

Lebanon

Multi-year Strategy 2023 – 2025



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1.1 Executive Summary

While working to facilitate refugees' access to durable solutions, UNHCR's multi-year strategy aims to preserve a dignified protection space for a Government estimated 1,5 million Syrian refugees, including more than 818,000 registered refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), Ethiopia, Iraq, Sudan and other countries within a context of a deteriorating socio-economic situation. This strategy builds on and is aligned with the Global Compact on Refugees, the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP), the and the UN Strategic Development Cooperation Framework in Lebanon (2023-2025). UNHCR's strategy is also aligned with the principle of "Leave No One Behind", a core principle of the United Nations.

Refugees in Lebanon are struggling to survive, with nine out of ten households living in extreme poverty despite UNHCR's expansion of assistance coverage in 2021. Faced with hyperinflation, subsidy removals and socio-economic deterioration, refugees are taking on increasing levels of debt to meet their basic needs, while spiraling costs force refugee families to cut spending on food, electricity, health services and medicine. As poverty levels increase across all populations in Lebanon, competition between Lebanese and refugee communities over economic resources is likely to increase, which risks escalating inter-communal tensions, along with anti-refugee rhetoric, further shrinking the refugee protection space.

To address the needs of refugees living in Lebanon against a backdrop of increasing vulnerability, UNHCR's strategy will focus on preserving the protection space, ensuring dignified stay, enhancing social cohesion and enabling protection-driven solutions, including improving access to resettlement and/or complementary pathways to third countries and upholding the right to voluntary return in safety and dignity. These focus areas rest on UNHCR's Strategic Directions four pillars: to protect, respond, empower, and solve.

1.2 Situation Analysis

The Government of Lebanon estimates that some 1.5 million Syrian refugees live in Lebanon, including approximately 815,000 registered with UNHCR. The number of refugees and asylum-seekers from countries other than Syria who are registered with UNHCR was approximately 12,100 individuals by the end of 2022. Iraqis continue to make up the largest percentage (55%) of the total refugee population from countries other than Syria, followed by Sudanese (19%) and Ethiopians (13%).

Lebanon is not a signatory to the Refugee and Statelessness Conventions and has not enacted legislation or a comprehensive policy to respond to the specific needs of refugees and asylum-seekers. Refugee stay is regulated under the framework applicable to other foreigners and notwithstanding their specific circumstances. Restrictions on admission to territory, suspension of UNHCR new registrations of Syrians by the Government of Lebanon in 2015 as well as deportations, continue to impact refugees' access to safety and protection in Lebanon.

Legal residency rates remain low among Syrians, with just 20% of individuals above the age of 15 having legal residency. Deportations of Syrians who entered or re-entered Lebanon irregularly after April 2019 continue, often without due process and procedural safeguards.

Lebanon continues to face a severe socio-economic and financial downturn. The situation is prolonged in the absence of a comprehensive macroeconomic and financial stabilization plan. The country failed to elect a President throughout 2023 resulting in prolonged office of the ad interim Government. The impacts of these crises are exacerbating a range of political, social and environmental issues that are inflicting significant human suffering and increasing the risk of social tensions and instability. Municipalities are also affected and are under increasing pressure but unable to provide basic services due to a lack of funding. The level of vulnerability among the Lebanese population has also increased, resulting in increased competition over scarce resources. The impact of the crises is exacerbating a range of political, social and environmental issues that are inflicting significant human suffering and increasing the risk of social tensions and instability.

