

Operational update

December 2025

"I couldn't sleep. I was so cold." As winter storms intensify across Lebanon, refugee families living in inadequate shelter are facing increasingly harsh conditions, with limited access to heating, insulation and basic winter items. For many, prolonged exposure to cold, rain and flooding is compounding existing vulnerabilities and protection risks. Sustained and timely funding is urgently needed to maintain shelter and basic assistance activities, and to help ensure that the most vulnerable can stay safe, warm and protected during the winter months. ©UNHCR



Operational context

- Repeated violations of the November 2024 ceasefire agreement continued, particularly in the South, with near-daily Israeli airstrikes. UNIFIL reported volatility throughout December, with ongoing strikes affecting civilian areas, and reiterated its concern over repeated breaches of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, stressing the need for its full implementation. A United Nations Security Council delegation visited Lebanon to support Lebanon's stability, implementation of Resolution 1701, and look at progress on disarmament and border control.
- The 2026 Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) 2026 was formally endorsed, launching a USD 1.62 billion appeal to assist 1.5 million people across Lebanon. The Plan underscores collective responsibility for stabilization and protection, including facilitated voluntary returns of 200,000 Syrian refugees, and advancing sector strategies aligned with national priorities and the Cooperation Framework.
- Voluntary returns remained a key development in 2025. In line with the Lebanese Government's return policy and its Exchange of Letters with UNHCR. By the end of December, over 55,000 Syrians had voluntarily repatriated in 2025 through the UNHCR-facilitated programme, representing 11 per cent of the 501,603 individuals inactivated from UNHCR's records due to confirmed or presumed returns, the majority of whom returned spontaneously. Women and children comprised 82 per cent of facilitated returnees.



H.E. Minister of Social Affairs, Mrs. Haneen Sayed, participated in the Steering Committee meeting endorsing the 2026 Lebanon Response Plan (LRP). "We recognize substantial joint efforts to address the Syrian displacement crisis, including progress towards a safe, dignified, and sustainable return," she noted.

UNHCR in Lebanon

UNHCR has been present in Lebanon since 1962 and maintains a country office in **Beirut** and **field offices in Beirut, Tripoli and Zahle**. In 2025, it worked with **21 national and international NGO partners** to implement protection and humanitarian assistance activities across the country.

UNHCR's mission in Lebanon is to support central, regional and local authorities in responding to the large refugee presence, while providing protection and life-saving assistance to refugees and other vulnerable populations, strengthening resilience and dignity, and supporting refugees' capacity to attain durable solutions.

❖ The sharp decline in funding in 2025 forced UNHCR to significantly reduce the scope or phase out of critical programmes, such as secondary healthcare, education and elements of shelter support and basic assistance, notably limiting support to highly vulnerable households. By December, UNHCR was **only 25 per cent funded against its requirements**.

Key Population figures

1 M Syrians known to UNHCR

the most vulnerable of whom need protection and assistance

115,006 Syrians estimated to have arrived

since December 2024

54,673 individuals (11,832 families)

supported by UNHCR to voluntarily return

501,603 Syrians

inactivated by UNHCR due to known or presumed returns in 2025

* Registration as of end of December 2025.

** UNHCR registration of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has been suspended since May 2015 through a decision by the Government of Lebanon.

***The Lebanon Response Plan 2025 refers to 1.4 million Syrians in Lebanon including those registered with UNHCR. The LRP 2026 Planning figure refers to 1.12 million Syrians in Lebanon.

UNHCR Response

HIGHLIGHTS

In December, UNHCR continued counselling and supporting Syrian refugees seeking support to return home, through UNHCR's facilitated voluntary repatriation programme. Counselling and voluntariness assessments were provided at UNHCR's Case Processing Centre and Community Development Centres (CDCs), and refugees with specific protection or assistance needs were referred to partners for appropriate support prior to return. By end-December, **54,673 Syrian individuals (11,832 households) had been supported to return**.

Of those assisted, 34 per cent were residing in Bekaa, Baalbek and Hermel, 32 per cent in the North and Akkar, and 24 per cent in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, with Homs remaining the most common area of return. The vast majority (95 per cent) facilitated to return opted to self-organize their transportation, while 5 per cent returned through the transport jointly organised by UNHCR and IOM. Between July and December, 13 organized return movements were facilitated, supporting 2,880 individuals.

