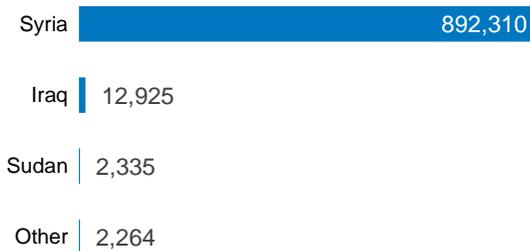


# Lebanon

January - March 2020

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

Country of origin

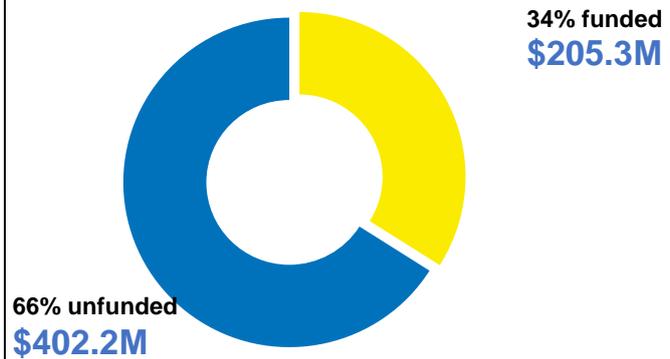


*Registration figures as of 31 May 2020. UNHCR registration of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has been suspended since May 2015 through a decision by the Government of Lebanon. The Government estimates there are 1.5 million Syrians in Lebanon.*

## FUNDING (01 JULY 2020)

USD 607.5 million

requested for the Lebanon operation



## OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Lebanon continues to host the largest refugee population per capita in the world, with some 1.5 million Syrian refugees according to Government estimates and almost 18,000 refugees and asylum-seekers of other nationalities. In January 2020, country-wide protests which started in October 2019 diminished in intensity and a new government was formed. Nevertheless, the economy continued to deteriorate. UNHCR's monitoring of the effects of the crisis on refugee households up to March showed that the situation worsened compared to the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) data from mid-2019. More families struggled to cover their basic needs and find employment, and were increasingly relying on debt and negative coping mechanisms to survive.

This situation was further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the first confirmed case in Lebanon on 21 February 2020. The Government responded by imposing a general lockdown, restricting the operations of most businesses and services, limiting movements, establishing a curfew and closing the border all to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19. The overall situation had a profound impact on refugees, as well as those who had worked in construction, which largely stopped, whose incomes are often reliant on daily labour or work that cannot be performed from home.

The deepening economic crisis combined with the pandemic-related measures have resulted in widespread income loss, high inflation and tanking purchasing power, further increasing the protection and socio-economic vulnerabilities of refugees, particularly those with specific needs, women at risk, and children. Refugees reported having difficulties to comply with the movement restrictions, being compelled to seek any form of income to provide for their families, including resorting to low quality and sometimes exploitative jobs and working conditions.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESULTS

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

UNHCR is working with the Government and partners to support the national COVID-19 response in three main areas<sup>1</sup>:

- **Prevention** through community engagement and awareness-raising;
- **Containment** of transmission by supporting refugees to adhere to mitigation measures and enabling quarantining/isolation of refugees living in overcrowded settings;
- **Treatment** and case management by reinforcing testing and hospitalization capacity, including by fully covering for the cost of COVID-19 testing for refugees conducted according to Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) guidelines, as well as treatment for COVID-19 positive cases.