In the last quarter of 2023, the eruption of the conflict in the Southern border region, and the spillover of the situation in Gaza, resulted in additional risks to the populations and a considerable number of displaced persons within and beyond the South with a significant increase in humanitarian needs. The conflict in the South affected all populations, including forcibly displacing some 93,000 Lebanese (DTM) by mid-April 2024 and secondarily displacing thousands of refugees. In early 2024, it spread to other areas in the country, including the Bekaa. UNHCR in Lebanon is co-leading cross-sectoral coordination of the emergency response, including at sub-national level, and coordinating or co-coordinating the Protection, Shelter, Basic Assistance, Social stability and Health sectors. UNHCR and partners have in place contingency plans for scenarios of further escalation, and activities are adapted as needed to be able to respond to continued displacement with emergency relief items, emergency cash assistance, shelter interventions, monitoring of needs in collective shelters and referrals to specialized services.

The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VaSyR) conducted by UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP found that 84% of Syrian refugee families are living in

extreme poverty, not being able to afford the survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB) and only some 5.3% are food secure. Shelter conditions for refugees also remain largely substandard, with approximately 52% of refugee families were living in shelters that were dangerous, substandard or overcrowded, according to the VaSyR 2023.

In this dire context, there have been increased attempts at irregular onward movements, including dangerous sea journeys. In 2023, UNHCR is aware of at least 65 instances of actual or attempted movement by sea destined almost exclusively for Cyprus (involving close to 4,000 individuals). Passengers were predominantly Syrian with at least 25 per cent women and children. At the beginning of 2024, the number of onward boat movements increased exponentially, with 35 boats departing to Cyprus in only 3 months. This has triggered intense diplomatic exchanges between Cyprus, and more broadly the EU, and Lebanon to discuss the situation and potential support

While the majority of Syrian refugees hope to return to Syria eventually, they remain concerned about safety and security, housing and access to essential services and livelihoods inside Syria. In 2023, UNHCR verified the return of 10,130 Syrian refugees to Syria, compared to 9,814 verified returns in 2022.

UNHCR continues to prioritize the most vulnerable and at-risk refugees in Lebanon for resettlement. In 2023, 8,985 refugees departed on resettlement from Lebanon down from about 20,000 in 2016. At the same time, UNHCR Lebanon operation submitted 8,625 people to over 13 countries. These submissions included families with medical needs, women and girls at risk and LGBTIQ+ people. More than 260,000 refugees were in need of resettlement in 2023, a need that is expected to grow in 2024.

1.3 Vision and Strategic Orientation

The overall vision of UNHCR in Lebanon is to preserve a dignified protection space for the refugees, in an increasingly dire socio-economic environment, while working to enable their attainment of durable solutions outside the country.

UNHCR's vision for the multi-year strategy continues to be grounded on the four pillars, in line with UNHCR's strategic directions – to protect, respond, empower, solve and include, as below:

Preserving protection space: Support a safe protection environment and ensure access to protection, temporary legal residency, and birth and civil status documentation for refugees, reduce risks associated with detention and ensure protection from refoulement.

Dignified stay: Ensure access to quality basic services and inclusive access to social protection and a safety net to preserve the dignity and well-being of refugees in Lebanon, while supporting refugees' ability to develop their human capital.

Enhancing social cohesion: Secure continued hospitality through enhancing social cohesion and community empowerment.

Enabling protection-driven solutions: Facilitate refugees' attainment of durable solutions in the form of resettlement or complementary pathways to third countries and capacitate refugees to exercise their right to voluntary return in safety and dignity.

UNHCR's strategic priorities aim to address the protection and assistance needs of forcibly displaced and stateless people with sustainable interventions in the immediate term, in close collaboration with the Government and partners to ensure synergies, coherence, and coordination for all the support programmes provided to Lebanon. Direct lifesaving humanitarian assistance and interventions to respond to critical needs will thus be delivered alongside efforts to promote the inclusion of refugees in development-oriented programmes, notably in social protection and skills development, to support self-reliance and refugees' ability to contribute to the recovery of Lebanon and Syria in their eventual return. UNHCR's work will be based on strategic partnerships with the Government, UN agencies, local and international NGO partners, donors, civil society, academia, and development actors. UNHCR is committed to further advancing localization in line with the Grand Bargain.