As of end-December, **12,218 individuals remained active or pending in the return pipeline**, reflecting a significant reduction compared to previous months due to prior returns, ongoing dynamics in Syria and winter conditions. Since January 2025, UNHCR has **inactivated 501,603 Syrian individuals** from its records due to confirmed or presumed returns.

Since 8 December 2024, new groups of Syrians have arrived in Lebanon in several waves, primarily settling in the Bekaa and Baalbek-El Hermel, followed by Akkar and the North, with others residing in Beirut, Mount Lebanon and the South. As of end-December 2025, an **estimated 115,006 Syrians are known to have arrived in Lebanon since December 2024**. Figures remain subject to fluctuation due to onward movements, returns and dynamic population flows.

COORDINATION & WORKING WITH PARTNERS

The Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) is a humanitarian-stabilization framework co-led by the Government of Lebanon and the United Nations. In December, the 2026 LRP was endorsed by the Steering Committee, reaffirming a collective commitment to a coordinated response to Lebanon's humanitarian, recovery and stabilization needs. It has a dedicated Returns Chapter that reaffirms the importance of durable solutions, notably support for voluntary, safe and dignified returns. In this regard, the LRP recognizes the role of UNHCR in supporting refugees who choose to return through counselling, voluntariness assessments and cash assistance, in coordination with national authorities, alongside the provision of humanitarian protection services and assistance for refugees who, for the time being, remain in Lebanon.

UNHCR works closely with the Government of Lebanon and UN agencies to ensure a coordinated response. This includes collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) on multi-purpose cash assistance to support vulnerable households in meeting basic needs; partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on organized voluntary return movements; and coordination with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to expand access to livelihoods and decent work. UNHCR is also part of the PROSPECTS partnership aimed at strengthening education, social protection and employment opportunities for forcibly displaced persons and host communities, in collaboration with partners including IFC, ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank. Within the LRP, UNHCR leads the Protection, and the Shelter sectors, as well as the Durable Solutions Working Group. In addition, UNHCR co-leads the GBV sub-sector and the Cash and the Information Management Working Groups respectively. It also participates actively in inter-sector coordination at national and sub-national levels.

UNHCR & PARTNERS PRESENCE IN LEBANON FOR 2026



13 Implementing I/NGO Partners 9 Local 4 International

Countrywide

IRC, Intersos, Restart, Ruwad Al Houkouk, SDA

North & Akkar

Caritas, LECORVAV, RMF

Beirut & Mount Lebanon

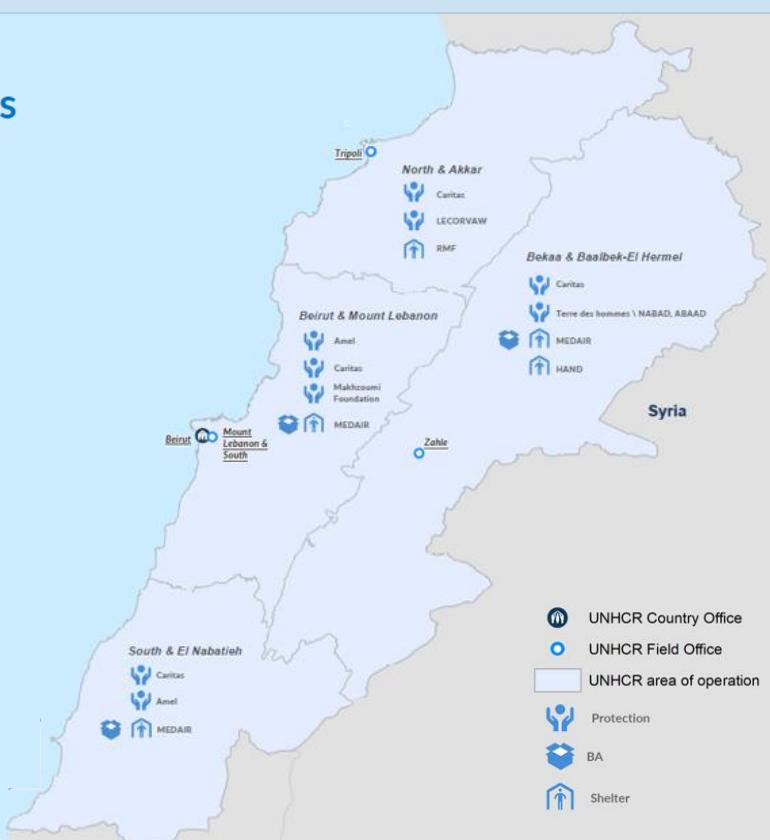
Amel, Caritas, Makhzoumi Foundation, MEDAIR