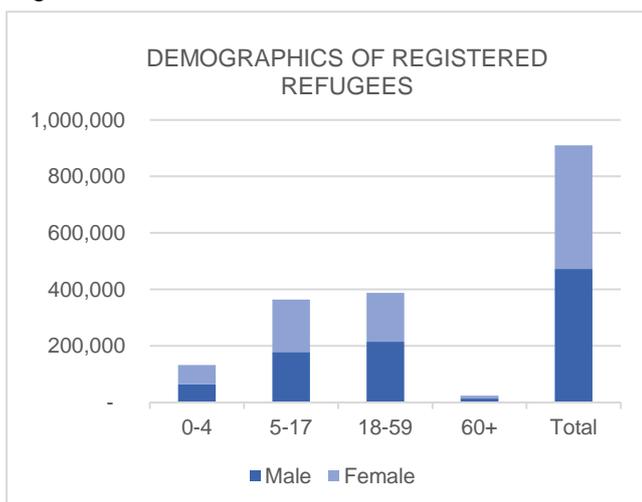
UNHCR also made every effort to maintain its regular programme and pursue its longer-term protection and assistance objectives. Delivery of protection, assistance and access to essential services were prioritised, adapted and increased when needed, in accordance with public health guidance and Government decisions.

In addition, UNHCR's ongoing advocacy efforts were expanded to promote one coordinated and coherent national response to the COVID-19 pandemic; non-stigmatization of any individual or community based on real or perceived infection; non-discriminatory application of movement restrictions and curfews; allowing refugees with medical background to support the national response to COVID-19; a moratorium on evictions initiated by landlords or municipalities; and scaled up support and access to basic assistance.

### ACCESSING PROTECTION

#### Registration and data management

At the end of May 2020, 892,310 Syrian and 17,524 refugees and asylum-seekers of other nationalities were registered with UNHCR in Lebanon.



- Since the instruction by the Government to stop new registration of Syrians in early 2015, the number of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in Lebanon continues to gradually decrease (down 2.4% compared to end-2019), mainly due to departures (resettlement and repatriation) and deaths. UNHCR continued to update the data of Syrians registered prior to 2015 and register children born in Lebanon to registered Syrian refugees, jointly with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA). Syrians approaching UNHCR for protection who cannot be registered are counselled on the Government's instruction to suspend registration, and assessed for vulnerabilities so that their critical needs can be addressed.

- Iraqi refugees and asylum-seekers continue to make up the majority (74%) of refugees and asylum-seekers from countries other than Syria, followed by Sudanese (13%) and Ethiopians (5%). The number of registered refugees of other nationalities is also gradually decreasing (by 2.5% compared to end-2019).

<sup>1</sup> For more details, please see <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Lebanon%20COVID-19%20Update%20-%2030MAR20.pdf>

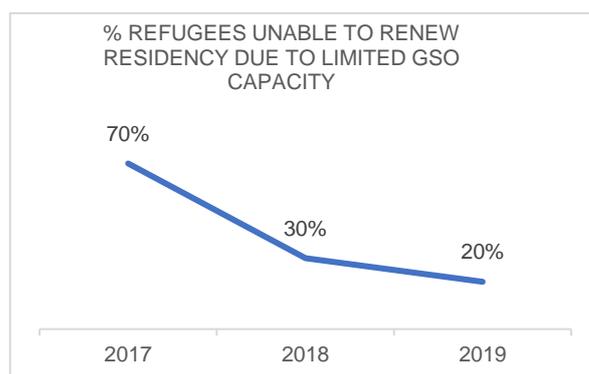
### Civil documentation

- UNHCR continued to inform refugees on **civil registration** procedures through mass communication tools, community-based approaches, and legal counselling at community centres and reception centres, as well as through outreach volunteers, protection monitors and partners. As a result, UNHCR and partners provided individualized legal counselling to 8,500 families on how to register the birth of their children, and directly supported around 1,500 families to register their child's birth. 24 families whose children are considered at highest risk of statelessness (such as single female heads of households, separated families, and couples without proof of marriage) were assisted to obtain proof of kinship from the Sharia court to prove the child's lineage and age.
- Another 150 families who had married unofficially were supported to obtain retroactive proof of their marriage and more than 960 families were counselled on marriage registration to facilitate the birth registration of their children and increase protection of women in case of separation, divorce or disappearance of their husband.
- To assist the Government's initiatives in ensuring that all births of Syrian refugee children born in Lebanon are registered, UNHCR continued to support the Directorate General of Personal Status (DGPS) through staffing and equipment to increase its capacity to register civil events. In this regard, UNHCR supported 30 civil registry clerks deployed to the different offices of the DGPS and the digitalization of records for all Syrians. These efforts have led to more consistent practices by the different offices and shorter processing time.
- Non-Syrian refugees continue to face greater challenges to obtain civil documentation in general. Notably, non-Syrians do not benefit from the waiver on the one-year deadline on birth registration.