On statelessness, and in line with the Global Strategy, UNHCR advocates with the authorities to promote policy and law reform of the regulatory framework affecting stateless persons; in relation to reforms to the nationality law, birth registration procedures and facilitation of court procedures and judicial solutions. Advocacy also aims to enhance the protection of stateless persons to promote the access of stateless persons to their rights, including education, work, identification documents, and health care among others.

UNHCR will also continue with a strong community-based protection approach, enhancing Accountability to Affected People. UNHCR will aim to further streamline Accountability to Affected People across sectors, to ensure a community-based, rights-based, and age, gender and diversity approach throughout the programmes, and informed programming by the views of forcibly displaced and stateless people.

In ensuring access to protection, UNHCR will work with humanitarian, development and civil society partners to promote the establishment of a more predictable legal

framework and respect for due process guarantees to ensure that people in need of international protection can access such, and that forced returns do not take place in violation of the principle of non-refoulement. Progress made towards facilitating access to legal residency and civil documentation, including birth registration, will be built upon, and further included as a priority in recovery and development processes.

To support dignified stay for forcibly displaced and stateless people in Lebanon, UNHCR will further develop the efficiency and effectiveness of its well-established cash assistance programmes for basic needs, together with WFP, protection risks and shocks as well as its health care and shelter programmes, while expanding efforts to include refugees in programmes to develop the national social protection system. Through strengthened collaboration with the World Bank, UNDP, ILO, UNICEF and other development partners, UNHCR will seek to ensure that refugees are included in programmes aimed at strengthening access to basic services, notably education, health and social services, and skills trainings and livelihoods. Practical steps in this direction have already begun. UNHCR, WFP, and the World Bank joined forces to conduct a Lebanon Vulnerability Assessment Panel (LVAP) that will provide for the first time, comparable insight on the vulnerability of refugees vis a vis the host community. In addition to the comparability of the LVAP, the partnership with the World Bank will also provide a development analysis approach to the results that will support UNHCR's effort to engage with more development partners. In addition, UNHCR will address the situation of refugee children more holistically, with an increased emphasis on education and child protection in close coordination with UNICEF and other partners.

UNHCR will strive to secure continued hospitality through social cohesion and community empowerment, with continued advocacy on the importance of also supporting host communities to mitigate the impact of the pressure on public services and infrastructure as well as the scaling up of social assistance for vulnerable Lebanese, through a strengthened and sustainable social protection system. This is particularly important in an environment of widespread poverty among all the populations in Lebanon, and increased competition over jobs and resources for survival. Collaboration with development partners, like UNDP, on tensions monitoring and targeted support to fragile host communities will be further strengthened, and technical advice will be provided to development actors on inclusive and conflict sensitive targeting of beneficiaries. Awareness about the refugee situation will be fostered through evidence-based external communication.

Refugees will be supported to attain durable solutions through UNHCR's advocacy for increased resettlement quotas and complementary pathways, alongside the efficient

identification and processing of cases. Refugees wishing to return will be supported to do so in safety and dignity, including through information about services available in Syria and help to obtain documentation.

UNHCR will continue active involvement in the process of developing and implementing the UN Strategic Development Cooperation Framework and joint programmes that incorporate rights-based and gender-sensitive approaches, and the inclusion of refugees in recovery and development plans and programmes that support their ability to strengthen their resilience and develop human capital and transferable skills. Preparedness remains a priority for UNHCR in the precarious situation of Lebanon, allowing for agile programming and implementation.