South & El Nabatieh

Amel, Caritas, MEDAIR

Bekaa & Baalbek El Hermel

Caritas, MEDAIR, HAND, Terre des hommes \ NABAD, ABAAD





PROTECTION & DURABLE SOLUTIONS

- Following endorsement of the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) 2026, UNHCR continued to support operationalization of the Protection sector framework in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs and sector partners. The Protection Sector Strategy, retaining three outcome areas, prioritizes safeguarding access to legal status and documentation, prevention and response to protection risks, and advancement of durable solutions. Led by UNHCR, the sector targets 1.4 million people with a budget of USD 184 million, including dedicated resources for return-related protection support. Protection coordinators also worked to strengthen alignment between sector priorities, national planning frameworks and the UN Cooperation Framework, ensuring coherent implementation at national and sub-national levels.
- In December, UNHCR and IOM convened a series of coordination and stocktaking workshops to review implementation of the facilitated voluntary repatriation programme and prepare for 2026. On 9 December, a joint IOM-UNHCR workshop brought together 40 staff members to take stock of lessons learned from the organized return movements conducted in 2025, to inform the continuation of organised voluntary returns in 2026. On 16 December, UNHCR organized a workshop with participants from the General Directorate of General Security, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the Lebanese Armed Forces, as well as IOM to review the voluntary return programme implemented in 2025 and its lessons learned.
- UNHCR convened a workshop on strengthening disability inclusion in the protection response, bringing together Protection Core Group members and organizations of persons with disabilities. The workshop reviewed the situation of persons with disabilities in Lebanon and initiated the development of cross-sectoral recommendations, with a workplan to be finalized.
- Refugees in Lebanon continue to experience severe socio-economic hardship, with some 60 per cent of households living below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket and struggling to meet their basic needs. This level of deprivation significantly heightens exposure to protection risks, including eviction, exploitation, child labour, early marriage and gender-based violence. Vulnerabilities remain particularly acute among women at risk, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, who require targeted protection interventions. Between January and December, UNHCR and partners provided individual protection case management to approximately 4,300 refugees with specific needs, while 20,000 individuals from 6,500 families received protection cash assistance to help mitigate risks such as eviction, exploitation and violence. Case management also supported an additional 2,700 children and 2,900 survivors of gender-based violence through follow-up and specialized assistance to address serious protection concerns. Preliminary findings from UNHCR's child feedback survey indicate that 92 per cent of children and caregivers reported an improvement in their situation after receiving case management, 95 per cent found the support useful, and 93 per cent expressed overall satisfaction. Similarly, 95 per cent of persons at risk of or surviving gender-based violence reported satisfaction with case management services. Post-distribution monitoring of protection cash assistance shows that 97 per cent of households reported that the assistance helped address or mitigate their protection situation, with many able to prevent eviction, reduce exposure to exploitation and harmful coping strategies, and improve their financial and physical security.
- Legal assistance remained a key component of the protection response throughout December. UNHCR and partners continued to support refugees with legal residency and civil documentation - services that remain essential in light of findings in the 2025 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees, showing that only 18 per cent of refugees aged 15 and above hold legal residency. Between January and December, a total of 18,000 refugees were supported to obtain or renew residency documentation. Legal residency is essential for refugees' ability to access services and move freely and avoid arrest, detention and exploitation.