### Legal aid

Access to legal assistance and services continued to be a priority to protect refugees and asylum-seekers against refoulement, arbitrary arrest and detention, abuse, and exploitation.

- Some 9,400 refugees and asylum-seekers received legal aid from UNHCR and its partners in the first quarter of 2020. This included legal awareness and individual counselling, legal assistance and representation in front of a court or administrative body. Legal aid covered key areas such as obtaining residency, protection from refoulement and detention, addressing exploitation and abuse – including evictions, trafficking in human beings, human rights violations and harassment – and family and labour law.
- UNHCR continued activities aimed at increasing the numbers of refugees with valid **residency**. In 2019, UNHCR accompanied 365 Syrians to different GSO centres to submit their renewal residency applications, of whom 321 (88%) successfully submitted their renewal applications to the GSO (the remaining lacked some required documentation). Follow-up in 2020 with 112 (35%) of the 321 refugees who were able to submit their renewal application found that 97% had successfully renewed their residency. UNHCR also continued its support to further expand GSO capacity to process applications. The positive impact of these support projects is evident in the UNHCR annual residency survey, whereby the percentage of refugees unable to renew their residency due to the limited GSO capacity has decreased by 50 percentage points since 2017.
- With the aim to make refugees feel more confident about renewing their residency, UNHCR encouraged the GSO to communicate directly with refugees, which led to the GSO publishing an announcement on their website in March 2020 encouraging Syrian refugees to renew their legal residency, clearly stating eligibility criteria and procedures.



- As part of the Government's measures to contain the spread of COVID-19, the GSO stopped receiving or processing requests, including residency renewals, and announced on 16 March that all foreigners with legal residency that expired since 11 March will be allowed to renew it when the situation allows and without being required to pay the overstay fees. Judicial and religious courts also closed in March. UNHCR therefore continued to provide legal counselling by phone and suspended activities, such as in-person representation.

### Child protection, SGBV and targeted responses for groups with specific protection needs

- The economic crisis coupled with measures to contain the pandemic have increased the protection concerns, emergency needs and mental distress faced by refugees, particularly persons with specific needs, women at risk, and children. UNHCR is prioritizing case management<sup>2</sup> for SBGV survivors and children at high risk, which has continued without interruption through remote modalities as well as face-to-face for emergency cases.
- In the reporting period, UNHCR and partners provided case management to over 1,600 **vulnerable children** and conducted more than 1,500 Best Interests Assessments to protect vulnerable children. In addition, close to 20 Best Interests Determinations were ongoing to implement solutions in line with the children's best interests. UNHCR also supported virtual activities targeting families and children to raise awareness about COVID-19 and prevention of child abuse.
- UNHCR's intervention on **SGBV** focused on maintaining access and quality of services to survivors. UNHCR, jointly with its partners, provided case management services to more than 1,100 survivors and 139 survivors were provided with emergency accommodation in safe shelters. Since March, only high-risk SGBV cases were managed face-to-face, while other cases were supported through remote modalities. Close to 1,300 survivors received individual psychosocial support (PSS) services remotely. During the lockdown, SGBV prevention activities included wide outreach through awareness-raising on domestic violence, intimate-partner violence, and stress/anger management.
- UNHCR and its partners also continued to provide a comprehensive package of services for **persons with specific needs** (PwSN). 2,600 vulnerable PwSN received case management support, 2,200 of which received non-cash support such as counselling and PSS. Moreover, specialized outreach volunteers (OVs) supported PwSN by identifying vulnerable cases, referring them to UNHCR and partners, and providing awareness and information sessions related to their area of expertise (child protection, paralegal, health and education). UNHCR also supported 1,700 people of concern through its Protection Cash Assistance Programme (PCAP)<sup>3</sup>.