1.4 Fair Access and Representation

UNHCR is guided by UNHCR's 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity policy and its ten core actions, as well as the Accountability to Affected People Operational Framework and its four core actions that are embedded in the core actions 2-5 of the Age, Gender and Diversity policy. Specifically, UNHCR is active in promoting the meaningful engagement and participation of refugees, including women and girls, in decisions that affect their lives. For example, 1 in 60 refugees and asylum-seekers, aged 12 years and above, is involved in at least one stage of the programme cycle each year through interventions such as ongoing assessments to identify refugee concerns and priorities, community group contribution to design activities, volunteer engagement in the implementation of certain protection activities and refugee feedback from satisfaction surveys. Moreover, 74% of refugees engaged in community structures, such as community development centres and thematic community groups, are women and girls. To further strengthen participation, communication and inclusion, UNHCR will, in addition to its ongoing activities:

- Increase the extent of refugee participation and engagement, especially with respect to their role in the design and implementation of activities to address issues such as limited legal residency, child protection and mental health and psychosocial support.
- Continue to conduct participatory assessments with refugee women, girls, boys and men, of diverse backgrounds, as well as share findings with key stakeholders and during planning processes and provide feedback to the refugee community on how the results inform programming.
- Enhance the National Call Centre's capacity to receive calls, answer queries and refer people in need of protection to multisectoral services.
- Enhance information access to people living in remote locations, people with literacy challenges, people with disabilities and those who are homebound through expanding

volunteer networks' reach and strengthening the role of community centres as information hubs.

- Further develop systems to collect and analyse feedback and complaints from refugee women, girls, boys and men of diverse backgrounds such as from community structures, participatory assessments, protection monitoring and complaints boxes and assessments with the aim to inform programmes, as well as track the extent of change across all sectors.
- Increase child protection and education activities, as well as promote child friendly feedback and complaints mechanisms.
- Enhance the different feedback and complaints systems based on an extensive review conducted by community-based protection for all UNHCR sectors, including by making them more sensitive and accessible to children and people with specific needs and diverse profiles.
- Further promote the inclusion of people with disabilities and older people within community centres, as well as continue to promote the participation of women and girls in community structures, which currently stands at 74%.

2. Impact Statements

Impact statement

Persons of concern enjoy a safe protection environment, with access to fundamental rights, fair procedures and specialized support services

Impact area: Attaining favourable protection environments

Outcome statements

Accurate PoC data is actively used to ensure equal and transparent access to protection and service provision and registration for Syrians is allowed to resume, allowing for individual documentation and enhanced protection

Outcome area: Access to territory, registration and documentation

Protection-sensitive border management is enhanced and procedural safeguards are respected in all cases of deportation

Outcome area: Access to territory, registration and documentation

Asylum seekers can access effective (and cost free) RSD procedures

Outcome area: Refugee status determination

The risks of GBV are reduced, all GBV survivors have access to timely, safe and quality services and prevention and risk mitigation interventions continue

Outcome area: Gender-based violence

Children are protected from abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation

Outcome area: Child protection

PWSN exposure to protection risks is mitigated and their needs addressed

Outcome area: Safety and access to justice

Barrier to accessing legal remedies and documentation are reduced

Outcome area: Safety and access to justice

Risks associated with detention are reduced through improved detention conditions and enhanced access to legal aid

Outcome area: Safety and access to justice

Donors understand the priorities and financial needs of the context, apportioning adequate funding and resources

Outcome area: External engagement and resource mobilization

All actors responding to the impact of the Syria Crisis implement coherent and complementary programmes, with coordinated fundraising, and harmonized advocacy

Outcome area: External engagement and resource mobilization

The public understands the challenges facing refugees in Lebanon, mitigating the escalation of social tensions and restrictive policies

Outcome area: External engagement and resource mobilization

Impact statement

In the context of a deteriorating socio-economic situation, further deterioration of affected populations' well-being is mitigated through equitable access to quality basic services

Impact area: Realizing rights in safe environments

Outcome statements

Current levels of well-being of PoCs maintained through supporting PoCs to meet their basic needs

Outcome area: Well-being and basic needs

PoCs have enhanced well-being and protected space through improved access to dignified living conditions

Outcome area: Sustainable housing and settlements

Persons of concern have sustained access to healthcare

Outcome area: Healthy lives

Gaps in education are bridged, resulting in improved human capital and transferable skills

