responses are offered throughout Lebanon, including: counseling; safe houses; and psychosocial, medical and legal support. The Office works to strengthen local and national institutions in this endeavour and to enlist men and boys in SGBV prevention and response.



Refugee women participate in a hygiene promotion session in Aaddousiyeh, South Lebanon. © UNHCR/Martin Dudek

Community-based Protection

UNHCR and its partners work to ensure that refugee and Lebanese communities receive enough support and information to remain safe and preserve their well-being and to empower them to assume more responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities. By doing so, communities also become less dependent on external aid.

UNHCR and partners support around 79 Community Development Centres (CDCs) and Ministry of Social Affairs Social Development Centres (SDCs). By the end of 2017, over 150,000

refugees and Lebanese women, men, girls, and boys accessed in community centre services and activities, including counselling, skills training, recreational activities and awareness sessions (for example on PSEA, early marriage, and birth registration procedures).

Moreover, UNHCR supports more than 120 community groups, including youth, women, older persons, men, LGBTI and children. The groups mobilize communities to participate in activities, identify community issues, and implement community-based initiatives to address main community problems.

UNHCR also engages over 650 outreach volunteers from refugee and host communities across Lebanon who provide updated information on services available to their communities and feedback to UNHCR and partners on needs and solutions.

Communication With Communities

UNHCR and partners are working to ensure that persons of concern not only participate in decisions that affect their lives, but also receive the information they need to ensure protection and access to life-saving services.

Information is accessed through various tools, to ensure that it is available to those most in need and those in remote areas. These include information videos, leaflets and posters in reception centres, CDCs and SDCs, a website for refugees (www.refugees-lebanon.org), Q&As and hotlines.

In addition, refugees receive and share information through social media, including Facebook pages, which have been set up for Mount Lebanon, the North and the South, and which are managed by volunteers with the

support of UNHCR.

As most refugees prefer to be contacted primarily via phone, information on issues such as basic assistance and the Back-to-School campaign are sent to refugees via SMS. Other updates on policies, important news, and new informational material are shared through community focal points such as outreach volunteers, local representatives, partners and social workers from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

MEETING BASIC NEEDS

Refugees fleeing conflict often arrive with few or no resources. Seven years into the war, many Syrian refugees in Lebanon have depleted the few resources they had and are increasingly dependent on assistance from UNHCR and its partners. That assistance can range from the provision of cash vouchers and ATM cards to help pay rent or buy food, stove fuel and winter clothes to emergency shelter repair kits in the aftermath of a storm, or the provision of water tanks and sanitation facilities in informal settlements.

The most socio-economically

vulnerable families are targeted. Vulnerable Lebanese are also provided with various types of assistance. Studies show that some of the highest concentrations of refugees in Lebanon are located in the country's poorest areas.

Cash Assistance

The provision of cash cards allows refugee families to decide on their most immediate needs and priorities and to spend accordingly. Moreover, the cash cards allow refugees to contribute to the domestic economy by purchasing directly from local merchants. In 2018, over 33,000 vulnerable Syrian refugee families are supported by UNHCR with monthly multi-purpose cash assistance.

Health

The health of refugees can be compromised by the often difficult and traumatic experiences they faced in their country of origin and during their flight, as well as from complications arising from the poor conditions in which most of them live while in exile. In Lebanon, health care is largely privatized and extremely expensive. While UNHCR and its partner agencies

cannot meet all health care needs, UNHCR prioritizes refugee access to primary health care and secondary care for obstetrics and life-saving emergency treatments.

UNHCR continues to provide direct support to the national public health system. In 2017, UNHCR financed 52 staff of MOPH and nurses and midwives at primary health care centres (PHCs).

Essential services are focused on reproductive health care, services for infants and young children and mental health care. Given the prohibitive cost of secondary and tertiary health care, UNHCR is only able to financially support life-saving and emergency treatments.

In such situations, between 75 and 90 per cent of all emergency life-saving care and cost of child delivery is covered.

Shelter and WASH

In line with Government policy, there are no formal refugee camps in Lebanon. Syrian refugees live in over 2,100 locations throughout the country.