*Ayla is a refugee from Syria and is the leader of her refugee settlement, a role usually occupied by men. She draws her strength from her father, who taught her to stand for her rights. She uses this strength to bring her neighbours together and they all receive their share.*

<sup>2</sup> 'Case management' refers to a holistic approach focusing on the individual, aiming to provide a tailored response to each situation. Such response combines legal aid, safe shelter, PSS, counselling cash support, seeking permanent solutions, etc. as relevant in each case, to address all causes of protection issues or risks each person faces, prevent negative coping mechanisms and support them out of such situations.

<sup>3</sup> PCAP is provided to individuals and families experiencing or facing an imminent risk of serious protection problems, such as child labor, SGBV, exploitation or harassment. PCAP directly contributed to both responding to the protection issue (e.g. paying transportation to go to court or relocating away from an exploitative landlord) and providing a safety net to help meet basic needs during that crisis period without having to resort to negative coping mechanisms.

## Border monitoring

- On 12 March, the Government of Lebanon closed its border with Syria to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Up until then, UNHCR continued its border monitoring activities to better understand the profiles and motivations of Syrians entering and exiting Lebanon. During these visits, UNHCR interviewed over 2,000 individuals to identify and refer vulnerable individuals, counsel people on border admission and exit regulations, and provide basic humanitarian assistance. After the border closure, UNHCR maintained regular phone communication with the GSO and conducted monitoring visits on an ad hoc basis. On 23 March, the Government of Syria also announced the closure of its border as a preventative measure against COVID-19.
- On **deportations**, UNHCR continued to advocate for each case to be assessed individually by a court in line with national and international law, both for Syrians apprehended within the territory and those attempting to enter irregularly. Following GSO referrals, UNHCR interviewed Syrians apprehended for irregular entry and conducted individual advocacy interventions for all those who expressed a fear of return or family separation. Deportations almost stopped mid-March, following the border closures and efforts to reduce overcrowding in detention facilities.

## Detention monitoring

- UNHCR and partners conducted more than 1,100 monitoring visits and 500 phone calls to detention facilities, but remained unable to access military detention facilities or refugees detained at the airport. The main concerns observed continued to be prolonged detention at police station level, overcrowded cells (leading to children being detained with adults in police stations), hygiene and sanitation issues, mistreatment, and lack of food and core relief items (CRI). The already long average duration of detention at police stations increased further when the ISF stopped transferring detainees to the GSO because of COVID-19. UNHCR thus assisted over 1,100 persons of concern, prioritized based on specific risks and vulnerabilities, with PSS, legal support, medical attention and CRIs including blankets, mattresses and hygiene kits.
- UNHCR actively engages in direct legal counseling, legal assistance and representation, and administrative follow-up at courthouses to track and expedite different requests. As a result, 18 Syrians were released from detention and the deportation of 59 non-Syrians held at the GSO was successfully halted. Moreover, UNHCR identified and supported children detained in all types of detention facilities as a priority; 51 Syrian children were thus provided with case management, legal aid, medical services and CRIs.
- In response to limited access to detention facilities as of March, as a result of COVID-19, regular monitoring was conducted by phone while partners continued to conduct visits for urgent cases to provide food, CRIs and medical services. Legal services continued to be provided both remotely and at courthouses when required. In addition, UNHCR partners conducted 98 health awareness sessions on COVID-19 for detainees and ISF personnel, and provided 105 hygiene kits to the ISF to assist the sanitation of detention facilities and promote the safety of detainees.