Outcome area: Education

Supply and programme management work effectively to serve operational needs

Outcome area: Operational support and supply chain

Impact statement

Affected populations are meaningfully involved in decisions that affect their lives, and engaged in finding local solutions and reducing social tensions

Impact area: Empowering communities and achieving gender equality

Outcome statements

Persons of concern are actively engaged in identifying, preventing, mitigating and addressing protection issues and have access to positive community practices, well-being and dignity

Outcome area: Community engagement and women's empowerment

Persons of concern of different backgrounds, are meaningfully engaged in decisions that affect their lives, have access to timely information and their feedback informs programmes, activities and advocacy

Outcome area: Community engagement and women's empowerment

Persons of concern are included in national services and feel safer in their host communities

Outcome area: Community engagement and women's empowerment

Impact statement

Persons of concern have access to a durable solution and are able to make free and informed decisions that ensure their safety and dignity

Impact area: Securing solutions

Outcome statements

Through a coordinated approach, all stakeholders advocate for the principles of voluntary return in safety and dignity to be upheld and are prepared to provide adequate support as needed

Outcome area: Voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration

Opportunities for resettlement are increased to match resettlement needs for vulnerable persons of concern, particularly those presenting protection needs.

Outcome area: Resettlement and complementary pathways

3. Lebanon 2025 Indicators and Targets

Country	Results Level	Result Area	Indicator	Population Type	Baseline	Target 2025
Lebanon	Impact	IA1: Protect	1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	53%	Not applicable
Lebanon	Impact	IA1: Protect	1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	20%	Not applicable
Lebanon	Impact	IA2: Respond	2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	45%	Not applicable
Lebanon	Impact	IA2: Respond	2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	82%	Not applicable
Lebanon	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	39%	Not applicable
Lebanon	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	64%	Not applicable
Lebanon	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	29%	Not applicable
Lebanon	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	85%	Not applicable
Lebanon	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	10,130	Not applicable
Lebanon	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	8,985	Not applicable
Lebanon	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.2b Number of people who departed through	Refugees and Asylum-	1,274	Not applicable

			complementary pathways	seekers		
Lebanon	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	41%	43%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	20%	22%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA2: Status	2.1 Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	564	660
Lebanon	Outcome	OA3: Policy/Law	3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol	None	Not yet aligned: ≤69	To be confirmed
Lebanon	Outcome	OA3: Policy/Law	3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	None	Not yet aligned: ≤69	To be confirmed
Lebanon	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	58%	70%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.2 Proportion of people who do not accept violence against women	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	60%	60%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV case management services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98%	70%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.1 Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interests Procedure	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	80%	89%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	20%	80%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.3 Proportion of unaccompanied and separated children who are in an	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	94%	95%

			alternative care arrangement			
Lebanon	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Extensive: ≥70 points	Extensive: ≥70 points
Lebanon	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	Stateless Persons	Limited: ≤39 points	Limited: ≤39 points
Lebanon	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	96%	100%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	Stateless Persons	10%	To be confirmed
Lebanon	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	65%	65%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Stateless Persons	30%	To be confirmed
Lebanon	Outcome	OA8: Well-being	8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	75%	62%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA8: Well-being	8.2 Proportion of people with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97%	97%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA10: Health	10.1 Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	89%	90%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA10: Health	10.2. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	90%	95%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA11: Education	11.1 Proportion of young people enrolled in tertiary and higher education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	6%	6%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA11: Education	11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	48%	50%

			national education system	seekers		
Lebanon	Outcome	OA12: WASH	12.1 Proportion of people using at least basic drinking water services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	99%	99%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA12: WASH	12.2 Proportion of people with access to a safe household toilet	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98%	98%
Lebanon	Outcome	OA13: Livelihood	13.3 Proportion of people (working age) who are unemployed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	12%	To be confirmed
Lebanon	Outcome	OA15: Resettle	15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	8,625	7,800