UNHCR met with representatives to review refugee return procedures and plan next steps, joined by key government counterparts, highlighting continued coordination in support of voluntary returns.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE

- During 2025, UNHCR has supported a network of 26 Community Development Centres (CDCs) across Lebanon, functioning as one-stop shops that provide updated information through awareness sessions and facilitate access to protection and assistance services. Through CDCs and mobile outreach, UNHCR and partners support persons with specific needs through case management, psychosocial support, legal aid and life-skills activities that foster empowerment, self-reliance and resilience. CDCs also serve as a venue for community engagement and participation and foster social cohesion with host communities. The CDCs promote inclusion and barrier-free access for vulnerable groups, alongside development-oriented engagement with partners including ILO, UN Women and IOM under the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. By December 2025, more than 365,000 services had been delivered through CDC activities throughout the year, including mobile services for 97,000 people of whom 12 per cent were Lebanese community members. In parallel, UNHCR supports 440 Outreach Volunteers (OVs) through partners to enhance community-based protection and outreach.
- UNHCR and partners conducted eight days of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) trainings across Beirut and Mount Lebanon and the South, targeting CDC staff, community groups, outreach volunteers, and psychologists. The trainings aimed to strengthen frontline capacity to identify, respond to and refer individuals experiencing psychosocial distress, enhance the quality of community-based support, and ensure timely access to specialized services for people with heightened vulnerabilities.
- The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign concluded in December, following coordinated community-based efforts across Lebanon focused on preventing digital and technology-facilitated GBV. UNHCR and partners raised awareness on safe online practices and available services, including sessions for women in informal tented settlements on digital violence and cyberbullying. In Beirut and Saida, women and girls also transformed their online experiences into artistic expressions through community labs, highlighting safety, strength and solidarity in digital spaces.

HEALTH

- UNHCR was compelled to make the difficult decision to phase out of its support to primary health care and the secondary referral healthcare programme for refugees by the end of 2025 due to a sudden and dramatic reduction in funding. To mitigate severe protection risks arising from gaps in access to life-saving healthcare, a time-bound transitional modality was put in place. To prevent the most vulnerable refugees facing protection risks from ending up in a life-threatening situation, UNHCR put in place a transitional emergency safety net while WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA continued fundraising for their expanded programs. This emergency transitional safety net is aimed to support hospitals approached by refugees known to UNHCR who require life/limb critical interventions and avoid them being turned away and left with potentially life-threatening risks.
- In December, such support was provided to 211 patients for life-saving interventions. Overall, between January and December, more than 25,000 individuals were assisted by UNHCR with secondary healthcare, including over 16,000 women who received delivery care, with support focused on critical and obstetric emergencies.



Hussain stands outside his home in Lebanon, where access to civil documentation has marked a turning point in his life. Support to address statelessness enabled him to obtain legal identity, restoring access to basic rights and services, including education, healthcare and freedom of movement. With documentation secured, Hussain has been able to rebuild stability for himself and his family, regain a sense of dignity and belonging, ©UNHCR/H. Hariri

SHELTER & CORE-RELIEF ITEMS

- In 2025, UNHCR supported nearly 130,000 refugees countrywide with shelter and winter assistance, including 18,000 weatherproofing kits benefiting more than 113,000 people, and upgraded collective shelters and rehabilitated substandard shelters to minimum standards. Shelter conditions nevertheless remained critical, with 54 per cent of refugee households living in overcrowded, or unsafe shelters. Risks were particularly acute in non-permanent shelters while winter conditions, recurrent flooding and limited access to heating continued to heighten risks, especially for families in informal tented settlements.
- Across Lebanon, UNHCR distributed core relief items (CRIs) in December to 1,141 refugees, including blankets, mattresses, kitchen sets and solar lamps. In addition, for preparedness in winter amid decreasing temperatures particularly in Bekaa area, 14,000 post-December 2024 Syrian arrivals received emergency relief assistance countrywide to address immediate needs.

BASIC NEEDS

- Cash assistance remains an essential lifeline for the most vulnerable refugee households, enabling them to meet urgent needs while preserving dignity and choice. However, funding constraints required UNHCR to reduce the coverage of its multi-purpose cash (MPC) assistance programme by 60% since the start of the year. UNHCR delivered multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) to 197,368 refugees (47,971 households) in December. With 60% of displaced Syrians living below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), many remain at risk of eviction, homelessness, begging, child labour, and unsafe informal work. While cash assistance alone cannot ensure long-term stability, it remains critical for survival.

Thank You!

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With the support of the following private sector partners:

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