### In 2020, as of 31 March:

**2,000** border monitoring interviews conducted

**8,500** families received individualized legal counselling on how to register the birth of their children

**1,500** vulnerable families assisted to register the birth of their child

**1,500** Best Interests Assessments to protect vulnerable children

**960** families counselled on marriage registration to facilitate the birth registration of their children and increase protection of women in case of separation, divorce or disappearance of their husband

**150** couples who married unofficially helped to obtain retroactive proof of their marriage

**18,100 persons** visited **24 community development centres** supported with staff and activities benefiting both Lebanese and refugees

**625** outreach volunteers mobilized

**20,600** refugees reached by OV's through home visits and info/awareness sessions

### Community mobilization and outreach

UNHCR continued efforts to build on the capacity of community members to engage in their own protection. This included supporting refugees to engage in two-way communication with UNHCR, safely identify and refer persons at heightened risk in need of protection and assistance, as well as implement solutions for themselves.

- **Community engagement** includes a network of 625 OV's, 24 Community Development Centres (CDC) and 153 community groups, as well as social media pages. From January until mid-March, OV's reached more than 4,600 persons through 2,000 home visits and 15,900 persons through 2,200 information and awareness sessions on various topics including available services, early marriage prevention, and marriage and birth registration. More than 6,800 refugees (47% female, 31% children) at heightened risk were referred by OV's to the relevant specialized services.
- Over 18,100 people (61% female) visited CDCs. The most accessed services and activities during the reporting period included information desks (54%), awareness sessions (34%), skills trainings (17%), basic literacy, numeracy and language classes (12%), and PSS (9%). Group activities at community centres were suspended in March, with face-to-face contact limited to cases needing urgent support.



*UNHCR rolled out its communication campaign centred around the theme '#TogetherWeGiveWarmth' aimed at raising awareness about the winter support provided to refugees and Lebanese vulnerable communities, prevent tensions between communities and to increase the understanding of UNHCR's role in the country.*

### DIGNITY AND RESILIENCE IN EXILE

UNHCR aims to help refugees meet their daily basic needs and maintain access to health care, education, shelter, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to reduce their vulnerability to exploitation, harmful coping strategies, and other protection risks.

#### Basic needs

- Between January and March, UNHCR assisted on average 32,800 refugee families (232,522 individuals) per month with **multi-purpose cash assistance**, including 2,291 particularly vulnerable families (elderly at risk, female-headed households and people with disabilities) identified through the Grievance Redress Mechanism who started receiving multipurpose cash assistance in January.
- Monitoring results of the winter assistance programme completed during the reporting period showed that assisted families reported higher expenditures than the poverty line as well as that of non-assisted families. Moreover, a larger proportion of non-assisted families (29%) reported that they had no heating source in their home compared to assisted families (7% for families receiving both winter and food assistance and 19% among those who only received winter assistance). Families who received winter assistance were also less prone to resort to crisis negative coping strategies that often increase in winter months, such as selling assets, reducing

non-food expenditure and moving shelters. Nevertheless, the level of needs meant that even assisted families relied on some form of negative coping mechanism to meet their basic needs.

- UNHCR also worked on adapting the programmes to the latest developments, related to the economic and monetary crisis as well as the pandemic, in order to respond to the increased needs of persons of concern and the Lebanese population, and mitigate tensions .

### Health care

UNHCR continues to support refugees' access to comprehensive primary, secondary and tertiary health care by subsidizing services through a hospital network and implementing partners.

- During the reporting period, UNHCR supported over 14,000 **primary health care** consultations, including for antenatal care, non-communicable diseases, and mental health.
- UNHCR's **secondary health care** programme facilitated refugees' access to life-saving care and supported more than 14,400 referrals, of which 60% were for deliveries.