UNHCR and partner agencies



Syrian refugee Ruffa pours a cup of water in her kitchen in her shelter in Sarafand, South Lebanon. UNHCR rehabilitates small shelter units to ensure minimum living standards to the most vulnerable refugees. ©UNHCR/Martin Dudek

respond to the shelter needs through several types of support. These include: rehabilitating substandard shelters; providing soft-walled shelter solutions for small settlements; and enhancing accessibility in settlements and shelter protection from floods and fire through site improvement activities with a focus on those living in insecure dwellings in informal settlements, garages, warehouses

and unfinished buildings. The added pressure on infrastructure brought by the refugee influx has severely affected water and sanitation systems in many parts of Lebanon. Besides improving access to safe water and basic sanitation, UNHCR aims to promote good hygiene practices. Specific interventions include implementing medium- and large-scale water supply systems to

increase water production through the construction of new wells, storage systems and distribution networks; undertaking comprehensive water quality testing; identifying sustainable water resources; designing sustainable systems; and carrying out comprehensive hygiene promotion activities.

INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Lebanon's generosity in providing refuge to more than one million Syrians has come at enormous cost to the country and its people. Recognizing this effort, UNHCR has, over the past few years, allocated an increasing proportion of its humanitarian budget to supporting Lebanese institutions and projects that benefit local communities as well as refugees.

To date, UNHCR's institutional and community support in Lebanon exceeds USD 217 million, including USD 148.5million for government institutions and USD 68.5 million for municipalities and host communities. Institutional support goes through government ministries: the Ministry of Social Affairs; the Ministry of Public

Health; the Ministry of Education and Higher Education; the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities; the Ministry of Environment; the Ministry of Energy & Water and Ministry of State for the Displaced Affairs (MoSDA). The funding helps with inputs like staffing, training, capacity-building programmes, new equipment, medication and so on.

INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

UNHCR and the Ministry of Social Affairs co-lead the inter-agency refugee response in close coordination with other ministries and over 100 humanitarian actors, including UN agencies as well as local and international non-governmental organizations. This response is integrated within the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), which includes a stabilization programme co-led with UNDP.

Through regular meetings and sharing of common analysis from the collection of data by partners, UNHCR and partners work to maximize efficiency and minimize duplication in the delivery of humanitarian programmes.

UNHCR Partners with Project Partnership Agreements

American University Of Beirut (AUB); Association Justice And Mercy, Leb (AJEM); Concern Worldwide, Ireland; Frontiers Ruwad Association; Institut Europeen De Cooperation Et De Development; International Organization for Migration (IOM); International Rescue Committee, USA (IRC); KAFA Enough Violence & Exploitation; Lebanese Organization of Studies and Training (LOST); Medair, Switzerland; Ministry Of Education and Higher Education (MEHE); Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA); UN Office for Project Services; United Nations Development Programme, Lebanon; The United Nations Population Fund; Gruppo di Volontariato Civile, Lebanon; Terre des Hommes; Universite Saint Joseph (USJ); ABAAD-Resource Centre For Gender Equality; American Near East Refugee Aid; Himaya; INTERSOS, Italy; Relief and Humanitarian Aid Organization; Relief International, USA; Save The Children International; SAWA group; WORLD VISION; Caritas, Lebanon; Lebanese Association for Popular Action (Amel); Makhzoumi Foundation; Restart Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture; Danish Refugee Council; Rene Moawad Foundation; Social, Humanitarian, Economical Intervention For Local Development.

Operational Partners

ACF, ACTED, ActionAid, ADRA, Al Fayhaa, Al Majmoua, Al Mithaq, AMURT, AND, ANERA, ARC, Arcenciel, Arche Nova, ARCS, AVSI, B&Z, British Council, CARE, CCP JAPAN, CESVI, CHF, CISP, Common Effort, DAF, Fair Trade Lebanon, FAO, FISTA, Fondation Mérieux, FPSC, Heartland, HEKS/EPER, HelpAge, Humedica, IDRAAC, ILO, IMC, IOCC, IR, LAW, Lebanon Support, LECORVAW, LSESD, MAG, Makassed, MAP, MCC, MDM, Mercy Corps, Mercy-USA, MOSAIC, Mouvement Social, MSD, MuslimAid, Near East Foundation, NRC, OHCHR, OXFAM, PCPM, Plan-International, PU-AMI, QRCS, RMF, RtiP, Safadi Foundation, SCI, SeraphimGLOBAL, SFCG, shareQ, SIF, Solidar Suisse, Solidarités, Sonbola, Tabitha-Dorcas, UNDP, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, UNWOMEN, URDA, WCH, WFP, WHO, WRF, WVI, YFORD.

UNHCR thanks its donors for their generous support to its programmes for refugees, stateless persons and Lebanese communities in 2018

تشكر المفوضية السامية للأمم المتحدة لشؤون اللاجئين المانحين على دعمهم السخي لبرامجها لعام ٢٠١٨ الهادفة إلى مساعدة اللاجئين والأشخاص عديمي الجنسية والمجتمعات اللبنانية