### Education

- More than 110 Education OVs were actively engaged in disseminating information on education in refugee communities. Additionally, 375 Education Community Liaisons were deployed in second-shift schools to enhance the cooperation between children, parents and school staff. They also supported children at risk of dropping out and ensured safe learning environments in and around schools. To further support retention in the public school system and foster learning, UNHCR supported homework groups facilitated by community volunteers and attended by more than 1,500 students.
- Schools closed at the end of February and all in-person education activities were suspended in March. UNHCR's network of community volunteers mobilized to help parents and children cope with distance learning by providing learning material and instructions, encouraging positive parenting, and sharing child-friendly activities to keep the children motivated. Children with disabilities, mostly high-risk or urgent cases, also continued to receive remote educational support, medical help and/or PSS.

### Shelter and WASH

- In the first two months of the year, UNHCR's shelter activities focused on leading and coordinating the response to the harsh weather conditions that hit Lebanon at the beginning of 2020. Rapid needs assessments were conducted to assess the overall situation in 633 informal settlements hosting 11,221 individuals (2,224 vulnerable families) that were reported to be affected with floods, damaged shelters, and fire. UNHCR also directly assisted 1,077 vulnerable households with shelter kits to reinforce or build their shelters.
- UNHCR also continued to support the implementation of Water Safety Plans in Lebanon. Furthermore, over 47,000 refugees and Lebanese living in Majder Anjar and Mansoura benefited from the continued support in solid waste management provided to the municipalities, helping to preserve the living environment and peaceful coexistence.

## SUPPORTING HOST COMMUNITIES TO PRESERVE SOCIAL STABILITY

- In the first quarter of 2020, intercommunal tensions continued to increase over socioeconomic concerns, rising from currency devaluation, increasing living costs, stronger competition for jobs and resources, as well as pressure on services. UNHCR aimed to mitigate inter-communal tensions and aid-bias perceptions by extending its support to both individual Lebanese and to institutions.

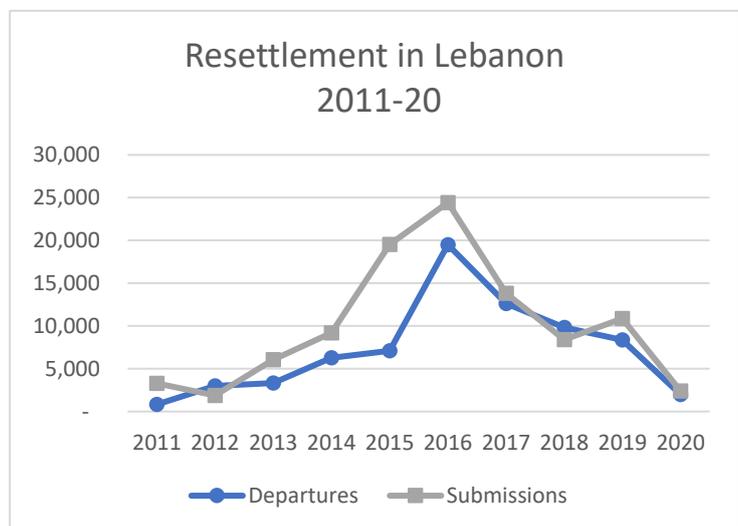
- Support was provided to strengthen the capacity of seven ministries (MOSA, MEHE, MOIM, Ministry of State for Displaced Affairs, MOFA, MOEW) to respond to the refugee situation within the LCRP including through staffing, capacity building and equipment and supplies.
- At the community level, UNHCR's support included the planning of five community support projects including on water and wastewater, aiming at mitigating the impact of deterioration in the quality of public services and the rising poverty among Lebanese families. The latter can result in increasing tensions, and impacting refugees' sense of safety and acceptance in the country.
- As of the end of March, the impact of COVID 19 on social stability remained minimal but the risk of stigmatization against refugees in cases of infection in the community was identified.

## REALISING SOLUTIONS TO DISPLACEMENT

### Resettlement

UNHCR continued to prioritize refugees for resettlement based on their protection vulnerabilities.

- Around 2,200 Syrian refugees and 200 refugees from other countries were submitted for resettlement consideration, and over 1,700 Syrian refugees and 280 refugees of other nationalities departed Lebanon to third countries during the first quarter. Refugees also departed through labour mobility, family reunification and humanitarian corridors.
- Resettlement interviews were suspended in March and the resettlement departures of more than 650 Syrian refugees and 90 refugees of other nationalities were cancelled as a result of government restrictions and airport closures. Affected refugees have been assessed for their needs resulting from the postponement of their departure and assisted as appropriate.



### Repatriation

UNHCR is aware of around 3,700 Syrian refugees who returned to Syria on their own or in group movements facilitated by General Security between January and March 2020. Official returns stopped after the border closure in March.

- Where possible, UNHCR supported refugees with civil documentation, information on services available in Syria, and vaccinations. Among the reasons for return cited by the refugees, the socio-economic situation in Lebanon increased in prominence compared to previous quarter, even though reunification with family members in Syria remained regularly mentioned.

## STATELESSNESS

In 2020, UNHCR will continue to provide legal assistance to stateless persons in Lebanon. This will include legal counselling, as well as legal representation on confirming the nationality or late birth registration. In addition to this, UNHCR will continue to support 49 individuals in strategic litigation cases that were initiated in previous years.

## PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS

### January – March 2020

#### Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers

	Reached Jan-Mar	2020 Target (prioritized)	2020 Target (if fully funded)
<b>Protection</b>			
Persons receiving legal assistance	9,041	33,000	44,000
Persons assisted with civil status registration or documentation	12,110	40,000	62,500
Persons submitted for resettlement and humanitarian admission	2,195	7,900	7,900
Persons assisted through SGBV psychosocial support	1,042	6,768	8,768
Individuals/cases receiving protection or emergency cash assistance	2,584	6,775	8,598
<b>Basic Assistance</b>			
Average number of households assisted with monthly multi-purpose cash grants	32,556	33,000	100,800
<b>Health</b>			
Individuals benefitting from life-saving emergency and obstetric referral health care	14,375	66,516	66,516
<b>Education</b>			
Students enrolled in secondary education	682	1,640	3,200
<b>Shelter and WASH</b>			
Shelter maintenance tool kits and materials provided	1,077	33,656	45,000
Individuals sensitized to hygiene and health practices	21,596	46,100	188,038
<b>Host Communities</b>			
Number of projects implemented to the benefit of host and displaced communities	0	36	137
			<b>2020 Planned Budget (USD)</b>
<b>Institutional and community support</b>			
Institutional support (rehabilitation of infrastructure, staffing and training, equipment, supplies, medications and vaccines)			8.7 million
Community-based projects (health, education, livelihoods, WASH, roads and community facilities)			2.5 million
Total invested			11.2 million

## Refugees and asylum-seekers (other nationalities)

Protection	Reached Jan-Mar	2020 Target (prioritized)	2020 Target (if fully funded)
Persons receiving legal assistance	396	2,500	3,000
Persons assisted with civil status registration or documentation	55	600	1,100
Persons submitted for resettlement and humanitarian admission	62	900	900
Individuals/cases receiving protection or emergency cash assistance	194	359	600
Individuals with specific needs receiving non-cash support	229	680	1,000
Persons assisted through SGBV psychosocial support	46	170	250
<b>Basic Assistance</b>			
Average number of households assisted with monthly multi-purpose cash grants	1,371	1,500	2,939
<b>Health</b>			
Individuals benefitting from life-saving emergency and obstetric referral health care	75	520	1,000
<b>Education</b>			
Sensitization and community mobilization campaigns conducted to promote school enrolment	14	91	100

## Stateless

Protection	Reached Jan-Jun	2020 Target (prioritized)	2020 Target (if fully funded)
Persons receiving legal assistance	N/A	300	500

**UNHCR Lebanon is grateful for the support of its donors, including major donors of unearmarked and regional funds, as well as private donors.**

